

“Taal op Tuks”
A reappraisal of the change in language policy at the
University of Pretoria, 1932

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Introduction

In 1932 the language policy of the University of Pretoria (UP) changed from a dual medium to an Afrikaans-only policy. In the official commemorative book, *Ad Destinatum 1910-1960*, published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Transvaal University College (TUC),¹ this event is discussed at great length and judging from the accounts given in this institutional history, as well as various contemporary Afrikaans and English newspapers of the time, this change in the language policy was not only a turning point in the history of UP, but also amounted to a highly controversial event that caused discord between various groups and individuals attached to the University.

This article will compare the account of the language question at UP as portrayed in *Ad Destinatum* with information from other sources, including Afrikaans and English newspaper reports, minutes of meetings of university bodies, oral and written testimonies of former students, as well as articles written on the language question at South African universities.² It also makes use of the relatively little used documentation of the University of Pretoria Archives.³ The aim of this article is to look at the value, as well as possible pitfalls in the use of official institutional histories in historical research. More specifically, the article will focus on

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1. Although classes at the Pretoria branch of the Transvaal University College already started in 1908, some people consider the actual founding only when the college received its own campus on the then eastern border of Pretoria in 1910.
2. J.C. Steyn, “Die taalstryd aan die Grey Universiteitskollege ten tyde van die rektoraat van D.F. Malherbe”, *Acta Academica*, 25, 4, 1993, pp 87-116; J.C. Steyn, “Die voertaalvraagstuk aan die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite tot ongeveer 1930”, *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Taalkunde*, 18, 1993, pp 225-274; J.C. Steyn, “’n Rektor skors sy voorganger – ’n onstuimige hoofstuk uit die taalstryd aan die UKOVS”, *Joernaal vir Eietydse Geskiedenis*, 20, 1, Junie 1995.
3. University of Pretoria Archives, Pretoria (hereafter UPA): A-7-1-1. Some of the latter documentation was only located as recently as 2007.

the way in which a particular school of historical writing can influence the interpretation of certain events in the past. It also points to the misrepresentation of a figure as prominent as General J.C. Smuts, due to the distinct political persuasion of the author of this institutional history.

Institutional histories

Institutional histories and university histories in particular, have developed over the past century from an amateur pastime of alumni and dedicated staff members, to a well-developed field of professional historical study.⁴ Official institutional histories can be useful in historical research, as these can give the researcher a broad overview of an institution's history and development. These accounts, however, have to be approached with caution and internal criticism should be applied to detect possible partialities and prejudices on the side of the author, while considering the nature and purpose of the work. Institutional histories are often written as part of the celebrations of a certain milestone in the institution's history and tend only to focus on the highlights and positive events of the institution. Furthermore, they are often commissioned and/or sponsored by the institution, and will therefore also be subject to approval of the authoritative body, which would like to promote a specific view of the institution.⁵

***Ad Destinatum* as a historical source**

Ad Destinatum 1910-1960 was published under the editorship of Professor C.H. Rautenbach, Rector of the University of Pretoria. Rautenbach's term stretched over two decades (1948-1969), making him

4. C.T. McIntire "Hegemony and the Historiography of Universities: The Toronto Case", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 72, 3, Summer 2003, pp 748-749. Examples of histories of South African universities written by professional historians are: B.K. Murray, *Wits: The Early Years: A History of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and its Precursors 1896-1939* (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1982); B.K. Murray, *Wits: The "Open" Years. A History of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 1939-1959* (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1997) and H. Phillips, *The University of Cape Town 1918-1948: the formative years* (University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1993). In the foreword to *Wits: The "Open" Years*, R.W. Charlton points out that extensive archival material as well as oral histories from former students and staff were used in the compilation of the history of the University of the Witwatersrand where the warts were "once again in plain sight".
5. J.W.N. Tempelhoff, *Verhuidiglike verlede. Die hermeneutiese verstaansmetode in Geskiedenis* (Kleio, Vanderbijlpark, 2002), p 92; R. Winks (ed), *History and historiography* (Garland Publishing, New York & London, 1984), pp 46-47.

the longest serving rector in the history of the university. During his tenure, the university grew from a small tertiary institution to the largest residential university in South Africa. With the economic boom that the country enjoyed after the Second World War (1939-1945), accompanied with the National Party coming into power in 1948, Afrikaans institutions such as the university enjoyed tremendous support from the state. Rautenbach was proud to stand at the helm of what he affectionately called the *Volksuniversiteit*,⁶ and as a staunch supporter of the National Party and its Republican ideals, and member of the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB) – a secret society which, “worked towards the healthy and progressive unanimity amongst all Afrikaners and for the well-being of the Afrikaner nation”⁷ – he had the necessary influence and contacts that could benefit the university, especially on a financial level.⁸ As *Ad Destinatum* was commissioned by the University Council and funded by the university, Rautenbach would probably have had a large say in the content and scope of the book.

The author of *Ad Destinatum* was Professor A.N. Pelzer, head of the History Department from 1947 to 1970, when he was promoted to Academic Registrar and finally to Vice-Rector.⁹ The Department of History was one of the first departments to be established when the Transvaal University College (TUC) was founded. Already with the appointment of Professor Leo Fouché as Head of the Department in 1908, Afrikaner Nationalists felt that history should be dedicated to *volksgeskiedenis* and actually play a leading role in exposing and converting students to Afrikaner nationalism.¹⁰ As this was contrary to Fouché’s aim of objectivity in historical research, he was treated as an outcast and resigned from the university in February 1934.¹¹ In reaction to the “broad South Africanism”¹² that Fouché ascribed to, the

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6. F. van der Watt, *Rectores Magnifici* (Protea Boekhuis, Pretoria, 2003), p 102.
 7. A.N. Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond: Eerste 50 Jaar* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1979), p 10.
 8. Van der Watt, *Rectores Magnifici*, pp 92-107.
 9. F.A. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism. Essays on the History Department of the University of Pretoria, 1909-1985* (Kleio, Vanderbijlpark, 2007), p 97.
 10. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 14, 28.
 11. A. Grundlingh, “Politics, Principles and Problems of a Profession: Afrikaner Historians and their Discipline, c.1920-c.1965”, *Perspectives in Education*, 12, 1, 1990, pp 1-19.
 12. According to General Louis Botha “broad South Africanism” entailed that: “Whoever had chosen South Africa as a home should regard themselves as children from one family and be known as South Africans.” H.W. van der Merwe (ed), *Looking at the Afrikaner today* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1975), p 20.

Department became involved in the promotion of Afrikaner nationalism,¹³ especially after the National Party came into power. This brought about a stagnant and simplistic view of history, as the focus was solely on the “heroic” past of the Afrikaner.¹⁴

When Pelzer became Head of Department in 1947, after Professor I.D. Bosman’s sudden death, he was only 32-years old and he had not obtained his doctorate yet. His “impeccable credentials as a true and trusted Afrikaner and his membership of the AB”¹⁵ outweighed any doubt about his academic and administrative capabilities.¹⁶ Although Pelzer did not adhere to any specific school of historiography, his views were in line with the ruling National Party’s ideology. He shared the view of Doctor D.F. Malan (leader of the National Party, 1934-1952) that the Afrikaner historian had an important role to play in the Afrikaner’s political, economic, spiritual and cultural mobilisation. With the revival of Afrikaner nationalism after the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938, the emphasis was placed on the Afrikaner’s separate identity and nationality, coupled with the view that the Afrikaner was the only true South African people and nation. The Afrikaner’s past was seen as a “sacred” history, in that the Afrikaner was regarded to be God’s chosen people with a special destiny in South Africa. This also served as a historical justification for policies such as apartheid and anti-Communism.¹⁷ As this interpretation of history primarily gave a nostalgic and idealised view of the Afrikaner’s past, it turned history into merely “a handmaiden of Afrikaner nationalism”.¹⁸ There was no room for new developments in historiography or criticism against the Afrikaner, and therefore offered a very limited and narrow-minded interpretation of the past.¹⁹

The account of the history of the university in general, and specifically the language question at the TUC/UP given in *Ad Destinatum*, is in line with Afrikaner nationalist historiography. As

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13. Grundlingh, “Politics, Principles and Problems”, pp 1-19.
 14. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, p 28; F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Afrikanergeskiedskrywing: verlede, hede en toekoms* (Lex Patria, Johannesburg, 1992), p 61.
 15. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, p 96.
 16. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 89-96, 107; Van Jaarsveld, *Afrikanergeskiedskrywing*, pp 57-58.
 17. Van der Merwe (ed), *Looking at the Afrikaner today*, pp 22-24.
 18. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, p 119.
 19. Grundlingh, “Politics, Principles and Problems”, pp 1-19; Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 119-120; Van Jaarsveld, *Afrikanergeskiedskrywing*, p 61.

