CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE-BASED PROBLEMS IN SOME COMPARABLE AFRICAN COUNTRIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses language planning procedures and language-based problems in Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania. I am comparing a province to countries not to imply that they are of the same stature but only because of the multilingual nature they show and the history of having ex-colonial influence in the language situation. It will provide the sociolinguistic profiles of these countries and critically discuss the development and implementation of their language policies. It will further touch on languages of wider communication (LWC) as languages of instruction in African countries as this seems to be a common "solution" to the problems of medium of instruction in African countries. The chapter will conclude with implications for Limpopo Province.

3. 2 Nigeria.

The sociolinguistic situation in Nigeria

The country now known as Nigeria came into being as a result of the amalgamation, in 1914, of two protectorate colonies of Southern and Northern Nigeria. Before this there were empires in the north and southwest, with the southeastern side made up of small "unattached clannish settlements". (Rufai, 1977. 68). This amalgamation brought into contact people who seemed incompatible linguistically. The country is inhabited by groups who are diverse in culture, beliefs and historical background. Language policy had to create national and regional loyalty and establish new values, norms and patterns of behaviour. There are about 400 languages and dialects in the country and these are not evenly distributed throughout the country. This unevenness makes them vary in relative importance. I prefer to use older data to get a grasp of conditions in the

country a few years after independence to be able to look at language problems at the start of a new state. In this respect Rufai (1977) splits them into four subdivisions:

Major (a): These are languages of wider communication as they were spoken even in places outside their areas of origin. They serve as languages of contact among some ethnic groups who do not speak them natively. These languages are Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa.

Major (b): They consist of languages occupying the second position in the scale of importance among Nigerian languages. "They are recognised officially as languages of national importance" (Rufai, 1977: 68). They are not spoken outside their original area and are mostly spoken by their L1 speakers. Examples are Fula, Kanuri, Ijaw.

Minor (a): These are languages recognised as important at state level only. They might have influence at provincial, divisional or even district level, eg. Nupe and Tiv.

Minor (b): Languages not considered officially as important, even at state level. Their influence may be restricted to a district only. They are languages like Gwari, Idoma and Ogoni.

The role each language plays in the society can be estimated relative to its position as shown above, functioning at district level, divisional level, the provincial level, the state or the regional level. The three languages of wider communication play a national role. The number of languages corresponds to the number of ethnic groups. They represent diverse cultures, languages, religions and other social forms. For the country to function well, it needs the unity and goodwill of the people (Rufai 1977). For co-operation and

63

mutual understanding among various ethnic groups, inter-ethnic communication was needed. Language policy can be used to achieve this and it is only possible if people understand each other through a common language. Nigeria had a problem of deciding which of her languages could serve as official for national purposes.

In selecting a national language for Nigeria, several factors were considered. In modern countries, contact with foreign countries is a sine qua non. Nigeria also needed a language to enable her to have contact externally and internationally. Some linguists recommended that Nigeria retain English for this purpose. Internally the government had to communicate with its subjects and the people themselves need to communicate among themselves. Basic education could be offered in a vernacular but there was a need for a national language. A Nigerian language had to be elevated to this function to bind people together as a nation with one language.

Three languages have been labelled as languages of wider communication and as nationally recognised. They are Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. Selecting one of them would have met with resistance from other groups whose languages had not been selected. A sacrifice had to be made by ethnic groups. Rufai (1977) suggests three basic principles in the framework of language planning which help determine the relative value of a particular language to function as a national language.
These principles are:-

    a. Efficiency in terms of the language properties.

    b. Adequacy in terms of functions.

    c. Acceptability in terms of attitude.

In comparing the three major Nigerian languages (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa) for the

relative strength and weaknesses in the first two principles a few criteria were used but I will only discuss those relevant to Limpopo Province and the link, with the principles above, will be made in the discussion, viz:-

- number of speakers

- association with a great tradition

- linguistic studies   (Rufai 1977. 71).

Number of speakers

According to Oke, as cited by Rufai (1977), the Nigerian census did not provide a record of the number of Nigerian languages a Nigerian citizen speaks or understands other than his home language. It would therefore be difficult to give an exact number of speakers of each of the three major languages by then. It was, however, estimated that about nine million people speak Igbo, twelve and a half million speak Yoruba and about thirteen million speak Hausa. Igbo is in the weakest position with regard to number. Before 1968 the Hausa speaking areas were part of the former Northern Region, where Hausa had been serving as a lingua franca administratively, educationally and otherwise (Rufai 1977. 72). Similarly, the areas of mid-west were part of the former Western Region and Yoruba had always been used there. Both Yoruba and Hausa kept on expanding.

Association with a great tradition.

