

CHAPTER 5

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

According to Webb (2000) the term *sociolinguistic profile* is used to refer to “a socio-political characterisation of the language situation in a state, region or community, or the language world of an individual” (28). In this chapter I will use the term to refer to the socio-political language situation in Limpopo Province. The function of a sociolinguistic profile is to form an input into the development of language policy, and language plans. I will provide the socio-political context in the province, the languages spoken, the families in which the languages are classified, and the language knowledge of the people of the province. The chapter will also touch on the demographic distribution of the different language groups, language functions and the functional meaning of African languages, their statuses, language growth and shift, literacy, corpus development and public functions and domains. I will close the chapter by looking at language planning institutions in the province and provide information on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the relevant planning site.

5.1 The socio-political context.

Limpopo Province, like the other eight provinces in the country, has been awarded limited powers to run its affairs through its provincial legislature, but is under control of the central government (of national unity) of the country. The province, like all others, is ruled by a premier assisted by a democratically constituted provincial legislature.

It covers an area of 123,910 km², representing 10% of the total area of South Africa. According to the STATSSA 1995 household survey the population density is 44 persons per km², somewhat higher than the average of 34 per km² for the whole country. The

racial distribution of the population is roughly as follows:

Africans 95.4%

White 2.7%

Coloured 1.9%

Indian 0.1%

Source: The STATSSA. October household survey 1995.

The racial classification of South Africa's black people, Coloureds, Indians and whites is retained in the series of October household survey to enable STATSSA to monitor changes in the life circumstances of those who were disadvantaged during the apartheid era. One would, normally, want to refrain from any reference to race.

The home languages distribution in the province according to Orkin (1998) is as follows:

Table 5.1: Home language distribution in the Limpopo Province by numbers and percentages.

Home language	numbers	percentage
Northern Sotho	2 572 491	52.7
Xitsonga	1 102 472	22.6
Tshivenda	757 683	15.5
Afrikaans	109 224	2.2
isiNdebele	72 506	1.5
Setswana	70 339	1.4
siSwati	57 149	1.2
Sesotho	56 002	1.1
isiZulu	36 253	0.7
English	21 261	0.4

isiXhosa	8 597	0.2
Others	13 228	0.3

Adapted from Orkin (1998, 2.7)

From the above table Northern Sotho, Xitsonga and Tshivenda are major languages statistically but Afrikaans and English are major languages functionally, i.e. they enjoy high status.

The term *major languages*, will from henceforth refer to these five languages in this dissertation.

According to the 1996 census findings, Limpopo Province is the least urbanised province in the country. Only about one-tenth of the total population (11%) lives in an urban area. In this province most coloureds, Indians and white people live in urban areas (92%, 92% and 69% respectively). This contrasts with the African population, of which only one in twelve (8%) live in urban areas. Usually, urbanisation is associated with the availability of resources and better economic conditions and education. The issue of urbanisation is brought in here to emphasise that most of the area in the province is rural and all the underdevelopedness associated with rural settlement may be expected and this needs to be addressed to strive, among other things, for a transformation leading to the development of the province as a whole.

5.2 Language families.

South Africa has two major language families, viz, the 'Bantu' language family and the Germanic family of languages. Both families are represented in the Province. From the 'Bantu' family of languages we have siSwaTi and isiNdebele (in the form of Northern

Ndebele) representing the Nguni; then we have Northern Sotho, which is the dominant language, representing the Sotho group. From the Germanic family of languages we have English and Afrikaans. The other two official languages, Xitsonga and Tshivenda, are not classified as Nguni or Sotho, but are African languages. My recommendations in this study will deal with different languages regardless of whether they are Sotho, Nguni or neither. The study is concerned with the promotion of African languages and their use as LoL/Tas well as the status of the other languages.

5.3 Languages of the Province

It will be important to display major African languages per district in the Province and the statistics provided below will also be used in developing a language policy for the province in Chapter 7.

Table 5.2 Geographical areas alphabetically by district and first language

	Ndebele	Northern Sotho	Tshivenda	Xitsonga	Others	Unspecified	Total
Bochum	87	157554	515	397	398	1699	160649
Bolobedu	66	174302	196	21238	1050	1768	198620
Dzanani	19	5972	160928	1238	1389	992	170538
Ellisras	184	5289	164	301	15248	427	21613
Giyani	188	9581	611	194472	3436	1432	209721
Hlanganani	17	616	6528	112014	409	1497	121081
Letaba	60	33991	496	16661	13863	1622	66693
Lulekani	26	5673	106	30462	886	383	87536
Malamulele	19	290	983	167071	697	1094	170155
Mapulaneng	119	140337	436	56080	48652	2368	247992
Messina	347	6152	14874	1734	6128	592	29827
Mhala	93	10517	108	253625	29508	1855	295707
Mokerong	41231	300906	785	39414	20388	3883	406608