with the latter, not only the decision to adopt an Afrikaans-only language policy, but the entire history of the University up to 1932 is portrayed as a struggle against and finally a victory for the Afrikaans-speaking community over the deliberate negation and suppression of the Afrikaners and their mother tongue by British imperialist authorities and the supporters of British imperialism.²⁰

According to *Ad Destinatum*, the move away from a bilingual to an Afrikaans-only policy was historically predestined and justifiable, as it was a natural progression that happened according to the wishes of the majority. In *Ad Destinatum* it is stated that the fact that the university became an Afrikaans-only institution should not have come as a surprise, but rather the fact that it took so long to achieve this, which was due to discrimination from the national and university authorities.²¹

The aspects as set out in *Ad Destinatum* that will be considered in the following sections are the allegation that the change in language policy was according to the wishes of the majority of students; the allegation that it was due to the denial of the Afrikaans-speaking population's rights that it took so long to achieve this change in policy; and the way in which Jan Smuts, founder of the TUC, as well as the Rector at the time of the change in the language policy, namely Professor A.E. du Toit, are portrayed in *Ad Destinatum*.

Background to the language question: on a national level and at the TUC/UP

The recognition of their mother tongue had since the late nineteenth century become increasingly important to most Afrikaners. In the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), which dealt a heavy blow to the Afrikaner's dream of independence, some Afrikaners attached an added significance to the recognition of the Afrikaans language. The policy of Anglicisation that Lord Alfred Milner (the post-war High Commissioner in South Africa) implemented on a constitutional, economic and educational level, resulted in Afrikaners believing that their linguistic identity was intrinsically part of their dream of regaining independence.²² In the words of J. Fisher: "The Afrikaans [language]

20. C.H. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960* (Voortrekkerpers Beperk, Johannesburg, 1960), pp 8-82.

21. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 48.

22. J. Fisher, *The Afrikaners* (Cassell, London, 1969), pp 198, 200; H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2003), pp 268-272; W.K. Hancock, *Smuts. The Sanguine Years 1970-1919* (University Press, Cambridge, 1969),

movement, more than any other, contained the dynamic force of Afrikaner nationalism”.²³

It is true that the promotion of the Afrikaans language enjoyed support from many Afrikaans and English speakers. Despite Milner’s Anglicisation policy, the use of Afrikaans grew steadily in all sectors after the South African War. The first Afrikaans dictionary was published in 1917; in 1918 a professorate in Afrikaans was instituted at Grey College and in 1925 Afrikaans became the official language, in the place of Dutch, when the Act of Union, which ensured equal rights for English and Dutch, was amended after a unanimous vote in the National Assembly.²⁴

However, amongst Afrikaners there were those who, though passionate about their mother tongue, did not feel that it should be part of the political arena.²⁵ In a letter to the *Rand Daily Mail*, Professor E.H. Brookes²⁶, lecturer in Native Law and Administration at the TUC who initially supported the move to grant greater recognition to the Afrikaans language, pointed out that “many English-speaking South Africans remain ignorant to this day of the depth of passionate loyalty towards the Afrikaans language and all it stands for, not only among ‘extremists’ but also among broad-minded and tolerant Dutch South Africans.”²⁷

In these differing responses to the language question, lay the seeds of political discord, which would play a crucial role in the unfolding of events not only at the TUC, but on a national level as well. Although the accepted policy of the TUC, as put forward in a statement by the General Purpose Committee in 1918, was to keep itself entirely outside the arena

p 360; Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 21-22; J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of Southern Africa* (James Currey Ltd, London, 1987), pp 148-149; F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Van Van Riebeeck tot Verwoerd 1652-1966* (Voortrekkerpers Beperk, Johannesburg, 1971), p 211; F. Welsh, *South Africa. A narrative history* (Kodansha America, New York, 1999), p 344.

23. Fisher, *The Afrikaners*, pp 198, 200.

24. Fisher, *The Afrikaners*, p 266.

25. Hancock, *Smuts*, p 360; Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 21-22; *Pretoria News*, 12 September 1922 (Fouling our own nest. Facts about the TUC).

26. Professor Brookes was a staunch republican who supported South Africa’s independence from the British Empire and felt that the annexation of the two Boer republics by Britain in 1900 was an international outrage.

27. *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 July 1932 (To the Editor).

of party politics and propaganda,²⁸ and it was “firmly convinced that any departure from this principle would be fatal to an institution which prides itself on being truly representative of the Union as a whole and less provincial or sectional in character than any other University or University College in South Africa”,²⁹ the College and subsequently the University of Pretoria were also troubled by serious political divisions. Unfortunately, the language question also came to serve, in the words of Professor Brookes as “a cloak for personal or party favouritism”,³⁰ and as a vehicle through which these differences were expressed.³¹

Change according to the wishes of the majority

The claim made in *Ad Destinatum* that the policy change was historically predestined and justifiable, as it was a natural progression from a double to a single medium institution that happened according to the wishes of the majority of students, can be questioned.³²

On a national level, bilingual universities initially received the support of both the South African and National Parties. In 1912, the Minister of Education, F.S. Malan, pleaded for bilingual institutions, because he believed it to be of great importance for the future of the country that the youth of both sections would come into contact with one another in order to learn to understand and respect one another.³³ In 1918, in a circular written by the Under-Secretary for Education on behalf of the Minister of Education, it was stated that: “The bilingual student is to be regarded as the normal student.”³⁴ Speaking at the second annual graduation ceremony of the University of South Africa in 1920, the Superintendent-General of Education of the Cape Province, Doctor W.J. Viljoen, said that though separate medium teaching might develop,

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28. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of the 135th Ordinary Monthly Meeting of Senate held on Wednesday, the 13th of June 1923; UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Adjourned Meeting of Senate held on Wednesday the 20th of June 1923.
 29. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Adjourned Meeting of Senate held on Wednesday the 20th of June 1923.
 30. *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 July 1932 (To the Editor).
 31. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 48-73; *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 June 1932 (A poor look-out for learning); *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 July 1932 (To the Editor); Hancock, *Smuts*, pp 176-179; Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 21-22.
 32. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 48.
 33. Steyn, “Die voertaalvraagstuk aan die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite”, pp 238-239.
 34. UPA: B-5-1-1: Copy of circular from Under Secretary for Education – The Medium of Instruction at University Colleges, 1918.

parallel medium universities should, both on economic grounds and from the point of view of efficiency, remain the preferred medium.³⁵ Doctor D.F. Malan, leader of the NP in the Cape, stated in the National Assembly on 5 June 1923 that the tendency in the country to develop single medium universities was undesirable and Patrick Duncan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Health, agreed with Malan that “two races should not be separated on university level. This can only be avoided if both languages are used. It is the right of students of every race to receive education in their own language, but deplorable if that means that the two races have to separate”. Malan succeeded Duncan in 1924 as Minister and he maintained the policy of dual medium institutions. Only a year before, UP adopted an Afrikaans-only policy. S.F.N. Gie, Secretary of Education, in a memorandum to all universities asked for steps to be taken to ensure that language rights of both sections of the population would be maintained sufficiently.³⁶

Events in South Africa surrounding the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918), such as the branding of members of the Afrikaans-speaking community as “rebels” because of their refusal to participate in the war on the side of Britain and the execution of their leaders by the government, reignited Afrikaner nationalist aspirations amongst numerous Afrikaans speakers,³⁷ some of whom were students and lecturers at the TUC. In the aftermath of the war, the Senate informed the University Council about a “considerable amount of unrest amongst the College students as regards the language medium”.³⁸ However, to interpret certain events that happened on the campus during this time as proof that the majority of the Afrikaans-speaking student body was in favour of an Afrikaans-only language policy, fails to explain the complexity of and problems surrounding the language question adequately.³⁹

According to *Ad Destinatum*, the first class presented in Afrikaans in 1917 by Professor D.F. du Toit Malherbe indicated that the institution

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35. *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 April 1920 (South African University. Remarkable development of the colleges).
 36. Steyn, “Die voertaalvraagstuk aan die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite”, pp 238-239.
 37. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 379-381.
 38. Minutes of the 91st Monthly Meeting of the Transvaal University College Council, held in Sir John Wessels’ Chambers on Tuesday, the 7th of May 1918, at 4.30 pm, *aangehaal in* Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 51.
 39. J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of Southern Africa* (James Currey Ltd, London, 1987), pp 165-166; Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 52-53.