In the field of culture and tradition, Hausa and Yoruba are still dominant. The Ibos tend to be rather clannish and never constituted themselves into kingdoms or empires. In terms of culture and tradition, Ibos are much stronger in the southwestern and northern states. Before colonization both Hausa and Yoruba came into contact with Islamic

civilization. Many Arabic words have therefore been borrowed by Hausa. With regard to contact with western civilization both Yoruba and Ibo have an advantage. This was so because it was easier for Europeans to reach the coastal plains than the hinterland. All three major languages have come into contact with western civilization. In all three languages there are many English words.

Linguistic studies

In the field of linguistic studies by Europeans, Hausa and Yoruba were dominant. In what was formerly northern Nigeria, colonial administration was based on a policy of indirect rule and some areas were administered in the mother-tongue. The British officials were given some incentives to study the languages of their areas. For standardizing procedures, the Hausa administrative terminology was used in the non-Hausa speaking areas (Rufai 1977. 74). Education in the non-Hausa speaking areas was slow because of language problems. These areas, inhabited by various tribes speaking different languages and dialects were assisted by establishing training centres for teachers, who could open schools and teach their own languages and introduce Hausa as a lingua franca.

The linguistic study of Hausa was encouraged and mechanisms devised to standardise the language. In 1955 the Hausa Language Board took over from the Northern Region Literature Agency. Such a privilege has not been enjoyed by Yoruba and Igbo. For this reason Hausa became 'the only indigenous Nigerian language that has been instrumental in effecting political integration within a context of ethnic pluralism' (Rufai 1977: 75). For the fact that Hausa was learned and understood even by speakers of other languages put the language as a possible candidate for selection of an

66

indigenous language as a national language for Nigeria.

Ethnic loyalty is still strong in Nigeria. It is always the ethnic group first, then the country (Rufai 1977). The ideal situation should be the reverse, but to do that very strong attachments need to be created. People usually have sentimental and instrumental attachments towards their country, but to be able to create a strong sentimental attachment one must improve the instrumental attachment first. This is so because to get a person involved in a system one must make him realize the instrumental gains at his disposal. Material gains are the best incentives. It seems therefore that a peaceful political atmosphere is the priority because it is only when there is political stability that language planning can be given serious and objective consideration. Before independence Nigerians called for a national language, after independence people became so pre-occupied with problems created by political changes that nobody thought about language.

The sociolinguistic profile of Nigeria as described by Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) presently looks as follows:

Population: 111 million

Number of languages: 400 (representing three of the generally recognized language families: Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic).

Dominant languages: Hausa (spoken as a regional lingua franca by more than 25 million people), Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Efik-Ibibio, Fulani, Nupe, Tiv, Urhobo, Nigerian Pidgin.

Official language: English, with Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo the national languages.

Language of learning and teaching: mother tongues/the language of the immediate

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community in junior primary school; English at senior primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

Language study: English, a national language (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba), and a language of the local community.

Literacy level: 57%

Literature has been produced in English as well as the indigenous languages.

Newspapers, radio, and television mainly in English, but also in the indigenous languages.

The implications of this section for my topic appears at the end of section 3.

3.3 KENYA

Development and implementation of language policy

Very few African nations have chosen a definitive course of action as far as language policy is concerned. Some have made a verbal commitment to language planning, but have not developed a language policy. Kenya designated Swahili as a national language but failed to formulate a comprehensive policy nor set in motion schemes to implement it (Hopkins 1977). According to him there are about 40 distinct languages/ dialects in Kenya. These may be classified in four main groups, vis, 'Bantu', Nilotic, Para-Nilotic and Cushitic. About 66% speak a 'Bantu' language, 31% speak Nilotic or Para-Nilotic and 3% speak Cushitic (Hopkins, 1977). Kenya also has a minority population of Europeans and Asians. They speak English, Punjabi, Gujerati, Urdu and Hindi. More than half the population speak Swahili as a second language.

The history of Kenya clearly shows three stages in its educational development: traditional, missionary and governmental education systems. Traditional education was

basically carried out in the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. This was informal and not carried out in 'schools' but it provided the children with specific skills that were necessary for them to survive and properly function as members of their society (Hopkins 1977:85). This type of education succeeded in preserving certain cultural values of which language is one.

Three processes took place in the history of Kenya's development of policy decision according to Hopkins:

Statement of policy:

The language policy statement ran:

"We have got to be proud and use our own language..."

With this statement made in 1958, president Jomo Kenyatta decreed Swahili as the national language of Kenya. Shortly later the National Assembly approved a motion declaring Swahili as well as English to become the official languages of Kenya. These languages were to be used both in non-governmental offices and in parliament. This was declared on December 31, 1971.

President Kenyatta reiterated his policy decision designating Swahili as the national language of Kenya on July 5, 1974 . He stated:

> I do know that some people will start murmuring that the
>
> time is not ripe for this decision. To hell with such people.
>
> Those who feel they cannot do without English can well
>
> pack up and go" (Hopkins 1977. 86).