Mutali	9	284	66992	143	165	810	68403
Namakgale	47	35663	423	9305	2658	616	48712
Naphuno	52	145381	105	3334	2001	1582	152455
Nebo	14814	271937	140	617	12335	3864	303707
Phalaborwa	102	4368	237	7876	15794	2156	30533
Polokwane	412	22170	1472	2671	34689	2489	63901
PP/rus	984	26119	285	4595	16357	1381	49719
Ritavi	34	21772	435	122607	5697	1074	151618
Sekgosese	49	100348	512	3197	420	753	105279
Sekhukhune	280	386419	153	5257	18610	4071	414790
Seshego	8703	303285	1276	8688	2060	3024	327035
Soutpansberg	192	6019	7828	2731	16751	470	33991
Thabamooopo	2695	337775	836	7028	4724	2959	356017
Thabazimbi	120	3444	407	2834	47510	1096	55411
Thohoyandou	75	2589	329138	5549	2974	3484	343710
Vuwani	8	9580	159970	9733	703	1048	181042
Warmbad	641	18820	322	5444	23776	812	49814
Waterberg	836	25336	422	6156	22877	861	56488
TOTAL	72506	2572491	757683	1102472	372053	52163	4929368

Source:STATSSA 7/4/01

The above table indicates that 18 out of 31 districts are predominantly Northern Sotho speaking, seven districts are predominantly Xitsonga speaking and six are predominantly Tshivenda speaking. This distribution will directly influence my formulation of the language policy proposal in Chapter 7.

The province houses almost all eleven official languages of South Africa. As mentioned in the previous chapter Tshivenda language is also spoken in Zimbabwe, Xitsonga in Mozambique and siSwati in Swaziland. Within the country all six official languages referred to are also spoken in some other provinces. The LANGTAG report on languages other than official languages suggested that in addition to the eleven official

ones, about seventy more are spoken in the country. For the Province they will include Northern Ndebele (this is a variety spoken in a diglossic situation with Northern Sotho at Ga-Mashashane which is not included under Ndebele in the Constitution of the country).

There are also dialectal variations in each of the three major African languages. The dialects are spoken as mother-tongues by speakers who are expected to learn and use at least one of the three major African official languages as their dialects are not yet reduced to writing. The major difference between language and dialect is that a dialect is usually not standardised while a language is. Dialect and language can perform or function at different levels. Language can comprise dialect but a dialect cannot comprise a language. The latter is a political entity while the former is a social entity. The problems with the standardisation of the African languages has always been which variety to select. In most cases the most dominant variety was selected as the case was with Northern Sotho which is based on the Pedi dialect, and Tshivenda which is based on Tshipani. This means that speakers of other dialects have to learn the selected one and consequently language-internal tension is built up. This is so because speakers of the non-standard dialects feel marginalised as they have to learn the standard form when they have to go to school as the standard form is the only form used in writing.

It is a difficult task to count languages as the sociolinguistic distinction between language and dialect is not clear. One may not know when a variety is a 'dialect' and when it is a 'language', beside one being standard and the other non-standard. It is not clear how many people who speak a particular language qualify to be counted as speakers of a 'language of the province' or country. One is also not sure when a pidgin

qualifies as a language. Tsotsitaal is widely spoken in this province but one may not be sure whether to count it as a language. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000), the concept of language has not yet been defined in a way that can enable one to decide which forms of “human communication can be categorised as belonging to the same ‘language’ and which as not belonging to the same ‘language’” (Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:28).

The term ‘language’ is usually used to refer to what teachers call ‘proper language’ or ‘correct language’ , which refers to the use of an appropriate form of communication in formal public contexts which excludes vernacular forms of speech (Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2000). In some contexts, the term *language* may refer to what linguists call **standard language** , which is the variety that has been selected, codified and had its functions elaborated and accepted as the appropriate form of speaking and writing in high-function public contexts. In the latter sense the term ‘language’ excludes the non-standard varieties and language counting becomes problematic.

Mention was made in the previous chapter that the African languages found in the province each have a number of dialects. The criterion of mutual intelligibility and other purely linguistic criteria, are of less importance in the use of the terms *language* and *dialect* than are political and cultural factors, like autonomy and heteronomy. Both language and dialect serve a common purpose (to communicate). One linguist may categorise a particular variety as ‘language’ and the other categorise the same variety as ‘dialect’. Hendrikse and Cluverl (1996) provides the following definitions of ‘dialect’ and ‘language’ which are applicable to the Limpopo Province:

A dialect is a variety of language (traditionally) associated with a specific region. It is not usually associated with a politically powerful group and is therefore not codified and is usually not used in the schools, the media or the government. Its speakers tend to form part of a larger, more powerful political group whose language does fulfil all these functions.