was moving naturally to an Afrikaans-only medium.⁴⁰ This event received a lot of attention in the newspaper *Die Volkstem* of 12 April 1918, and the student magazine *Studenteblad* of June 1918. An article in the student magazine praised Professor Malherbe for his example and expressed the hope that the drive to make the TUC an Afrikaans institution would become less apologetic.⁴¹ Whether Professor Malherbe's actions were politically-driven and aimed at establishing Afrikaans as the only medium, or merely in line with the advancement of Afrikaans on a national level, is not clear. As he was a member of the South African Party⁴², which ascribed to a policy of a "broad South Africanism", his motives could have been influenced by the latter. What is interesting to note, however, is that other lecturers who also supported the move to present lectures in Afrikaans, such as Professor L. Fouché, who was one of the first lecturers to present classes in Afrikaans and Dutch, and Professor Brookes, as an English speaker, are not mentioned in this regard in *Ad Destinatum*.⁴³ They did not side with the Afrikaner nationalistic movement, but were in favour of a more moderate "broad South African spirit".⁴⁴

The article published in the student magazine *Studenteblad* of 1918, which according to *Ad Destinatum* proves that from the students' side, there was outright support for a policy change, is given too much importance and is also quoted out of context. This article is one of only four out of twenty-three articles where the question of tuition in Afrikaans is mentioned. Although the differences between Afrikaner and English students are discussed, the plea from the author for separate development is not in terms of language, but religion, as the author feels that the English-based education system is founded on non-religious, scientific principles.⁴⁵

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40. Prof. Malherbe also published a booklet entitled "Skeikundige Terminologie" in April 1918 to help students who came from English medium schools, a chemistry textbook in Afrikaans and in 1932 an Afrikaans-English dictionary for Natural Sciences and Mathematics – *Skakelblad*, 2, 3, Oktober 1955, p 29.
 41. Skrywer onbekend, "Besware teen die gees van onse eeu", *TUK Studenteblad/TUC Students' Magazine*, 2, 3, Junie/June 1918, p 20; Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 50.
 42. UPA: D-6-5-1-6-22: UP Argief Alumniversameling: Brief van W.J. du P. Erlank, 21 September 1974.
 43. Due to the animosity towards them from Afrikaner Nationalist quarters, both Professor Brooks and Professor Fouché resigned from the University of Pretoria, respectively in 1933 and 1934.
 44. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, p 12.
 45. Skrywer onbekend, "Besware teen die gees van onse eeu", *TUK Studenteblad/TUC Students' Magazine*, 2, 3, Junie/June 1918, p 19.

The account in *Ad Destinatum* maintains that the outbreak of influenza in 1918, which necessitated the early closure of the college,⁴⁶ limited any further student reaction against the language policy. Moreover, when it was reopened in 1919, the lack of public peace celebrations on the TUC grounds was attributed to fear of the rebel element amongst the Afrikaans-speaking students. In neither the Senate's, nor the Council's minutes any reference is made of such a rebel element. From reports in the *Pretoria News*, it seems that the peace celebrations were aimed at including the largest possible section of the population and were therefore centred around the railway station and Church Square, as well as the Union Buildings. The TUC grounds were then on the eastern outskirts of the town and the fact that no specific mention is made of the TUC in the programme does not necessarily give weight to the claim made in *Ad Destinatum*.⁴⁷

According to *Ad Destinatum*, not only were the battles of the First World War, but also the "titanic struggles" of the Anglo-Boer War re-enacted on campus after a Union Jack that had been hoisted on campus, was torn down and burnt by a group of Afrikaans-speaking students.⁴⁸ Whether the flag was actually burnt, or just lowered by an Afrikaans-speaking student in protest against some English-speaking students hoisting the flag on campus without the TUC authorities' permission, is not clear, as there are conflicting reports on this event.⁴⁹ In later years, however, one of the students who allegedly took part in the so-called "flag burning incident" ascribed his actions rather to student boisterousness than to Afrikaner nationalist sentiments.⁵⁰

Even after the Rector, Professor Du Toit, announced in 1929 that Afrikaans would become the only medium of instruction, the ideal of a

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46. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Special Meeting of Senate held on 25th of October 1918.
 47. *Pretoria News*, 8 August 1919 (Peace Celebrations. Pretoria's successful effort).
 48. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 52.
 49. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 52; UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Senate held in the Board Room at 2.30 pm on Wednesday the 27th of August 1919; UPA: B-4-1-1: Minutes of the 106th Monthly Meeting of the Transvaal University College Council, held in the Mayor's Parlour on Thursday the 22nd of August 1919, at 4.30 pm; *Pretoria News*, 12 August 1919 (Mutilating the Union Jack); *Pretoria News*, 14 August 1919 (Mutilating the Union Jack); *Pretoria News*, 15 August 1919 (The Union Jack).
 50. UPA: D-6-5-1-6-22: UP Argief Alumniversameling: Brief van W.J. du P. Erlank, 21 September 1974.

bilingual institution lived on.⁵¹ Amongst the students and the general public, there was also a far greater spirit of broad-mindedness than is portrayed in *Ad Destinatum*.⁵² The claim that Professor Du Toit acted according to the wishes of the majority of students who wanted to receive tuition in Afrikaans and that the only opposition was received from the English-speaking section of the population,⁵³ which constituted a minority, is not entirely true. In 1922 at a general meeting of the Students Representative Council, which was so well attended that the invited members of the Senate had difficulty in finding seats in the college hall, students from both language groups testified to the complete harmony that existed between the two sections and not a single voice was raised “in defence of uni-lingualism”.⁵⁴ In letters to the press and at a meeting of the Extramural Student Council after Professor Du Toit’s statement in 1929, members of the Afrikaans-speaking public and students voiced their dissatisfaction about the decision.⁵⁵

Were the Afrikaans speakers who were opposed an Afrikaans-only policy indeed traitors to the Afrikaner nationalist ideal, as they were labelled by some other Afrikaners?⁵⁶ On the contrary, they saw

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51. An advertisement in the *Cape Times* of February 1932 read: “The only FULLY BILINGUAL university institution in South Africa” and an article in the *Pretoria News* of 16 February 1932, with the heading “An Experiment in Conciliation”, stated that: “Within its [University of Pretoria] walls young Briton and young Afrikaner can meet and, without sacrificing one iota of aught of worth in either.”
 52. At the 1928 Initiation Social the Mayor, Councillor C.M. de Vries, gave his speech in English. His reason was that at a recent function at Sonop he had spoken in Afrikaans and he wished to meet the criticisms of all objectors. “Some detractors said that the TUC was purely English ... while others described it as anti-British. In reality it was neither; the professors were endeavouring to instil the principles of the League of Nations into these young men, to make of this University a meeting ground for Dutch and English, and to teach them to respect each other. The lads who came there were sportsmen or if they were not so when they joined, they soon became sportsmen and they learned to pick their teams on non-racial lines. This University will, in my opinion, become one of the greatest factors in South Africa in settling the racial question.” – *Pretoria News*, 12 March 1928 (TUC Initiation. Rector deprecates criticism from outside).
 53. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 68.
 54. *Pretoria News*, 19 September 1922 (“Language and the TUC. Students’ scheme. Bilingualism: the ideal).
 55. UPA: D-11-3-2-2: Buitemuurse notule 13 April 1932; *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”); *Pretoria News*, 13 September 1932 (The Students’ View).
 56. Interview with Mrs J. Claassens (née Wessels), Pretoria, 2 April 2006; Interview with Mrs L.T. Groenewald, Pretoria, 12 April 2006.

themselves as true Afrikaners, many of whom, or whose parents fought on the side of the Boers during the Anglo-Boer War and who endured the hardships of the concentration camps. Some also considered themselves politically to be Nationalists.⁵⁷ They ascribed to the ideal of reconciliation between the two language groups and were of the opinion that national recovery would only be possible “through mutual understanding and goodwill”⁵⁸ and “a new national consciousness ... could only arise out of a bilingual basis”.⁵⁹ For this reason, Afrikaans and Dutch-speaking parents sent their children to bilingual institutions.⁶⁰ They felt that the “formenters of racehatred”, and not they, were the national enemies and traitors to the future of South Africa and they accused the university of “turning its back on all those who had believed in it on account of its ideals”.⁶¹ The students, in particular, felt that the racial differences belonged to a past generation. As students they “should stand together for the ideals of a South African race” and for something that would be greater and truer than either Afrikaner Nationalist or British imperialist ideals, namely “the liberal South Africa”.⁶²