There was no clear statement made as to whether English will still serve with Swahili at the official level. Some members of parliament felt that the introduction of Swahili in

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the House would take 'some time'. It would further require some amendment of section 53 of Kenya's constitution which stipulated English as the language to be used in the Assembly. President Kenyatta reacted immediately by ordering the assembly to start deliberations in Swahili. The house passed the Constitutional Amendment Bill of 1974 making Swahili the official language in parliamentary proceedings (while retaining English for written laws, bills, financial resolutions and amendments).

In general, implementation of a language policy cannot be effective unless the implementation is directed towards the aims of that policy and these policy aims transmitted into precise national goals. The exact aims underlying Kenyatta's decree of Kenya's language policy was never explicitly stated. The overall consensus for the use of Swahili has been favourable because the 1974 census revealed that 73% of Kenya's population accepted Swahili as the national language with only 8% favouring English and the rest, other vernaculars (Hopkins, 1977: 88).

The implementation of this policy was not suited to pragmatic solutions. There has been no presidential or ministerial commission to study the feasibility of implementing the policy and there has not been any reform in the education system to reflect the intended policy. English, which substituted Swahili and the vernaculars as medium of instruction in 1958 is still used in that capacity. According to Whiteley (1971) as cited by Hopkins (1977), a national language policy is likely to succeed if based on the education system.

The sociolinguistic profile of Kenya is as follows according to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000.):

Population: 24 million

Number of languages: 42

Dominant languages: Kikuyu (spoken by 20%), Dholuo (14%), Luluya (13%), Kikamba (11%), Kalenjin (11%), Ekigusi (6.5%), Kimeru (5%).

Others: Maasai, Galla, Rendile, Turkana, Somali

National language: Kiswahili (known as a second language by 65% of the nation).

Official languages: English (known as a second language by about 16% of Kenyans), and Kiswahili.

Language of learning and teaching: most of the indigenous languages during the first three years of primary education, with English and Kiswahili as subjects; English from the fourth year of primary school onwards.

Language study: Kiswahili and English are studied throughout the school system. No indigenous language is studied after the third year.

Literacy: 78%

Literature: most literature is in English, but there is also a growing literature in Kiswahili. Some indigenous writing is available in Dholuo, Kikuyu, and Luhya.

Media: most newspapers are in English, there is only one Kiswahili daily now (there used to be three some years ago). Radio and television use English and Kiswahili. Some channels are English only.

3.4 Tanzania.

The United Republic of Tanzania is composed of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. It is linguistically a very diverse nation. Fasold (1984) mentions that Palomé (1982) gave 135 as the number of 'different linguistic units identified as distinct languages by their speakers' (p.266). Kembo (2000) has it at 135 to 150. In 1957, 94% of the population

71

spoke one of the languages of the Bantu language family. There were very few languages spoken by large numbers of people, according to Fasold (1984). Kiswahili is a Bantu language with strong Arabic influences. It originated in the seventh and eighth centuries along the coast, and spread from about 1 000 AD southwards along the trading routes and became a lingua franca for trade between Arab merchants and the local population. In the eighteenth century it spread inland along the caravan routes. (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000). Kiswahili was adopted as the language of TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) in its struggle for independence. A few years after independence Tanzania designated Kiswahili as its national language and in 1967 it was made the official language of the country as well.

The selection of a national language was less of a problem for Tanzania compared with many developing countries. As a Bantu language, Kiswahili is structurally similar to the native languages of about 95% of the population. The only alternative for official language was English but according to Fasold (1987:266), Kiswahili had the advantage because it was:

1. indigenous

2. not the language of one of several socio-cultural groups competing for dominance

3. widely known as a second language

4. linguistically related to the native languages of the majority of citizens, and

5. historically used as a language of initial education. (1987:269).

There are numerous dialects of Kiswahili and the national language developed from one of them. The East African Kiswahili Committee was established to determine which form of Kiswahili can best be used as national and official language. This committee

was responsible for the standardisation of Kiswahili during the colonial period. The standardisation process in Tanzania was successful to an extent as the written form is close to the spoken norms based on Kiunjuka (which was Zanzibarian but similar to many dialects in the former Tanganyika). The committee eventually became the Institute of Kiswahili Research at the University of Dar es Salaam. The 'Promoter of Kiswahili' and the ministry of Education were responsible for the development of the language.

Kiswahili is the language of government. It is the working language of the national assembly and the lower courts. Most printing appears in English but government officials address citizens mostly in Kiswahili. English, Kiswahili and the vernaculars are all used in courts but with mostly English used in higher courts. There was a policy of transferring civil servants to places far from their homes to compel them to use Kiswahili as they could not speak the local vernaculars. The other policy was the use of *ujamaa* villages (agricultural communes) where people of diverse languages lived together.