The term *language* cannot be properly defined, as cited in the previous page. What one can provide is a definition of standard language as done by Hendrikse and Cluver (1996). It is:

One dialect that has been selected from a group of dialects or that is a combined form of two or more dialects. It is codified and elaborated so that it can be used in all formal domains such as the central government, the legal system, the media, the school and the churches. It helps to unite dialect speakers into a larger political unit (p. 229).

Webb (1998) indicates that the country's politics make the task of the language counter even more difficult. He quotes Herbert (1992) who pointed out that some African language boundaries seem to have been artificially introduced as part of missionary politics and the implementation of apartheid. One example is the creation of Northern Sotho, which is internally so diverse that one can doubt its unity. Moreover its linguistic similarities with Setswana make it difficult to draw any significant linguistic boundary between them.

The information furnished in this chapter about the sociolinguistic profile of the province can be seen to be biased in a way as it is difficult to be precise about the number and

identity of the languages. The chapter will concentrate mainly on the major languages (official languages), which are either statistically or functionally major as indicated above, and this may also make the rest of the information appear biased as well. Only major languages are selected because this dissertation is aimed at the functional allocation of some of these languages for transformation or development purposes.

The problem of distinction between language and dialect will affect policy recommendations in Chapter 7 as I will concentrate only on what is taken to be official languages. I will however make a suggestion about some of the dialects which I feel must be promoted because of their differences from the standard form of language to which they are said to be related.

5.4 Language knowledge.

It is not easy to give accurate information about people's 'knowledge of a language' since 'knowledge of language' may differ at different stages in the life of a speaker, where different speakers may range from being able to interact on a very elementary level to being able to read or write a language or follow texts like the national news, to displaying a knowledge of communicative competence which includes using the language appropriately in many contexts. It is difficult to gauge whether someone has linguistic competence, strategic competence and communicative competence in a language. For the sake of providing a picture of the number of people who can be said to know a language, the only available statistics are for the country as a whole. In trying to display a more accurate approximation of language knowledge in the province, I will provide statistics for the 2001 Grade 12 learners. I will show the number of students in Grade 12 who have registered for the major languages. The number of students

registered for a specific language can be generalised as a fraction of the population that knows that language. Only five of the official languages found in the Province will be included.

Table 5.3: Actual number of Grade 12 candidates enrolled for three levels of language study in the province in 2001.

	L1	L2	L3	TOTALS
N. Sotho	49505	5	57	49567
Xitsonga	16812	-	2	16814
Tshivenda	14852	4	3	14859
Afrikaans	1496	74196	-	75692
English	1219	84004	-	85223
Total	83884	158209	62	242155

Source: Limpopo Province Department of Education: Program E0121BP, 01/07/13

From the table above one realizes that black people choose to learn English and Afrikaans as L2's in this Province. The languages have more L2 learners than L1 learners. This must be because of the high status they had from long ago as already indicated. The African languages seem to be studied only by their L1 speakers and hence they have very few L2 and L3 learners. The situation must be changed by the language policy. This picture demonstrates the issue of the low status that African languages have. Compared to Xitsonga and Tshivenda, Northern Sotho is learned by far more learners in the Province and there are at least 57 L3 learners for it. This is an additional point to make it the main African language in the Province for consideration in the policy proposals in Chapter 7

5.5 Incidence of multilingualism.

It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that the term *multilingualism* was seldom used in this country before 1994. Instead the general term used was *bilingualism*. This was used to refer to knowledge of English and Afrikaans and not knowledge of any other two languages. This restricted meaning created a situation in which most Asian, Coloured and white South Africans still remain only bilingual. Most black people, however, are multilingual. This multilingualism is somewhat confusing since it is not clear what it means to say that someone knows two languages. One should find out what communicative functions such a person can perform with his/her knowledge of these languages. (Webb 1998b). Multilingualism refers to the language knowledge of the individual or a community. Multilingualism cannot be discussed without touching on language attitudes because in every multilingual situation, language attitudes abound. My understanding of language attitudes is not confined to language itself, but includes attitudes towards speakers of a particular language or dialect. This scope may be broadened to include attitudes towards language maintenance and planning efforts. Language maintenance is often the reflection of attitudes towards members of various ethnic groups. Attitudes may affect L2 learning as well.

In this province different people have different attitudes towards different languages. Some African language speakers do not like learning to speak other African languages as they regard them as minor, and most white people view the African languages as uncivilised and not worth studying. The study of language attitudes is more valuable as a tool in illuminating the social importance of language. Language planners have to understand how language is used as a symbol of group membership (Fasold 1984). In this province people discriminate against each other's language. Regardless of the extent of this multilingualism, it remains a tool which enables cross-cultural

communication. Language attitudes may not be found among people who grow up in monolingual environments. It is widely accepted that most black people can command at least three African languages in this province. Very few Indian, coloured and white South Africans can speak any African language.