Denial of the Afrikaans language

As has already been mentioned, the only obstacle in the way of the natural development towards an Afrikaans-only institution according to *Ad Destinatum*, was the efforts of the British imperialist authorities to suppress the use of the language.⁶³ Lord Milner’s Anglicisation policy was aimed at phasing out the use of Afrikaans and thus ensuring that the young generation would be loyal British citizens. With the coming to power of the Liberal Party in 1905 and the granting of self-government to

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57. *Pretoria News*, 26 May 1932; *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”); Interview with Mrs J. Claassens (née Wessels), Pretoria, 2 April 2006.
 58. *Pretoria News*, 16 February 1932 (The University of Pretoria. An Experiment in Conciliation); S.J.C. Wessels & S.F.G. Wessels, *Die nageslag van Jan Wessels* (S.F.G. Wessels, Stellenbosch, 1999).
 59. *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1932 (Afrikaans only. Pretoria Students’ Bit Protest).
 60. J.C. Steyn, *Taalstryd aan die Grey Universiteitskollege*, p 99; Interview with Mrs J. Claassens (née Wessels), Pretoria, 2 April 2006.
 61. UPA: D-11-3-2-2: Buitemuurse Studenteraad Notules/Extra Mural Students’ Representative Council Minutes of Meetings 1932; *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1932 (Afrikaans only. Pretoria Students’ Bit Protest).
 62. Author unknown, “South Africa and the Afrikaner”, *The TUC Students Magazine/Studenteblad van die TUK*, 1, 1, November 1912, pp 14-17; *Pretoria News*, 16 February 1932 (The University of Pretoria. An Experiment in Conciliation).
 63. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 8-82.

South Africa, this policy fell by the way-side. From certain sectors of the English-speaking community animosity against Afrikaans was experienced, for example an anonymous letter that was published in an English newspaper, which concluded that Afrikaans was inferior to be used as a scientific language and the “Sons of England Society” protesting against “the grant of Municipal Funds to the Transvaal University College, whilst” Afrikaans is used as a medium of instruction.⁶⁴ However, from the start of classes at the Pretoria branch of the TUC, efforts were made to accommodate both English and Dutch or Afrikaans, even though the majority of classes were still presented in English. Not only at the TUC, but on a national level, Afrikaans did not receive the same recognition as English.⁶⁵ In *Ad Destinatum*⁶⁶ this imbalance is interpreted as a deliberate attempt from the English-speaking community to deny Afrikaners the right to receive instruction in their mother tongue. Examples of discrimination referred to in *Ad Destinatum*, are the actions of Professor A.C. Paterson, principal from 1919-1923,⁶⁷ as well as the University Senate and Council’s efforts to address the language question.⁶⁸

In 1920, a group of students asked that certain lectures be given in Afrikaans, but the request was denied. In 1921, the parents of four English-speaking students informed Professor Paterson that their children would be sent to another university unless all first year lectures were in English and without approaching the Senate, he made provision for these students. In 1923, however, he did make an allowance to present some History lectures in Afrikaans, but only after it became known that a group of students wanted to leave for Grey University College to receive tuition in Afrikaans. At a following meeting of the Senate, Professor J.E. Holloway, professor in Economics, tabled a motion of no-confidence against Paterson. Although this motion was not accepted, Paterson’s position was weakened and in October 1923 he was not reinstated as Rector.⁶⁹

Even though this incident, according to *Ad Destinatum*, is proof of discrimination, there are other factors to consider as well. The reason why Professor Paterson made the decision to grant the English students

64. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 54.

65. Steyn, “Die voertaalvraagstuk aan die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite”, pp 243-245.

66. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 48-68.

67. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 54.

68. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 55-58.

69. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 54.

their request without consulting the Senate, was due to the fact that it had happened during the December holiday, when most of the members of Senate had not been available. This was apparently not the first occasion on which the Rector had to make an important decision without an input from the Senate.⁷⁰

The reason why the Afrikaans students' request was denied in 1920, but subsequently granted in 1923, was to a large extent due to the poor financial situation at the TUC. Insufficient funds hampered the appointment of personnel and many staff members had to lecture in a number of subjects.⁷¹ Duplication of lectures would have placed an unfair demand on them.⁷² Most of the funding for the TUC came from the English-speaking community. Unfortunately the names of the four English-speaking students who demanded lectures in English are not known, and therefore it cannot be determined whether the parents were donors to the college, a fact that could have determined Professor Paterson's decision. Faced with increasing demands from the students for better facilities, Professor Paterson would have been ill-advised to alienate the donors.⁷³ On the other hand, he went to great lengths to prevent the expulsion of W.J. du P. Erlank, the student implicated in the flag-burning incident in 1919.⁷⁴ He was fully aware of the effects of political tension between the two language groups⁷⁵ and was known to have steered clear of "making this college a field of political speculation".⁷⁶ If one also considers his dedication to and hard work on behalf of the college, it is difficult to imagine that he would act in a manner that would jeopardize the future of the institution.⁷⁷

70. UPA: A-7-1-1: Letter of Professor J.E. Holloway to Professor A.N. Pelzer.

71. UPA: A-7-1-1: Letter of Professor J.E. Holloway to Professor A.N. Pelzer.

72. An example is the case of the History Department where up to 1923, Professor L. Fouché was the only lecturer. He also had to lecture in Ethics, Logics, Psychology and Political Science. Because his health suffered seriously under the workload, another lecturer was appointed in 1923 and therefore the duplication of lectures could be justified.

73. *Sunday Times*, 22 February 1920 (Transvaal University College Munificent Donations); *Cape Times*, February 1921 (Tranvaal University. Progress in 1920).

74. UPA: D-6-5-1-6-22: UP Argief Alumniversameling: Brief van W.J. du P. Erlank, 21 September 1974.

75. In a visit to the country after his emigration to New Zealand, he was quoted in a newspaper interview as saying that South Africa was still a terrible country for politics – *Pretoria News*, 4 April 1928 (Professor Paterson on New Zealand).

76. UPA: D-6-5-1-6-22: UP Argief Alumniversameling: Brief van W.J. du P. Erlank, 21 September 1974.

77. Van der Watt, *Rectores Magnifici*, pp 19-25; *Die Volkstem*, 22 September 1928 (TUK se nuwe rektor. Verrassing vir professore. Prof. A.C. Paterson benoem).

Professor Holloway's actions can also be interpreted in light of the fact that by the late 1920s, the Afrikaner nationalists started to gain a foothold in the College Council, and by 1929 they secured control of both the Senate and the Council. This facilitated the election of Professor A.E. du Toit, who was a fiery nationalist, and the movement to an Afrikaans institution.⁷⁸

In *Ad Destinatum*, the University Council and Senate are accused of deliberately dragging their feet on the language issue and by issuing "vague" statements that the public and students could be fooled in believing that both of these bodies were trying to address the issue, while in fact they probably never intended to give Afrikaans the same recognition as English.⁷⁹ However, already in 1918, the Senate looked into the language question and concluded unanimously that a policy of "English Medium only" was no longer possible. The Senate's investigation also showed that "Dutch Medium only" was asked for neither by Dutch, nor English students. The Senate also felt that such a policy would be detrimental to "the general welfare and development of the College"⁸⁰, as it was considered to be "bad policy to estrange the English section of Pretoria and the rest of the country from the TUC".⁸¹ Furthermore, it was felt that such a decision would "strengthen the hands of Johannesburg in the matter of a rival Agricultural Faculty and in general their Arts and Science Departments."⁸² It was decided that each case had to be considered on its merits, "in a method of give and take and in relying on the good sense of the students and the public not to demand the impossible and unattainable."⁸³

The matter was also referred to the College Council and in a report to the Minister of Education, they provided seven possible solutions to the matter. In the light of the comprehensiveness of the investigation and the various options that they considered, it is difficult to believe that they did not take the matter very seriously and did not go to great lengths to

78. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, p 21; Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 48-58.

79. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 55-56.

80. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Special Meeting of Senate held on the 21st of May 1918, to consider Deputation re Language question.

81. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Special Meeting of Senate held on the 21st of May 1918, to consider Deputation re Language question.

82. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Special Meeting of Senate held on the 21st of May 1918, to consider Deputation re Language question.

83. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Special Meeting of Senate held on the 21st of May 1918, to consider Deputation re Language question.

solve it in a manner acceptable to all parties concerned. The possible solutions listed in the report, were the following:

1. The medium had to remain English, which would solve many problems, including financial problems, but would cause the animosity of Afrikaans-speaking students, and was in any case not fair to them. Many students came from secondary schools of Dutch medium and would therefore have found it very difficult to change medium at this stage.
2. Each lecturer had to ask at the beginning of the course what the preferred language would be and present the lectures in the language of choice. This would mean that the minority would suffer in some way.
3. A lecturer for both the majority and the minority. The possibility however existed that one lecturer would be better qualified than the other – very real at this time when lecturers were very scarce.
4. Bilingual lecturers had to present classes in both languages, which would entail the duplication of classes. The question remained what had to be done with lecturers who were not bilingual, although many of them were otherwise very competent?
5. In subjects where duplication was required, lecturers of equal ability had to be appointed, but that would be a “very expensive undertaking” and the Senate was “doubtful whether the Government would be prepared to accede to such a request.” It seemed to be the ideal solution, but had serious financial implications.
6. All professors appointed had to be bilingual, lectures would be presented in both languages with a bilingual assistant for each professor. This would be less expensive than duplication, but not all lecturers were perfectly bilingual.
7. Choose the language of the majority of students. This would lead to the firing of professors who were not able to speak that specific language and would forfeit students who could not speak that language either. This would mean that the college would become Dutch and English students would have to leave – for many subjects this meant that not Johannesburg, but Cape Town would be the college of choice.”⁸⁴

The Council also indicated in the covering letter of the report that it was not in favour of having to show any language group away, as such an

84. Steyn, “Die voertaalvraagstuk aan die Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite”, pp 239-241.

action would defeat the objects of the college, namely that both languages should co-exist in harmony. In addition it issued a statement underlining that “the ideal solution of the difficulty is a duplication of teaching-staff”, despite the financial strain under which it would place the college. It was decided “to urge the Minister ... even if this should have to be considered a temporary measure – [of] the necessity of appointing, wherever the call exists, additional professors able to impart tuition through the Dutch medium”, which resulted in several subjects being presented in both languages, depending on the willingness and ability of each individual lecturer. Another measure that was taken, was to make lecture notes available in both languages where possible.⁸⁵ In 1923, when possible candidates for the vacant position of Rector were being considered, it was decided at senate level that the Rector had to be bilingual, as he was the representative of the university, the Senate, the Council and the student body.⁸⁶

As was the case at Grey University College⁸⁷, practical considerations did play a role in favouring English over Afrikaans, namely the availability of textbooks, the fact that some lecturers and students only spoke English and that even the Afrikaans lecturers doubted their ability to lecture in Afrikaans, since there was no established Afrikaans terminology.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the cost of duplicating lectures would have been too much of a financial burden for the fledgling college to carry.⁸⁹

85. These measures are indicated in the TUC yearbooks. In 1923, Zoology lectures were still presented in English only, but notes, as well as practical work were available in Afrikaans. In 1925 Botany II and III were presented in Afrikaans only, but “notes will be supplied in English”.

86. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of a Meeting of the ad hoc Committee of Senate appointed to redraft the functions of the Rector, held in the Registrar’s Office at 2.30 pm on Wednesday the 26th of September 1923.

87. Steyn, “Die taalstryd aan die Grey Universiteitskollege”, pp 96-97.

88. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 53-54; Steyn, “Die taalstryd aan die Grey Universiteitskollege”, p 90.

89. UPA: B-5-1-1: Minutes of an Adjourned Meeting of Senate held on Wednesday the 20th of June 1923. “The policy of the College with regard to the medium of instruction is to subordinate considerations of medium to the maintenance of the highest possible efficiency in the work of the College, but subject to this to do all it can to meet the legitimate claims of both sections of the population. The granting of further facilities for instruction in either medium is entirely dependent on the provision of further funds. The College is prepared to duplicate lectures in any subject, if funds, specially earmarked for the purpose are made available by the public.”

The supporters of the bilingual policy condemned an Afrikaans-only language policy as a “heavy handicap to the Afrikaans student”⁹⁰ and felt that instruction “exclusively through an Afrikaans medium must end in disaster for him”.⁹¹ It was argued that the Afrikaner lagged behind his English-speaking counterpart in the economic and business sector, as well as in public service, and they were of the opinion that a bilingual education would “equip the young Afrikaner for the battle of public life”⁹² and that a “university catering for both sections would provide more scope for development”.⁹³

Personalities involved in the advancement of Afrikaans at TUC/UP

a. Professor A.E. du Toit’s role in the language question

In *Ad Destinatum*, Professor A.E. du Toit is credited as being the person responsible for the UP becoming an Afrikaans-only institution. This account portrays Du Toit as the champion of the Afrikaner cause, who had the courage to stand up against the discrimination from the predominantly English-speaking University Council.⁹⁴ However, newspaper reports and minutes of meetings of the Senate add a different perspective to the question.

In 1929, at the opening of the academic year, the Rector’s address was given in Afrikaans for the first time. In his address, Professor Du Toit stated that it was time to finalise the language question. According to Du Toit, the TUC was in service of the mostly rural, Afrikaans-speaking population of the Transvaal and therefore an Afrikaans-only policy would be the best practical solution.⁹⁵ In an article in the *Pretoria News* of the same year, the contrary was claimed, namely that as “... the University of the rural Transvaal, the TUC must necessarily be bilingual and agricultural in outlook.”⁹⁶

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90. *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”).
 91. *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”); *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1932.
 92. *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”).
 93. *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1932 (Pretoria faces a crisis).
 94. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 56-71.
 95. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 57.
 96. *Pretoria News*, 27 May 1929 (The TUC and Pretoria).

From a financial point of view, the University would definitely have benefitted from single medium instruction.⁹⁷ However, even though the majority of students were Afrikaans-speaking, not all favoured instruction in Afrikaans only. In 1929, the majority of students were still in favour of a fifty-fifty policy, and the student councils of both the day and extra-mural students, in a joint memorandum to the Council and Senate, asked that the “equality of languages” should be maintained.⁹⁸

At this time, Professor Du Toit realised that he would have greater freedom with regard to such decisions only if the TUC was granted university status. On 10 October 1930, the TUC officially became the University of Pretoria and the Rector actively started promoting a change in the language policy.⁹⁹ The fact that he made no secret of his pro-Afrikaans sentiments and his hope that Afrikaans would become the sole medium of instruction at the TUC, made Du Toit a controversial figure and it had cost him the position of Rector after Professor Paterson’s resignation in 1921. At that time, the University Council had felt that they could not alienate the English-speaking community on whose donations the institution depended. Du Toit was temporarily appointed as Acting Rector in 1927 and permanently in 1929, despite serious misgivings from the Council.¹⁰⁰ His appointment in 1929 was, according to *Ad Destinatum*, soured by the fact that the students were instigated to table a motion of no-confidence in him, which was passed by 180 votes against 43.¹⁰¹ According to reports and letters from students published in the *Pretoria News* and *Sunday Times* however, the students’ reaction was entirely organised from within the student body and not by the Council or any other body. The Senate had to take firm action against the students, and finally forced them to apologise to Professor Du Toit. Afterwards the Student Council was also disbanded.¹⁰²

However, it was not the fact that he was so outspoken concerning Afrikaans that alienated many initial supporters. Unfortunately, his personality and manner, which was described as haughty, without tact,

97. *Pretoria News*, no specific date 1932 (High cost and large deficits, Unnecessary Duplication of University Facilities) – Statistics showed that the fees at Pretoria were almost 45 per cent higher than at Wits, due to duplication.

98. Van der Watt, *Rectores Magnifici*, pp 44-59.

99. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 58.

100. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 57.

101. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 57.

102. *Pretoria News*, 5 June 1929 (TUC Rectorship – Students’ unprecedented action); *Sunday Times*, 16 June 1929 (Students in state of revolt. Bitter feeling towards TUC Senate); *Pretoria News*, 19 June 1929 (Students reply to Senate. TUC rumpus).

and inflexible, as well as his tendency to lose his temper in the heat of an argument, cost him the support of both Afrikaans and English speakers. Certain people who did not agree with his political point of view, also felt that he deliberately tried to make their lives difficult at the university.¹⁰³ In the events following his announcement at the beginning of 1929, the very lack of support from various sectors of the Afrikaans-speaking community proved to be a greater obstacle than what Professor Du Toit had perhaps reckoned.¹⁰⁴ One such an event, which became a turning point in the language debate, was the Lamont case.