The use of Kiswahili both as national and official language has been a success. It symbolises Tanzanian nationalism. It is true, however, that Kiswahili is not used for official functions at all levels, it could also not be used in higher education and technical domains. It is, nevertheless, used widely in government dealings and in primary education.

The socio-linguistic profile of Tanzania is as follows (Webb and Kembo-Sure :2000: 51):

Population: 29 million

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Number of languages: between 135 and 150

Dominant languages : Kisukuma (spoken by 12.5%), Kinyambwezi (4.2%), Kiswahili (10%), but known as a second language by 90% of the population).

Other languages: 15 other languages are spoken by between 0.5 and 1 million speakers each. Tanzania's languages mainly belong to four language families (Bantu, Nilotic, Khoisan and Cushitic).

National and official languages: Kiswahili; English as an official language (known by 20% of the population)

Language of learning and teaching: Kiswahili at primary level and English at secondary and tertiary levels.

Literacy rate: 68%

Media: Printed and radio media in both English and Kiswahili.

Implications of this part on the Limpopo Province appear at the end of section 3.

3.5 The consequences of the language policies of African states vis-à-vis education .

According to Bokamba and Tlou (1977) language policies of most independent African states vis-à-vis education are the continuation of the colonial policies. Gorman (1974.397) as quoted by Bokamba and Tlou (1977) asserts that language policies are almost always political decisions. He asserts that:

"Decisions in language use in a particular society are almost invariably

subordinate to, or a reflection of, underlying social and or political values and goals.

Even in the educational domain, pedagogical considerations, while relevant, are seldom

primary in influencing decisions relating to the use of particular languages as media or

subjects of instruction" (Bokamba et al,1977: 36).

74

The language policies practised by the former major colonial powers reflect very much their political philosophies. As stated in Chapter 2, the Portuguese discouraged the use of mother-tongue as medium of instruction in the school system. The Belgian and British educators subscribed to the principle that the most effective medium of instruction in the preliminary stage of a child's education is his mother-tongue. This principle was re-echoed by UNESCO, as already mentioned in Chapter 2.

The language policies of most African states, including Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria, as cited earlier in this chapter, are examples of the rapid "Europeanization" of the medium of African education since independence. The use of mother-tongue in education has been gradually phased out to an extent that with the exception of Tanzania, English or French or Portuguese has in theory become the medium of instruction from secondary school level. As for the teaching of the African languages, Bokamba quotes Walusimbi (1972) that in Ghana, the government recognised six official languages which had to be taught at elementary and secondary schools as well as in the teacher training colleges, Luganda is surprisingly the only one of the six that is taught up to school certificate level. The other languages are taught in primary schools and teacher training colleges only (Bokamba and Tlou 1977). Tanzania has adopted Swahili as the medium of instruction for all primary school education.

The present language policies of African states vis-à-vis education are dictated by three practical considerations according to Bokamba and Tlou (1977).

*efficiency and expediency

*national unity or political considerations, and

* national progress.

75

Efficiency and expediency

One reason for rejecting African languages as media of instruction is that they are not sufficiently developed or modernized. The second argument is that teaching in African languages is not possible because of the lack of teaching materials and trained African cadres. These problems, it is argued, can be obviated by adopting colonial languages as media of instruction. This argument is senseless. Every language can be put to any use only after careful consideration of the language situation is made and a number of necessary steps are taken to develop, elaborate and revalorise the language. Any spoken language can be written and teaching and learning material can be developed in such languages. The language political situation must be made conducive for such undertakings, and people's attitudes towards such languages should be changed positively.

National unity

The second major argument in favour of European, ex-colonial languages as media of instruction is that the choice of indigenous national languages is regarded as a highly divisive undertaking politically. It is said that the choice of one indigenous language as a medium of instruction in a multilingual community will be interpreted by some part of the population as a rejection of other languages. The implementation of such a policy can't be carried out without entertaining political conflicts, which, it is feared, may destroy the delicate so-called national "unity" which has been the goal that African countries have been striving for since independence. The use of a number of indigenous languages is suspected to encourage tribalism. To try and avoid these type of conflicts most countries opted for the Europeanization of the media of instruction.

This conclusion is rather strange because it applied even to homogeneous nations like Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland where English remains the language of instruction and not Tswana, or Sotho or Swazi.

National progress.

National progress or development means industrialization and associated technological achievement. One senseless argument is that it is feared that the use of an African language will impede the progress and retard integration into the modern world. It is true that colonial languages have established themselves as the languages of prestige and upward mobility in many African states. In contrast to the above shallow arguments mentioned in this section, a sound language policy would call for the assignment of specific functions to each language in consonance with the realities of the society concerned. This is the type of language policy that this research would like to argue for. African languages can be used as media of instruction and for other internal affairs at the national, regional or local levels. More will be said about this in Chapter 7.