5.6 Demographic distribution.

The term *demographic distribution* refers to sociolinguistic information pertaining to different social/demographic groups in the provincial community, specifically racial groups, ethnic groups, socio-economic classes, age-groups, urban vs rural people and any other social group which may relate significantly to the politics of language.

According to Orkin (1998) the age of the population is important for a number of reasons. A young population, for example, will require greater educational resources. "An elderly one needs more facilities to take care of them" (p.8). The planning for the economy and also of the country and its languages is thus influenced by the age structure of the population. The age distribution of the African in the Limpopo Province will be treated as a surrogate of the age distribution of the total population for a number of reasons. The African people are by far in the majority in the province (95%) and this means the overall pattern of age distribution will be similar to that of the African population.

Orkin (1995) asserts that children under the age of 5 years represent 20% of the population, whilst children under the age of 15 years represent 48% of the population. (8%) represent the elderly, i.e. 65 years and older. This distribution shows that the Limpopo Province population is somewhat younger than the African population in the

whole country: 14% under 5 years, 40% under 15 years and 45 over the age of 65 years (Orkin 1998.9). One reason for this might be the movement of adults to other provinces like Gauteng in search of employment. This is supported by the drop among males between 15-19 and 25-29 years. It implies that in planning for the province one needs to ensure that the underdeveloped black people are developed to alleviate the problem of economic inactiveness.

The 1995 October household survey as put by Orkin displays population distribution with four broad age categories.

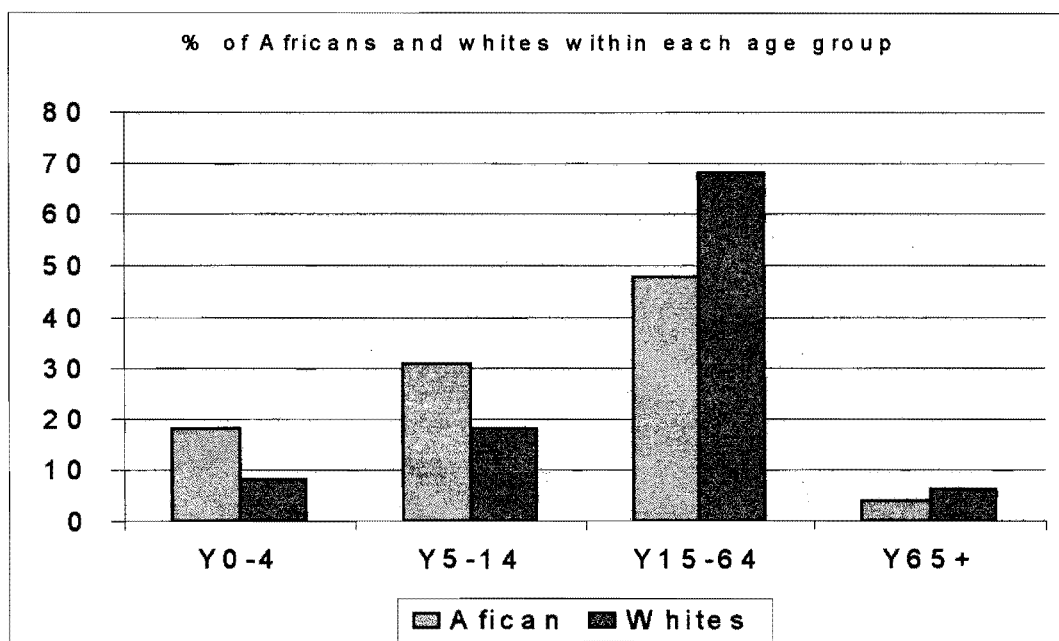


Table 5.4. Age and gender distribution of the people in the Limpopo Province by population group.

This shows a relatively young African population in which 18% and 31% are in age groups 0-4 and 5-14 respectively compared to the corresponding proportion of whites of 8% and 18% respectively. The proportion of the African population in the labour force (ages 15-64) is much smaller (48%) than the corresponding white population (67%). This implies that an economically active black person has a greater number of people

to maintain than his white counterpart. There are more dependant young people and more pensioners who in a way depend on the economically active adults among the black people as compared to their white counterparts. One reason for the few black people in the work force might be that their languages are rarely used in the economic sectors and if the African languages are used more people can be employed unlike if English and Afrikaans are preferred in the work situations. This can improve the economy and the people in what Bokamba (1999) calls "the political economy of planning African language" as will be explained in the next chapter.