The wife of one of the staff members who supported Professor Du Toit, told him after his opening address in 1929 that: “You have this day lit such a fire, which, pray God, shall never be put out”.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, with the publication of the book *War, Wine and Women* by Wilfred Saint-Mandé, the fire that was lit ignited a powder keg, which literally blew the university apart. In addition to an account of his personal experiences on the front during the First World War, the author gave a very negative portrayal of the Voortrekkers, Dutch Reformed ministers and what he called the “back-veld Boer”.¹⁰⁶ Rumours that the author was in fact a lecturer at the TUC, namely H.P. Lamont, a senior lecturer in French, started to circulate. The University Council instructed the Rector to launch an investigation into the true identity of the author, since Lamont had initially denied all allegations. While the findings of this investigation were still pending, four young men, one a student of the University of Pretoria, took Lamont against his will from his house to a secluded spot where he was “tarred and feathered” and then set free on Church Square.¹⁰⁷

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103. For example he opened the mail of lecturers he did not like and even spread false rumours about people – Van der Watt, *Rectores Magnifici*, p 56; UPA: D-6-5-1-6-22: UP Argief Alumniversameling: Brief van G.W. Schilz, 21 September 1974.
104. UPA: D-11-3-2-2: Buitemuurse Studenteraad Notule 13 April 1932; *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”); *Pretoria News*, 13 September 1932 (The Students’ View).
105. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 57.
106. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 61-62; *Pretoria News*, 16 November 1931 (“War, Wine and Women” – Striking book by a Pretorian); *Volkstem*, 1 April 1932 (Boek wat die Afrikaner belaster); *Volkstem*, 1 April 1932 (’n Walglike boek); *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 April 1932 (“War, Wine and Women” – A book gives offence).
107. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 61-62; *Pretoria News*, 27 May 1932 (In a nursing home. Prof H.P. Lamont); *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 May 1932 (Tar and feather outrage); *Die Vaderland*, 8 Junie 1932 (Skrywer: War, Wine and Women); *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 June 1932 (Professor Lamont gives evidence).

Ad Destinatum claims that the fact that the English-speaking lecturers of the TUC sided with Lamont, proved that the lack of respect of English speakers towards the Afrikaans culture dealt the final blow to the possibility of a South African university.¹⁰⁸ It cannot be denied that the content of the book and the actions of the young men indeed influenced the already strained relationship between the two groups to a certain extent. However, judging from letters from both Afrikaans and English speakers, including Professor Brookes,¹⁰⁹ published in Afrikaans and English newspapers, it is evident that English speakers deplored the contents of the book as much as Afrikaans speakers did the actions of the young men.¹¹⁰ Various people, including several university staff members, felt that far greater damage had been done, not only to Afrikaans-English relationships, but to the prestige and credibility of the university and the position of the Rector, by the decisions and actions of certain staff members and the Rector himself.¹¹¹ They felt that the Rector realised that he would not be able to garner enough support for the language policy change. Not only did the movement for a unilingual institution not have “its roots in an inevitable evolution that would one have naturally subscribe to it”¹¹², but many, including a large section of the student body, felt that the fifty-fifty policy had not been given a fair chance.¹¹³

According to his critics, Du Toit used the Lamont affair as “a misleading case” to provoke anti-English sentiments and therewith win Afrikaner support for the language question.¹¹⁴ When he and 27 staff

108. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 60.

109. *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 June 1932.

110. *Pretoria News*, 25 May 1932 (“War, Wine and Women” – Ex-Mayor calls for action); *Pretoria News*, 26 May 1932 (To the Editor of the “News”); *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 May 1932 (Union Prestige Lowered. The outrage on Professor Lamont); *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 May 1932 (Back to the Dark Ages. Every code of freedom violated).

111. *Pretoria News*, 25 June 1932 (No Confidence. Dissension in University Circles).

112. *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”).

113. *Pretoria News*, 10 September 1932 (Students’ Views. “Disservice to Afrikaans youth”).

114. In 1922 Professor E.H. Brookes published a volume of poetry, and in 1926 he delivered a lecture in which he described England as the “foe to liberty” and openly professed his republican views. In the press, numerous letters were published in which people voiced their dissatisfaction with this, but from the University’s side no action was taken against him and his publication was considered to be separate from the University and in the spirit of individual freedom. *Pretoria News*, 27 September 1922 (Political Propaganda and Poetry. Tendencies at the TUC. Lecturer demands a republic); *Pretoria News*,

members signed a petition against the book and supported the “Pro Patria” fund founded by the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Vaderland* to pay for the fines laid upon the young men by the court¹¹⁵, these objectors, who included the Afrikaans author C.L. Leipoldt, felt that the best interest of the university had been ignored in order to advance personal political and Afrikaner nationalist aspirations.¹¹⁶ The situation deteriorated to such an extent that on 13 May 1932, two members of Senate, Professors J.P.R. Wallis and A.M. Bosman, informed Du Toit that they had lost faith in his abilities and asked him to resign as Rector. A supporting motion was tabled at a special meeting of the Senate held on 18 May 1932, signed by both Afrikaans and English-speaking lecturers.¹¹⁷ Even though this petition, as well as Du Toit’s counter petition that asked for the resignation of Professors Wallis, Tromp and Bosman as Deans and members of the University Council, came to naught, serious harm was indeed done to the university’s reputation and to Afrikaans-English relationships on campus.¹¹⁸ Eventually in 1934, the Deans of 7 faculties also tabled a motion against the extension of his term and Du Toit resigned from the university.¹¹⁹

At the time, Professor Du Toit was undeterred and in 1932 tabled a motion which called for the abolition of the fifty-fifty policy and the acceptance of Afrikaans as the language of instruction. This was accepted at the Senate meeting of 7 September 1932. Several adjustments, which entailed a gradual phasing out of the use of English, and a more accommodating stance towards English-speaking students and lecturers, had to be made before the policy was accepted by the Council on

1 October 1922 (Poetry, Republics and sentiment. To Mr. E.H. Brookes. An open letter); *Pretoria News*, 4 March 1926 (The sad case of Prof. Brookes); *Pretoria News*, 4 March 1926 (South Africa and the Outer World. The Dissertations of Professor Brookes); Grundlingh, “Politics, Principles and Problems”, pp 1-19.

115. *Die Vaderland*, 25 Junie 1932 (Oproep tot stortings in Pro Patria-fonds); *Pretoria News*, 25 June 1932 (The University of Pretoria); *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 June 1932 (Professors to the front. Subscriptions for fines).

116. *Pretoria News*, no date; *Pretoria News*, 25 June 1932 (The University of Pretoria); *Pretoria News*, 2 September 1932 (Stellenbosch of the North. Pretoria University Campaign).

117. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 63-64; *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 May 1932 (Trouble in Pretoria University. Professors in two camps); *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 May 1932 (University Trouble. For and against the Rector).

118. *Pretoria News*, 19 May 1932 (Senate battle ends in a draw).

119. Van der Watt, *Rectores Magnifici*, pp 44-59.

13 September 1932, but the university officially became an Afrikaans-only institution.¹²⁰

b. The role of J.C. Smuts

Even though the impression is created that the recognition of Afrikaans was a much later development in the history of the institution, the promotion of Afrikaans at TUC can be traced back to the very founding of the Pretoria campus in 1908, by the then Minister of Education of the Transvaal, J.C. Smuts.

When one considers the condition of tertiary education on a national level, Afrikaans-speaking students at the TUC benefitted from Smuts' education policy and the fact that special efforts were made to accommodate Afrikaans. At an inter-colonial conference of the "University of the Cape of Good Hope" (UCGH) in February 1908, the examining body rejected a motion that examinations could be written in Dutch if the candidate so wished. Only in 1911 and 1912 respectively, did the Council of the UCGH allow candidates to use both official languages for the junior and senior certificate examinations and from 1916 the various university colleges were granted permission "to allow candidates to use Dutch as their medium in answering questions in the BA Pass and Honours Examinations ... in all subjects except English".¹²¹

With the support of Doctor J.E. Adamson, Director of Education, Smuts drafted the Education Act in the first few months of the *Het Volk* Party coming to power in 1907.

The principles of this Act were that education had to be unitary; that there had to be equality of languages; that it had to be established on Christian principles; and that education had to be free and compulsory at primary level. This was in direct contrast to Milner's centralisation, secularisation and Anglicisation of education.¹²²

120. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 66-68; *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 September 1932 (Pretoria University and Afrikaans); *Die Vaderland*, 14 September 1932 (Univ. Pretoria slaan nuwe koers in); *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 September 1932 (An Afrikaans University); *Pretoria News*, 14 September 1932 (The University Decides); *Pretoria News*, 14 September 1932 ("For he's a jolly good fellow." Rector carried shoulder high).

121. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 49.