Bokamba and Tlou (1977) mention some of the disadvantages of colonial languages, namely:

The acquisition of the European medium of instruction is rendered difficult because of the lack of reinforcement outside of the classroom situation. Most European languages in Africa are used by a few privileged members of the community who pose as the elite in the communities. Very few of the pupils have the chance to use these languages outside their classrooms in both rural and urban settlements. They mostly use their mother-tongues in situations outside school. Pupils ultimately become 'people of two worlds' being the home and the school, neither of which reinforces the experiences of

the other with regard to language use.

Secondly, since the student is unable to master the language of instruction, his ability to understand the academic content and logic of the subject is negatively affected. The student has to grasp both the language and the subject content at the same time. Low language comprehension hinders academic development and learning becomes difficult as a result.

Thirdly, the development of the African languages and cultures is discouraged by the continued use of European languages. In line with what I mentioned in chapter 1, Ansre (quoted by Bokamba and Tlou, 1977), asserts that some Ghanaians look upon their own languages with a certain amount of shame, and regard them as not worthy for their children to learn. As a result, these people become culturally alienated from the people whom they should serve and help.

Fourthly, the bulk of dropouts from school because of any reason including language problems, lapse back into illiteracy after some time of being away from situations that force them to use their literacy skills in the foreign language used as medium of instruction. These children become disillusioned and turn, understandably, to crime, and become a threat to their societies.

3.6 Languages of learning and teaching (LoL/T)

Policy context:: issues, problems and constraints.

Linguistic complexity in Africa is not only caused by the number of languages spoken by Africans but also the diversity prevalent in the language families and, moreover, the

diversity of the functions assigned to the various languages spoken in a particular country. There are also cases of various languages spoken by the same individual. Some countries have only one indigenous language while others like Nigeria have about 400 languages. The internal complexity in such examples is not only a matter of numbers, but also a matter of the relative power and status of the languages.

As mentioned earlier, in most African countries, the most prestigious language is that of the former colonial country. These languages, which are often referred to as languages of wider communication (LWC), are perceived as languages of international communication. They are accorded official status in most African countries. They are used as languages of instruction (LoL/T), as official languages and as languages of the modern economy (IDRC, 1997).

The situation created by the treatment of languages as described above, may be even more complex to the child. In Kenya, for example, a child may start school where his mother tongue is an LoL/T in the first three years of education. The same child must immediately start learning two other languages, in this case Swahil , as an indigenous national language, and English as the official language (which also becomes the LoL/T from grade four onwards). In some urban areas in Kenya a child may have one of his two other languages (Swahili or English) as the LoL/T on the first encounter with a teacher. One reason for using the LWC is for socioeconimic development but as Bamgbose (1991:38) put it:

> National development, even when narrowly defined as socioeconomic development, ...has to take place in the context of linguistic and ethnic

heterogeneity.

It is important to discuss the role of language in education because the acquisition of literacy is part and parcel of the educational process which directly influences and shapes social transformation. Countries with low per capita incomes tend to have the highest illiteracy and birth rates in the world. Countries which overcame illiteracy show improvement in attitude and socioeconomic development which boost social transformation. As already explained in Chapter 2 instruction in the mother tongue in the primary years of a child's education is very important. Experiences in Africa and elsewhere show that cognitive development is achieved faster in mother tongue instruction than when the LWC is used as LoL/T in primary school education. (Bamgbose 1991).

In terms of access and quality, Kenya's education system, at least at the primary school level, is considered effective. At present the language policy in Kenya's education system is as follows:

* The language of the catchment area (the dominant language of the school's neighbourhood) is used as the LoL/T for the first 3 years of primary school education.

* English is taught as a compulsory subject from the first year of school up to the last year of secondary school and is used as the LoL/T from the fourth year of primary school to the final year of university. (There are however, places where teachers have decided that English is the language of the catchment area).

* Swahili is taught as a compulsory subject from the first year of primary school up to the last year of secondary school. (Swahili is also used as LoL/T for the first 3 years of primary school if local teachers decide that it is the language of the catchment area) (IDRC.,1997: 6).

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In its 1977 National Policy on Education, the government of Nigeria made two key pronouncements on the importance of language in the education system: the mother tongue would be used in education; and some Nigerian languages would be used for achieving national unity (Chumbow 1990). Nigeria, like most Anglophone African countries, has been using mother tongue as LoL/T at the lower primary levels of education since before independence. The British colonial education policy recognised the importance of the mother tongue very early on and with the 1977 policy which was geared to pre-primary education, the government was seeking to:

- effect a smooth transition from home to school; and

- prepare the child for the primary level of education.