The age distribution of the African people in the Limpopo Province varies between urban and non-urban areas. In non-urban areas a larger proportion of the population consist of children (those aged 14 years and younger): 49% compared to 40% in the urban areas. There are also more elderly people (4%) in non-urban areas than in urban areas (2%). Because of rural-urban migration, the proportion of economically active people is noticeably greater (58%) in urban areas than non-urban areas (47%). Rural-urban migration has implications for the development of non-urban areas in the Province because rural areas are characterised by a relatively high proportion (53%) of dependents compared to urban areas (with 42%).

I do not want to suggest that urban areas are always better than rural areas but I only have in mind resources like the infra structure, electricity, water and sanitation, which are not always found in most rural areas of the Province. Since urban and rural areas differ so much one expects differences also in the needs, expectations, attitudes, culture, identity, etc. therefore there will be a need for different language planning policies.

5.7 Language functions.

English and Afrikaans were both used in all public domains until 1994 even though Afrikaans was probably the preferred official language. The African languages were recognised statutorily, as official languages in the so called national states and self-governing regions. They had very little real meaning (Webb 1998). They were mainly used as media of instruction to introduce learners to education, then they were taught as subjects at schools and some universities. They were seldom used for economic, political and scientific functions, and were accorded the function of regional official languages only in their homelands.

Since the democratic elections of 1994 Afrikaans is being used less and less in official contexts and 'is undergoing gradual functional decline' (Webb 1998. 46). English, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, is rapidly becoming the only language of official use at all levels of government. For Limpopo Province to attain full democratisation, attention should be paid to the extended use of the African languages in public life. The languages should be given some new uses as the next chapter will suggest.

5.8 Language status.

The status of the languages in the province is as follows:

English commands very high status. It is used as an instrument for international communication and as an instrument of access to most domains of human achievement. It is a mark of prestige and civilisation and the means of wider communication within the Province, in the country and within parts of Africa. It is also used as a lingua franca in politics and the economy. People feel that knowing English is equated with success and civilization. It serves as a determining factor for national and international recognition,

job opportunities and a better life. This situation might be a dangerous one since the increasing dominance of English diminishes the use and development of other languages which can transform a number of institutions.

Afrikaans is viewed by its L1 speakers as having the same instrumental value as English and it embodies the Afrikaners's socio-cultural identity. Since some Afrikaans can be understood in the Netherlands and some areas in Belgium, it is also viewed as internationally viable by its speakers. For most non-Afrikaans-speaking people Afrikaans is seen as the language of the oppressor because of its association with the apartheid system of government. Many black people in the Province nevertheless have a speaking knowledge of it.

This dissertation tries to make people aware of the importance of the African languages for their political economy. African languages generally have a very low public status and are used for low-function communication purposes mostly, like interpersonal communication, ritual performance, deliberations at local gatherings, etc.

The homelands government system elevated the status of the African languages by making use of them in some government functions. More recently, linguistic consciousness is increasing among the Venda, Tsonga , Northern Ndebele and Swazi communities and this is demonstrated by the establishment of the committee for marginalised languages which tries to develop these languages and give them more uses.

5.9 Language growth and language shift.

Sociolinguistic status can also be indicated by determining language growth/decline and language shift. Language shift is a process whereby speakers of one language use a second language for more and more functions until only the second language is used by them for most or all communicative purposes. If all these people ultimately abandon the use of their first language, we then speak of language death, i.e. the people have completely changed their language preferences and identity and there are no more native speakers of what was a first language. From the information on South Africa's language growth and shift, data relevant to the languages mainly spoken in Limpopo Province can be extracted and used to illustrate this point. Schuring (1993) as quoted by Webb (1998:50) provides this information on the growth of languages in the country after 1990. The information shows which languages are declining and which ones are progressing and this is representative of the people's interests in the various languages.

- * Afrikaans shows a decrease in second language speaker numbers from 19.4% of the total population to 15.03%.

- * English shows an increase in primary speaker numbers from 8.59% of the total population to 9.01%

- * Northern Sotho shows an increase from 6.86% to 9.64%

Language shift has occurred to some extent from Afrikaans to English according to Webb (1998:51).

According to Kamwangamalu (2000) "code-switching refers to language alternation across sentence boundaries, and code-mixing to language alternation within sentence boundaries." Even though research has not been done extensively on code switching and code mixing (on languages in the province) in diglossic situations English is the

donor rather than the receiver. Examples abound of words borrowed from English in all Bantu languages. It is used for high functions, and code switches and code mixing mostly involve English. It will benefit the province to teach and learn the African languages and refine the knowledge of English to expose people to additive multilingualism instead of emphasising bilingualism as the case was in the past.