122. Hancock, *Smuts*, pp 238-240.

In the same year, Smuts called for the establishment of three branches of tertiary education in the Transvaal.¹²³ In a memorandum to Adamson, Smuts explained his idea behind the so-called “tripartite university”.¹²⁴ “The root-idea of the scheme is to carry on the different sides of the work at the centres where they would be most likely to attract the largest number of students, and where the educational conditions are most favourable ...”¹²⁵ *Ad Destinatum* questioned Smuts’ statement that the classes in the Arts in Johannesburg did not attract a sufficient number of students.¹²⁶ This statement might have been an exaggeration on Smuts’ side. He realised, however, that the majority of Afrikaans speakers in the Transvaal lived in rural areas, and that the big cosmopolitan and predominantly English-speaking city of Johannesburg could be a deterring factor. A campus in Pretoria was a way of establishing a tertiary education centre where Afrikaans speakers in the Transvaal could receive a tertiary education.¹²⁷ An advertisement about the commencement of classes at the Pretoria branch was also published in the Pretoria-based *Die Volkstem*, which was known for its “radical zeal” in promoting Afrikaans as a recognised language, thereby targeting the Afrikaans-speaking population.¹²⁸

Initially a working committee of the TUC Council was appointed, but this was overruled by Smuts with the appointment of his own committee to decide on the Pretoria branch. He also offered members of the TUC staff in Johannesburg positions at the Pretoria branch without the Council’s knowledge.¹²⁹ It cannot be denied that Smuts acted in an autocratic way by not consulting the College Council regarding his plans. Smuts was aware that the Council would not be inclined to agree to the establishment of a campus in Pretoria. By initially side-lining and later overruling them and by appointing people, such as the Reverend Breyer (who as Afrikaans speaker, would be in favour of Smuts’ idea) in his own committee, Smuts ensured that the Pretoria campus would become a reality.

123. Technology and mining would be situated in Johannesburg, Agriculture at Frankenwald and Arts and Science in Pretoria.

124. *The Star*, 28 November 1907.

125. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 8.

126. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 8.

127. Hancock, *Smuts*, pp 233-238; Van der Merwe (ed), *Looking at the Afrikaner today*, p 19.

128. Hancock, *Smuts*, pp 178, 361.

129. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 8-9.

By side-lining the Council in the appointment of the first four professors, Smuts could also ensure that these appointments would be in line with his policy of reconciliation between the Afrikaans and English speakers. By appointing an English speaker, Professor J. Purves; a Scot, Professor A.C. Paterson (who, having spent time in the Netherlands, could speak what one of his colleagues referred to as high Afrikaans); Professor H. Reinink from the Netherlands; and the newly graduated Afrikaner, Professor D.F. du Toit Malherbe,¹³⁰ Smuts and Adamson's hope that "English and Dutch will be found working together ..., in arts and general science at Pretoria, ... [and] not only further the cause of learning in industry, but the greater cause of national unity",¹³¹ could be given a fair chance. Smuts was also the first honorary president of the first student organisation, the bilingual "Letterkundige Debat-Vereniging"/"Literary and Debating Society".¹³²

Two years later, Smuts took great care in the planning of the ceremony to lay the cornerstone of the Arts Building on the new campus on the eastern outskirts of Pretoria¹³³ to ensure that it would be a bilingual event. The Reverend H.S. Bosman opened the ceremony with "een gebed in de hollandsche taal",¹³⁴ Professor Reinink who spoke on behalf of the Senate also used Dutch, while Smuts and the Governor General of the Union of South Africa, Sir Herbert Gladstone, gave their speeches in English.¹³⁵ In 1930 he was the first to receive an honorary doctorate from the newly established University of Pretoria and on 13 December 1937 he laid the foundation stone for the Merensky Library, which was one of his last formal appearances at the university.¹³⁶ At this occasion he made a call on the students to equip themselves with a thorough knowledge of especially modern languages, as he saw that as a solution for many of the country's problems.¹³⁷

130. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 11-13.

131. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 48.

132. D.M. Joubert, "Generaal Smuts by UP vereer", *Tukkie-werf*, 4, 1988, p 14.

133. Smuts drafted and presented the draft bill on 7 April 1910 at the last sitting of the Transvaal Parliament, which would lead to the establishment of two separate institutions in Johannesburg and Pretoria and a national Agricultural College, later the Faculty of Agriculture at UP.

134. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 26.

135. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 26.

136. The growth of Afrikaner nationalism from 1938 onwards, also at UP, and the Second World War (1939-1945), caused a deep rift between Afrikaners of differing political viewpoints, which strained the university authorities' relationship with Smuts – Joubert, "Generaal Smuts by UP vereer", p 15.

137. *Pretoria News*, 11 October 1937 (Laying of foundation stone of university library. General Smuts refers to importance of language study).

Smuts' actions, however, were not judged on educational merit, but from a political point of view, especially by Afrikaner nationalists.¹³⁸ Prior to the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 and during the war, Smuts earned himself a place beside the legendary Boer War generals. In the aftermath of the war, however, it was felt that he was, as J.B.M. Hertzog, leader of the opposition National Party, put it: "the lackey of British Imperialism who was intent on betraying his people by leading them along the path of conciliation and delivering them into the hands of his Imperial Masters".¹³⁹

It is because of the Liberal Party's act of "conciliation and friendship"¹⁴⁰ by granting South Africa self-government so soon after the war, that Generals Louis Botha and Smuts, as leader and deputy of the *Het Volk* Party, felt it imperative to work towards a relationship of reconciliation with the British government and the English-speaking section of the South African population. This sentiment was not shared by some of the other Boer leaders, who were not inclined to "forgive and forget" what had happened during the war.¹⁴¹

During the difficult and slow reconstruction period after the war,¹⁴² and especially with the events prior the outbreak of the First World War, some of the Afrikaners lost faith in Smuts. In Afrikaner nationalist circles after the rebellion only those who rebelled were accepted as Afrikaners, while the others were branded as "Khakis", Jingoos and toadies to the English.¹⁴³ D.F. Malan felt that Smuts was a misguided

138. Hancock, *Smuts*, pp 238-240.

139. B. Friedman, *Smuts. A reappraisal* (Hugh Keartland Publishers, Johannesburg, 1975), p 82; Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 261-264. In *Ad Destinatum* (pp 8-9) he is criticised for playing on the emotions of the Afrikaner when in a speech held in Boksburg in 1907, he stated that he deplored the fact that the children in the Transvaal had to attend schools in the Orange Free State or Cape Province to receive proper secondary and tertiary education, but less than a month later he was quite willing to yield to the will of the English-speaking population by agreeing that the TUC Council would become trustees of the Beit inheritance of £200 000 and the farm Frankenwald.

140. Friedman, *Smuts*, p 15.

141. Friedman, *Smuts*, pp 15-17; Hancock, *Smuts*, p 240.

142. Fisher, *The Afrikaners*, pp 199-204.

143. Van der Merwe (ed), *Looking at the Afrikaner today*, p 21.

Afrikaner to believe in broad South Africanism¹⁴⁴ and that people like him had to be treated as renegades.¹⁴⁵

In a conversation with Professor D.M. Joubert, shortly before his death, the author of *Ad Destinatum*, Professor Pelzer, acknowledged that his appreciation for Smuts was only a later development in his career as historical researcher. Professor Joubert also mentions that in this conversation, Pelzer's leaning towards a more Afrikaner nationalist interpretation became clear.¹⁴⁶ This might be the reason why Smuts is treated critically in *Ad Destinatum*. His role in the advancement of Afrikaans is not mentioned and he is only credited for being the founding member of the TUC.¹⁴⁷

The aftermath of the change in the language policy

It is difficult to determine the impact the change in the language policy had on the number of Afrikaans students registering at UP. The worldwide economic depression of the 1930s resulted a decrease in student numbers from 1 050 in 1930 to a low point in 1935 with just over 700 students. It is interesting to note that the number of Afrikaans-speaking students from outside the Transvaal dropped by almost 50 per cent between 1931 and 1933.¹⁴⁸ For many of these students, either Grey University College (GUK – from 1934 known as the University of the Orange Free State) or Victoria College (later University of Stellenbosch) would have been closer, but up to 1932, they still chose to come to the University of Pretoria. To what extent the language policy influenced their choice, is not clear.¹⁴⁹

144. The Afrikaans cartoonist T.O. Honniball portrayed this feeling, which was shared by a large section of the Afrikaans-speaking population, in a cartoon entitled *Die Jingo-Orkes*. Smuts is portrayed as a conductor who waves away a young Afrikaner woman in Voortrekker dress who wants to honour Afrikaner heroes with her song, because his orchestra, made up of a strange mix of not very pleasant-looking musicians, only plays overseas music – Fisher, *The Afrikaners*, next to p 222.

145. Friedman, *Smuts*, pp 97-98.

146. Joubert, "Generaal Smuts by UP vereer", pp 14-16.

147. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 8-9.