The government committed itself to ensuring that the LoL/T would principally be the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community. Institutions were created to promote the development of Nigerian languages (Chumbow, 1990).

According to IDRC (1997), when Tanzania gained independence in 1961, the new government had the task of addressing problems created by more than 60 years of colonial rule. One burning issue was the racial integration of schools. Their schools, as in the former South Africa, were segregated along racial lines. There were European, Asian and African schools. Their curricula differed as well as their LoL/T. When Swahili was declared LoL/T in 1967 in the primary school system, it was an attempt at facilitating racial integration. To create social cohesion, basic education was made accessible to all members of the society.

It becomes imperative here to look at the relationship between LoL/T and school outcomes, specifically cognitive development and language acquisition. The most

authoritative research carried out in Nigeria's National Policy on mother tongue literacy was conducted in the Ife State from 1970. This project was started because of the fact that the 1970 mother tongue education produced poor learners. A survey was conducted on the use of mother tongue as LoL/T throughout the six years of primary education. The sample schools were compared to mainstream Nigerian schools and the findings were that :

* The cognitive and academic performance of the students in the project schools was better than that of their counterparts in the mainstream schools.

* Pupils educated in Yoruba (the mother tongue) throughout the 6 years of primary education were no less proficient in English than pupils educated in English during the last 3 years.

* The gains that pupils reportedly made when instructed in their mother tongue fell into various categories:- cultural, affective, cognitive, socio-psychological and pedagogic. (Akinnaso 1993, as cited by IDRC 1997).

There is a possibility that there might have been other non-linguistic factors incorporated in the compilation of this comparative study, which may include the selection of better teachers, curriculum change, use of new course materials, use of new and more effective teaching methods.

In South Africa, a study was carried out in 1990 on a transitional bilingual project, the Threshold Project. At that time, the LoL/T policy was that the medium of instruction should shift from mother tongue to English at grade 3. The objective of the project was to test the cognitive development of the child in that program. According to Luckett (1994,5), "pupils could not explain in English what they already knew in their first

languages; nor could they transfer into their first languages the new knowledge that they had learnt through English". The main conclusion is that bilingual programs that shift the LoL/T from the mother tongue to a second language before the child reaches a certain age or level of cognition will result in failure.

Beside these projects, study findings from elsewhere as cited by IDRC (1997) from Ramirez (1994) show that in general:

- The mother tongue is the primary language of learning

- Early transition to English-only programmes does not succeed, students do not maintain or develop the linguistic and cognitive skills acquired in the first language.

- Efficient access to the second language can occur via second-language content classes for the remaining 50% of instruction time.

- Additive bilingual or multilingual programmes, coupled with an integrated approach to the curriculum, provide the best results in the acquisition of both knowledge and competencies in the second language (IDRC,1997).

There are a number of things one can learn from the experiences in the countries discussed above. One of them is the importance of clarity of objectives in policy statements. In the Tanzanian case, the objectives, at least for primary education were clear. Soon after the LoL/T policy was made public in 1967, a circular was issued explaining how and when the policy should be implemented. The secular was sent to all regional education officers. Implementation was to start in the academic year of 1967-1968 and would be gradually implemented. By 1973-74, Swahili would be the LoL/T throughout all grades in the primary schools. The policy was implemented as planned (Roy-Campbell, 1992).

In contrast to the Tanzanian example, the Kenyan catchment-area policy was vague, and it gave room for loose interpretations . The same vagueness can be found in Kenya's policy to make Swahili its national language. Bamgbose (1991: 113) pointed out that :

> the vagueness of the decision can be judged by the implementation steps recommended. These included the requirement that all Kenyans were to speak Swahili at all times with fellow Kenyans (a practical impossibility since language choice depends on several factors, particularly topic, situation, and role relationship between the interlocutors), that government business was to be conducted in Swahili, that all civil servants were to be required to pass an examination in the language, and that Swahili would be given greater prominence than English in the schools. Not only are details of how these prescriptions were to be achieved not given, the opposite of what is recommended has been going on, without any notice of the contradiction involved ...

Even after the objectives of a policy are clear and a sound implementation plan has been drawn up, there may still be some technical and sociopolitical problems to battle with. Tanzania experienced some technical problems. Swahili had inadequate and inappropriate technical terms. Most technical terms were difficult, some of the terms are still foreign but written in Swahili, and many definitions are either imprecise or distorted when compared with the concepts they are supposed to define. Borrowing in languages is a fact which cannot be wished away. Corpus planning as a long term process can be pursued to modernise the language for specific purposes.

Although Swahili is used as LoL/T in training primary school teachers, most of the materials used at the teachers's colleges are in English. English was therefor seen as 'superior' to Swahili. People in practice preferred English and this language preference seemed not just to be pedagogically effective but it was linked to the wider political and socioeconomic factors, including the perceived status of the various languages.