5.10 Literacy.

It is difficult to specify the degree of literacy for the Province because the calculation of literate people depends upon the definition of literacy used. If one defines literacy as a grade 7 level of school education, then according to the findings of the October 1995 household survey, the proportion of the population 20 years and older that did not go to school is twice (27%) the national proportion (13%) (Orkin: 1996). Those who ended their education in primary school (grade 7 or less) are below the national proportion of 19% compared with 24%. This implies that more than 30% of the provincial population is presently in need of literacy and some adult literacy training and basic education.

5.11 Corpus development.

The concept "corpus development" implies different things for different languages in South Africa. For example, the concept standard language does not have the same meaning for English and Afrikaans as it has for the African languages. Cluver (1993:22) agrees with Hendrikse and Cluver (1996) in their definition of standard language. He writes:

A standard language meets certain structural criteria (it must be codified, it must have certain registers and a productive word-formation system). It is used in certain functional domains (eg. in education, the courts, in religious contexts, as

a literary language and as a language of the (central) government).

Standard language for Afrikaans and English meant: supra-dialectal variety of formal, public discourse, but in the case of African languages it means “the variety used in formal writing”. (Webb 1998. 52).

Afrikaans and English are highly standardised and their vocabulary for science and technology is adequate. The other major languages are also standardised and codified, but to a lesser extent. The African languages lack technical and scientific vocabulary. There are grammars written for Northern Sotho, Xitsonga and Tshivenda languages. Mention was made in Chapter Four that the African languages were initially standardised by missionaries and this had various consequences. Some speech sounds were difficult to represent. Most orthographies were not static. The South African government created language committees called Language Boards from the late 1950's. Their task was to develop the orthography and to create new technical terms but in effect very little was done about the vocabulary of the languages to make them adequate for scientific and technological uses.

The political changes that occurred in 1994 in South Africa presented new challenges to language planners. The speakers of the African languages speak varieties different from the standard forms. This may mean that the standard languages can become instruments of elitism and discrimination of a sort since the standard language is mostly known by the literates. Language may be used as a ‘yard stick’ to mark specific social levels.

5.12 Public functions and domains.

This section wishes to discuss the different functions that can be allocated to a language . I will only discuss four domains or functions in which languages serve, official languages, lingua francas, languages of education and languages of the judiciary.

5.12.1 Official languages.

Six of the eleven official language are spoken in different degrees in Limpopo Province. Each province in the country has the right to select their province's official languages. The provinces are expected to do the selection by considering only official languages and selecting dominant ones. The constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that "...the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages" (Act 108 of 1996:4).

It was mentioned in Chapter 1 that the Limpopo Province, and the country, does not have a comprehensive language policy. It is therefore not known what the provincial government has in mind with regard to the official languages in the Province. Fact is, the Province cannot use all the national official languages equally for all official functions. And also if one dominant language like English is used as the sole provincial language, it will be unconstitutional. Attempts to democratise the province must include the transformation of state departments and administration. In this area of transformation African languages must be given a dominant role in politics, the economy, media and education. Chapter 7 will propose a language policy and plan for the Limpopo Province.

5.12.2 Lingua Francas.

There is no provincial lingua franca but for most domains like political debates, higher

education and economic affairs, English is used as a language of wider communication (LWC). This is not true of the informal domains. For example, meetings at the University of the North are officially held in English but the participants discuss issues among themselves before and after the meetings in Northern Sotho since most members speak or understand Northern Sotho. As a dominant language in the Province Northern Sotho assumes the role of informal lingua franca.

5.12.3 Education.

All the official languages found in the Province are adequately developed to be used as media of instruction at lower primary school levels. Only English and Afrikaans are used in higher primary schools, secondary schools and throughout tertiary institutions. The choice of medium of instruction is a serious problem which caused widespread controversy in the black schools as mentioned in Chapter 1.

Today the policy on medium of instruction in all schools allows free choice from day one of the school programme. In this Province most schools opt for initial mother-tongue instruction with the tendency to shift to English. There are schools that start with English from day one at school as indicated already in Chapter 1. The medium of instruction is still an issue today and it will be touched on in Chapter 6.

5.12.4 The judiciary.

Despite clear changes in the constitutional language stipulations, English and Afrikaans are still the major languages in the formulation of laws and in the courts of law. The interpreters interpret from Afrikaans and English into the African languages and vice versa. This is also a cause for concern since the practice discriminates against the

African languages and is in line with the point raised in Chapter 1 about the growing dominance of English which may lead the government into making English the main or only language of the courts. In the Sowetan of Wednesday, 15 March, 2000, Paul Setsetse and Effort Kgamedi (who both work for the Department of Justice) wrote that "Language of record in courts should be English" (16). This strengthens the dominance of English and reveals how little people care about both language rights and human rights. The courts as state institutions are important forums where the reality of language rights are put to display. They are also important because people have access to the law only through language. All reasonable and necessary steps to protect, promote and enhance all languages by officials at local, regional and national level, must be taken into account when addressing this complex issue.