148. This excluded students registered for Veterinary Science. Due to the fact that this was the only Faculty for Veterinary Science in the country, accommodation had to be made for English-speaking students.

149. UPA: D-1-13: University of South Africa, Transvaal University College Pretoria, Register of Internal Students, 1924-1936.

In the same period, however, the GUC experienced an increase in student numbers, namely from 313 in 1931 to 339 in 1933. In a memorandum on his time as Rector at the GUC, Professor D.F. Malherbe ascribed this tendency to the fact that he started the move towards “*die aangewese Afrikaanse rigting*” [“the appointed Afrikaans direction”]. As an example, he cited the school at Boshof that previously had never sent pupils to the GUC, but in 1933, 11 students came from there.¹⁵⁰ The contrary could have been true as well. The fact that UP became a single medium institution in 1932, could have prompted people rather to choose the GUC, which still openly stated that, in the words of R.B. Saayman, who succeeded Malherbe as Rector, it would aim for “*absolute billike behandeling van die Engelse element in ons bevolking*”¹⁵¹ [“absolutely fair treatment of the English element of our population”].

The policy change did have a detrimental effect on Afrikaans-English relations at UP. A negative reaction from the English-speaking community to the policy change was expected and an article published in the *Pretoria News* gave voice to many English speakers’ feelings. It stated that the “Lamont affair was merely an incident in a general campaign at the UP to oust English from its place at the side of Afrikaans. Nobody can doubt that now” and that “the present policy ... is tolerated merely because the English-speaking community opened its purse strings”.¹⁵² The *Pretoria News* also suggested that the City Council should reconsider its annual grant of £2 500 to the University. Even Professor Du Toit Malherbe, the first lecturer to lecture in Afrikaans, in a strongly worded letter to *Die Vaderland*, recognised that most financial support came from the English-speaking community and therefore their unhappiness with the situation could be understood.¹⁵³ After a meeting on 7 December 1933, the Pretoria City Council informed the university that, “as trustees of the ratepayers of Pretoria”, the council was “unable to render the University any financial assistance”,¹⁵⁴ a decision which placed the university in a very difficult financial situation.¹⁵⁵ A better relationship was only re-established in 1936, after mediation on

150. Steyn, “Die taalstryd aan die Grey Universiteitskollege”, p 115.

151. Steyn, “Die taalstryd aan die Grey Universiteitskollege”, p 114; Interview with Mrs J. Claassens (née Wessels), Pretoria, 2 April 2006.

152. *Pretoria News*, 2 September 1932 (Stellenbosch of the North. Pretoria University campaign).

153. *Die Vaderland*, 15 Junie 1932 (Waarom dit gaan).

154. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 70-71.

155. *Pretoria News*, 26 October 1932 (University Policy. Dissatisfaction of Donors); *Star*, 1 December 1933 (Grant to Pretoria University. The City Council’s Attitude); *Pretoria News*, 8 December 1933 (City Council and University. Grant not to be paid).

ministerial level and willingness on the part of the university to be more accommodating towards English-speaking students.¹⁵⁶

Despite calls from various people, such as Advocate Oswald Pirow and Professor I.D. Bosman, who urged Afrikaans-speaking people not to give offense or be churlish in their endeavour to uphold their language, the new language policy did not end the racial tension on campus.¹⁵⁷ A “new spirit of intolerance against those who were not politically or ethnically ‘correct’”¹⁵⁸ appeared on campus and both English speakers and Afrikaners who were considered to be disloyal to the Afrikaner cause, were singled out. The positions of “politically unacceptable lecturers”¹⁵⁹ were made as difficult as possible. Unofficially a policy of “ethnic cleansing” was followed against English-speaking academics such as Professor Brookes, even though he initially supported the Afrikaner cause, leading to the resignation of many.¹⁶⁰

At the end of 1938, a committee under the chairmanship of the Reverent W. Nicol was appointed to investigate the bad relationship between the lecturers, of which the language issue and “nature of the University”¹⁶¹ were the main points of conflict. The constant unrest amongst the students was also a matter of concern.¹⁶² The critics of the single medium policy and the way it was brought about, expressed the fear that it would strengthen the “impertinences” of extremists on either side.¹⁶³ Sadly this fear seemed to have materialised, making the ideal of peaceful cooperation between the two language groups more remote than ever before.

Conclusion

Although the official institutional history *Ad Destinatum* offers the reader a detailed representation of the language question, it is limited and in

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156. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, pp 70-71; *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 December 1933 (The Pretoria Grant. Reconciliation possible).
157. *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 October 1932 (“Don’t give offence” Mr. O. Pirow at Pretoria); *Pretoria News*, 24 October 1932 (University of Pretoria. “Not Anti-English”).
158. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 27, 29; Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 87.
159. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 27, 29; Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 87.
160. Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism*, pp 27, 29.
161. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 87.
162. Rautenbach (red.), *Ad Destinatum 1908-1960*, p 87.
163. *Pretoria News*, 16 February 1932 (The University of Pretoria. An Experiment in Conciliation).

many ways incomplete. Numerous factors, such as the financial situation of the college, practical implications in terms of implementing a new policy and the fact that being Afrikaans did not automatically define people in terms of their political viewpoint, are not taken into account. Furthermore, this version divides the various people involved in the college and subsequently the university into either pro- or anti-Afrikaans, regardless of their motivations, and it does not recognise the role of some, since they did not fit the Afrikaner nationalist mould. In some cases people were unfairly criticised because they were against policy changes, whereas the weaknesses of others are overlooked because of their support for Afrikaner nationalism.

Researchers can use institutional histories as a starting point to direct their investigations, but in order to obtain a better understanding of the various underlying factors that shape events, they would benefit from using a variety of sources.

Abstract

This article is an attempt to explore the value, as well as possible pitfalls, in the use of official institutional histories in historical research and specifically the way in which a particular school of historical writing can influence the interpretation of certain events in the past. This article focuses on the events surrounding the change of the language policy of the University of Pretoria (UP) from a dual medium to an Afrikaans-only policy. It compares the account of the language question at UP as portrayed in the official commemorative book of the university, *Ad Destinatum 1910-1960*, with information from other sources, including Afrikaans and English newspaper reports, minutes of meetings of university bodies, oral and written testimonies of former students, as well as articles written on the language question at South African universities. It also examines some of the leading personalities who played a role in the language question.

Opsomming

“Taal op Tuks”

’n Herwaardering van die Verandering in Taalbeleid aan die Universiteit van Pretoria, 1932

Hierdie artikel poog om die waarde, sowel as die moontlike slaggate van die gebruik van amptelike institusionele geskiedenis in historiese navorsing te ondersoek en in die besonder te kyk hoe ’n spesifieke skool

van geskiedskrywing die interpretasie van gebeure in die verlede kan beïnvloed. Hierdie artikel fokus op die gebeure rondom die verandering van die taalbeleid van die Universiteit van Pretoria (UP) van 'n dubbelmedium na 'n enkelmedium Afrikaanse beleid. Die uiteensetting van die taalkwessie soos weergegee in die amptelike gedenk bundel van die universiteit, *Ad Destinatum 1910-1960*, word met inligting uit ander bronne, insluitend Afrikaanse en Engelse koerantberigte, notules van vergaderings van universiteitsliggame, mondelinge en geskrewe getuienis van voormalige studente en reeds gepubliseerde artikels oor die taalvraagstuk by Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite vergelyk. Die rol van leiersfigure in die taalkwessie word ook ondersoek.

Key words

Ad Destinatum; Afrikaans language; Afrikaans universities; Afrikaner historiography; Afrikaner nationalism; Afrikaner Rebellion (1914-1915); Anglicisation policy in education; Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902); bilingualism; British Imperialism; “broad South Africanism”; dual medium instruction; First World War (1914-1918); institutional histories; language question; tertiary education; Transvaal University College (TUC); university histories; University of Pretoria (UP); *Voortrekker Universiteit*.

Sleutelwoorde

Ad Destinatum; Afrikaanse taal; Afrikaans; Afrikaanse universiteite; Afrikaner historiografie; Afrikaner Nasionalisme; Afrikaner Rebellie (1914-1915); Anglisasiebeleid in onderwys; Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899-1902); “breë Suid-Afrikanisme”; Britse Imperialisme; dubbelmedium onderrig; Eerste Wêreldoorlog (1914-1918); institusionele geskiedenis; taalvraagstuk; tersiêre onderwys; Transvaal(se) Universiteits-kollege (TUK); tweetaligheid; Universiteit van Pretoria (UP); universiteitsgeskiedenis; Voortrekker Universiteit.