3.7 Some characteristics of language-in-education policies in Africa.

According to Bamgbose (1991) language policies in African countries are characterised by one of the following :

"avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuations and declaration without implementation" (Bamgbose,1991:111). I will in this study only include problems that affected the three chosen countries. Vagueness of policy is related to avoidance of policy formulation. An example of this is the vague policy in Kenya as explained earlier in the chapter.

Declaration of policy without implementation can take one of three forms, according to Bamgbose (1991). A country may declare a policy which cannot be implemented in the circumstances and the policy-makers are well aware of that. He gives an example of when a country declares that pre-primary education shall be in the mother tongue when there are no pre- primary schools in the country. This may be done for propaganda purposes. Secondly it may be declared but with some escape clauses built into it. These escape clauses give an alibi for non-implementation. Thirdly, a policy may be declared but procedures to implement it are not specifically provided and the policy is a good plan only on paper. Nigeria's language policy exemplifies the last two forms of declaration without implementation. Its policy in section 51 and 91 of the 1979

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

constitution states that:-

> "The business of the national assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefore (section 51)
>
> A House of Assembly may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more major languages spoken in the State as the House by resolution may approve. (Section 91)" (Bamgbose 1991:117).

Escape clauses have been built into the formulation:

> 'when adequate arrangements have been made therefore'

> 'as the House by resolution may approve'

Clauses like these are said to be necessary in legal documents but in this case the net result is to maintain the status quo as represented in the earlier policy that

> ' business of Parliament shall be conducted in English'

Besides these escape clauses the policy lacked implementation mechanisms. It was not specified which body would make the necessary arrangements to introduce major languages in the assembly. It was not clear when the assembly would make its resolution on the language to be used with English. It was not stated how the decision should be implemented. These omissions imply that the official language policy has never been implemented.

The other relevant section of Nigeria's language policy is the education policy. Its main features are:

* Mother-tongue medium from pre-primary school until some point in primary education.

* Two Nigerian languages as core subjects in the Junior Secondary school and one in the Senior Secondary school.

* One of the three major languages to be taught where the language selected should not be the child's mother tongue.

The government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages to be Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba.

The policy contained an escape clause: subject to the availability of teachers. In practice most states simply ignored the policy and could claim that teachers were not available for some languages. It must have provided some mechanisms which would include the (re)-training of teachers, (both pre-service and in-service) and the production and development of teaching and learning materials for teachers and pupils respectively.

With regard to pre-primary education, the policy demonstrated the problem of lack of feasibility and vagueness. Mother tongue education is supposed to begin in pre-primary school but this level is not controlled by the government but the private sector. Since the government does not fund or control pre-schools, pre-schools cannot be forced to comply with the policy. Parents have also demonstrated by their choice that they want their children to learn English as quicky as possible instead of learning a Nigerian language.

From the examples cited above, and others provided by Bamgbose (1991) for other countries in Africa, one will understand that language policies differ according to the situation in each country. While in Nigeria there are official and educational language policies without adequate provision for implementation, in Tanzania it is different because language policies there are backed by such provisions. For example the declaration of Swahili as a national language was followed by a number of implementation strategies: Tanzania created a post of Promoter of Swahili in 1964 in the ministry of Community Development and National Culture. The main task here was to co-ordinate Swahili development efforts. There was also an inter-ministerial Swahili committee to hasten the formation of technical terms in the language and to publish the Government Directory in Swahili. A national Swahili council was set up in 1967 to co-ordinate and promote Swahili development efforts and disseminate publications in the language. Thus the official language policy specifies measures to facilitate implementation.

The language policy shortcomings discussed above imply that a policy that works in one country may fail hopelessly in another, depending on the differences in the context prevalent in each country, the vision of the government and actually the commitment of the government to their own policies.

3.8 Implications for the Limpopo Province

One sociolinguistic assumption about language varieties states that the type of relationship between language and society will be fairly constant over various speech communities. In other words, patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour found in one community are most likely to occur in a second community under similar circumstances.

The comparative section of this study is aimed at identifying language conditions in the three exemplified countries which might be similar to language conditions in the Limpopo Province. Conditions that prevailed in the three countries pertaining to language situations are not so different from those in the Province under review.

Like most of the African countries discussed in this chapter, Limpopo Province displays a language situation that is comparable in principle to the diversity found in Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria. South Africa in its present general climate is interested in (re) defining the role of its eleven official languages, and the Limpopo Province should also redefine the role of its diverse languages, which are listed in Chapter 1. As in most African countries English in this province is a second language. But it is not always clear what that implies. The spectrum ranges from a multilingual context in which English is a mother tongue to those where it is almost 'only' an international language or a foreign language. I am convinced that the role of a language can only be objectively assessed on the basis of an empirical investigation of language behaviour whenever the language is found in a complex sociocultural context.