5.13 Language planning institutions.

In order to facilitate delivery on reform in the new and democratic language policy, Act 200 of 1993 made provision for the establishment by Act of Parliament of the Pan South African Language Board. The Pan South African Language Board act, 1995: Act no. 59 of 1995 was subsequently promulgated and gazetted (No. 16726) on October 4, 1995. Item 8 (8) (a) and (b) of Act no. 59, 1995 in turn provided for the creation of provincial language committees to look into language services at provincial level for the Pan South African Language Board.

In response to this new dispensation, the Limpopo Province disbanded the old "Venda", "Tsonga" and "Pedi" language boards and sought to replace them with a new language structure which in time came to be known as the 'Northern Province Language Council'. (NPLC May 16, 1997). It serves to advise the Pan South African Language Board on any

language matter in or affecting the Province or any part thereof with respect to the languages used in the province; and shall perform such other functions as may be assigned to it by the Pan South African Language Board. The NPLC became ineffective and was passive for a while but was reactivated with a new leadership by the end of 1999 and then referred to as the Northern Province Language Committee (*now to be known as Limpopo Province Language Committee, LPLC*). According to Prof. C.N.Marivate (2000) this, and other such delays with other provincial language committees, happened because “a strategy was not developed as to how the Board would interact with the provincial structures and make use of their expertise and linguistic resources” (PANSALB, 2000.2).

Like other provinces were advised to do, the Limpopo Province Legislature also passed an act to provide for the determination of official languages in the Province; the establishment of the Limpopo Province Language Committee; to regulate and monitor the use of such languages; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

The programme of the LPLC for the year 2001 was as follows:

Table 5.5. Limpopo Province Language Council year programme.

DATE	ACTIVITY	VENUE
09 February 2001	meeting: ratification of the 2001 year plan, report on assignment given to PLC members during 2000	Pietersburg

22 February 2001	Consultative meeting for implementation of programmes emanating from report	Pietersburg
16 March 2001	Youth authorship workshop	Pietersburg
25 May 2001	Sign language and braille stakeholders's consultative meeting	Pietersburg
20-21 July 2001	Workshop on braille and sign language awareness	Warmbad
28 September 2001	Seminar on marginalised languages	Tzaneen
24 November 2001	Meeting: plans for 2002	Pietersburg

Source: LPLC year program from Prof. N.A. Milubi

The report on a survey of language infrastructure in National Government Departments and provinces of South Africa states that the provincial language committees have some advisory function as explained in the Government gazette no. 22451 as notice 112 of 2001. The survey was conducted in order to understand the financial implications of the language units as proposed in the Language Policy and Plan for South Africa (section 5, page 16). The province's Department of Sports, Arts and Culture has a language services section which translates and edits documents for the provincial departments. Like the national language services, it consists of a translation and editing section, a terminology section and a language planning section. (DACST, April 2001).

Beside this there is a non-governmental Committee for Marginalised Languages which includes Tshivenda, Xitsonga, siSwati and Northern Ndebele. Until now very little has been achieved by this committee but its existence is an indication of concern for language rights.

5.14 The vision and mission of the LPLC

The LPLC shall strive to serve the language needs of the people of Limpopo Province and the creation of conditions for the development and enjoyment of all languages and the furtherance of multilingualism in the Province and in South Africa, in accordance with the provisions of section 3 of Act 59 of 1995.

The mission of the LPLC will be:

1. To make grants available to any person wishing to develop and formulate a language policy for the Province that will stimulate the growth and the development of all languages used in the Province;
2. To foster respect for the understanding of the different languages of the Province;
3. To promote the use of these languages in the widest possible context in the furtherance of multilingualism;
4. To advise the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture on ways and means of implementing a national language policy and to identify areas where specific measures should be introduced.

For the sake of the policy proposal in Chapter 7, one needs to include a SWOT analysis of the five major languages. English will not be analysed like other languages as it commands very high status in the Province and occupies a dominant position and is therefore not comparable with the other languages. The following SWOT analysis is adopted from Webb (2000:13).

5.15 A SWOT analysis

a. Northern Sotho

Strengths

1. A strong language community of L1 speakers, 2 572 491.
2. Performs some high-functions as in formal instruction in schools and medium of religious practice.
3. Constitutional guarantees and national language committees and provincial language committees.
4. Reasonable language planning expertise as in PanSALB and the LPLC.
5. Mutually intelligible to two other South African languages, viz. Sesotho and Setswana.
6. Offered at universities and taught at primary and secondary schools.