The official status of a language must correspond (at least partly) to existing knowledge, use and the attitudes of people in that area. It must be known and spoken by most people, people must identify easily with it and like it. As in most African countries, English in the province is either a native language, a second language or a foreign language. This categorisation depends on a number of sociolinguistic and linguistic differences. One may consider the age and context of acquisition: mother tongues are usually learnt from parents and foreign languages through formal education; second languages can be acquired in social contact, but also in the home

or through early formal education (Schmied 1998:12).

Given the language situation in the countries discussed, and attempts at solving perceived language problems, this study is challenged to come up with a way of empirically measuring the roles and statuses of languages in the Province with a view to proposing a comprehensive language policy and language-in-education policy.

One implication is that language attitudes should be scrutinised, both positive and negative ones. One can try to put these attitudes together and see which of these relationships contribute strongly to the allocation of official roles to languages in the Province in relation to the national language policy.

The Tanzanian example as described above has some implications for the Province in that policy statements must be made concerning the role of each of the languages spoken in the province with full awareness of the multilingual scenario. The Province should guard against repeating mistakes mentioned in this chapter concerning policy statements and implementation strategies.

I think that this Province in contrast to most African countries has reasonably adequate economic power and political will to shape its education system according to its people's language needs. A balance will have to be struck between languages in the Province for the sake of smooth social transformation. Additive multilingualism is one way of incorporating various needs on different levels, but at the provincial level fewer official languages will have to be supported.

I hope that while people are struggling to create political stability, they can take steps which will improve the chances of developing one or some of the languages to serve as LoL/T and also as official working languages in the provincial government. These may not be radical views, but they are possible as it happened with the promotion of Kiswahili in Tanzania. In a province like this, solutions can be found to problems only through a careful approach, no matter how long it may take. After all, language planning is a long-term process which should be implemented in terms of decades, not years. It takes time for people to change their beliefs and cultures to accommodate new ones. The socio-linguistic history of the Province will inform us of the background history of the Province which will show us the attitudes that people have towards languages and the relationships between language groups.

The Province will have to make many compromises in order to provide education first in the psychologically and educationally advantageous mother tongues and, only if necessary, later in LWC opening up more economic and cultural opportunities to children and adults (Schmied 1998).There might be problems in the Province as the heritage of apartheid education may make it difficult for parents and politicians alike to support things like mother tongue education in the first few years of school and maintain additive bilingualism. Methods used by countries exemplified above may not always be applicable and their results should not be seen to be transferable. Practical language choices may be difficult as the question of 'mother tongue' can become tricky mostly in urban and peri-urban communities. Schmied quotes an example of one 23 year old student from Germiston quoted from Mesthrie, 1995. xvi:

> my father's home language was Swati, and my mother's home language was Tswana. But as I grew up in a Zulu speaking area we used mainly Zulu and

Swati at home. But from my mother's side I also learnt Tswana well. In my high school I came into contact with lots of Sotho and Tswana students, so I can speak this two languages well. And of course I know English and Afrikaans. With my friends I also use Tsotsitaal

Like Tanzania and Kenya, the province may have to accept the concept of a community language or the language of the immediate environment but it may be difficult to reconcile language practice with language attitudes, as will be shown in chapter 5.

This chapter looked briefly at language planning policies in Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya. The sociolinguistic situations in these countries are comparable to the language situation in Limpopo Province. African languages had different roles and statuses in the different countries and the languages of the colonial masters were treated differently in the three but ultimately remain the LoL/T and the LWC with the exception of Tanzania where Swahili is used as LoL/T to a larger extent in the primary schools. Internal migration to urban centres as well as the association of specific languages with a great tradition have been causes for concern in formulating policies in all three country's allocation of roles to different languages. Ethnic loyalty always came first before the country while the ideal situation would be the reverse.

I have touched as well on the consequences of language policies with regard to education in which the LWC is used as the LoL/T for most educational levels with the Tanzanian exception. The LWC was preferred for the maintenance of national unity and national progress, which African states had been struggling for since independence, but in vain. I then outlined issues, problems and constraints in the LoL/T and looked at

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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

some case studies of mother tongue instruction as a factor in cognitive and linguistic development. Characteristics of language policies in Africa included vagueness, avoidance, fluctuation and declaration without implementation as put by Bamgbose (1991). The chapter ended with implications for the Limpopo Province, much of which shall be discussed after having looked at the socio-political history of the Province with special reference to the language issue.

I hope that while people are struggling to create political stability, they can take steps which will improve the chances of developing one or some of the languages to serve as national or provincial means of communication. The sociolinguistic history of the Province follows.