Weaknesses.

1. Lacks technical and scientific vocabulary for high-function use.
2. Low prestige and negative self-esteem.
3. Absence of a comprehensive language policy and plan.

Opportunities.

1. Spirit of democratisation
2. Emphasis on the importance of development and thus the creation of opportunities to make a contribution.

Threats.

1. Uncertainty about the government's real commitment to the implementation of the constitutional language stipulations.
2. Lack of insight/understanding about the fundamental role language plays in public life.
3. Negative attitude in L1 is common and this is the major threat.
4. Over-appreciation of English by black South Africans. The knowledge of English is

viewed as a means to attain higher social and economic levels.

b. Xitsonga

Strengths.

1. Strong language community of L1 speakers, 1 102 472.
2. Performs some high functions as in formal instruction and medium of religion.
3. Constitutional guaranties and language specific committees.
4. Spoken in one other country, Mozambique.
5. It is offered at university and taught at primary and secondary schools.

Weaknesses.

1. Inadequate scientific and technical vocabulary.
2. Low status.
3. Negative self-esteem.
4. Absence of a comprehensive language policy.

Opportunities.

1. Spirit of democratization
2. Emphasis of the importance of development and thus the creation of opportunities to make a contribution.
3. Over appreciation of English among black South African.
4. Represented in the Committee for Marginalised Languages.
5. World wide support for minority languages.

Threats.

1. Uncertainty about the government's commitment to the implementation of the constitutional language stipulations.
2. The dominant position of English.
3. Lack of insight/understanding about the fundamental role language plays in public

life.

4. Dominance of Northern Sotho.

C. Tshivenda.

Strengths

1. A strong language community of L1 speakers, 757 683.
2. Performs high functions as in formal instruction and medium of religion.
3. Constitutional guarantee and language specific committees.
4. Offered at universities and taught at primary and secondary schools.
5. It is also spoken in Zimbabwe

Weaknesses.

1. Inadequate scientific and technical vocabulary.
2. Low status.
3. Negative self-esteem.
4. Absence of a comprehensive language policy.

Opportunities

1. Spirit of democratisation
2. Emphasis of the importance of development and thus the creation of opportunities for make a contribution.
3. Over appreciation of English by black South Africans.
4. Represented in the Committee for Marginalised Languages.
5. World wide support for minority languages.

Threats.

1. Uncertainty about the government's real commitment to the implementation of the constitutional language stipulations.
2. The dominant position of English

3. Lack of insight/understanding about the fundamental role language plays in public life.
4. Dominance of Northern Sotho.

Afrikaans.

Strengths

1. Dynamic group of young Afrikaner speakers who got rid of the previous exclusiveness of Afrikaans.
2. The language still performs several high functions as in formal instruction in education and medium in religion, politics and the economy.
3. Constitutional guarantees and essential language bodies: national language committees and language specific committees at provincial level eg. South African Language Academy for arts and Science.
4. Quality highly trained language planning expertise available.
5. Represented in the LPLC to promote the language.
6. Established culture/tradition of teaching in the language.
7. Sufficient teaching and learning materials (school books and curriculum).
8. Intellectually developed community of speakers.
9. Strong support and interest from foreign countries, eg. Netherlands.

Weaknesses

1. Negative social standing of Afrikaans among L2 speakers in Limpopo Province.
2. Absence of a comprehensive language policy.
3. Suspicion among non-Afrikaans speaking people that Afrikaans language activists are mainly interested in maintaining power and/or privileges.
4. Bad knowledge of African languages.

5. Divided language political community.

Opportunities

1. The spirit of reconciliation in the country.

2. The spirit of democratization.

3. Emphasis on the importance of development and thus the creation of opportunities to make a contribution.

4. Participation in the information era like the internet.

5. Availability and understanding of technological facilities.

6. Worldwide support for minority languages.

7. Negative language political oriented position of the African languages and therefore an opportunity to make a contribution.

Threats

1. Uncertainty about the government's real commitment to the implementation of the constitutional language stipulation.

2. Language oriented nationalism in Afrikaans communities.

3. Insufficient support among Afrikaans L1 communities for the upgrading/upliftment of the African languages.

4. The dominant position of English

5. Lack of insight/understanding about the fundamental role language plays in public life.

The chapter provided the socio-political context of the Limpopo Province and the sociolinguistic profile of the languages of the province, language families and language knowledge. The linguistic background provided revealed the linguistic complexity of the language situation. I then discussed multilingualism before giving the demographic

distribution, language functions, status, growth and shifts. I then discussed the corpus development, language planning institutions and provided a SWOT analysis of the language situation. The analysis gave the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the languages of the province. The information provided in this chapter will be used in proposing a language policy in Chapter 7. The next chapter is on educating for social transformation.