# LANGUAGE POLICY AND NATION-BUILDING IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Language Policy

VOLUME 10

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# LANGUAGE POLICY AND NATION-BUILDING IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

by

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# Contents

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# Abstract

While not essential, the link between language and national identity is nevertheless often a highly important and salient one, a fact illustrated by the centrality of linguistic concerns in many nationalist discourses throughout the world. As a result of this linkage, it is understandable that those seeking to create or manipulate national identities have habitually attempted to do so through the formulation and implementation of language policy and planning measures. This book develops a broad theoretical framework for the study of national identity and language policy. Of particular interest is the manner in which these two phenomena frequently interact and the societal consequences of that interaction.

South Africa represents a fascinating historical and contemporary context in which to investigate the effect of language policy and planning on the formation of social identities. From the earliest stages of European colonisation to the present day, successive governing regimes have attempted to manipulate the various ethnic and national identities of the South African population to suit their own ideological agendas. In the post-apartheid era, much has been made of the government's official policy commitment to promote 'nation-building' through the institutionalisation of genuinely multilingual practices in public life. In reality, though, public life in present-day South Africa is notable for its increasingly monolingual-English character. This contradiction between official policy and actual linguistic practices is symptomatic of the hegemony of an implicit 'English-only' ideology that permeates most governmental and public organisations. This has led to a situation of highly salient language-based identity conflict between many Afrikaans speakers resentful of the decreasing presence of Afrikaans in public life and those loyal to the *de facto* monolingual model of nationhood promoted by the ANC. But perhaps the most pernicious consequence of this increasing dominance of English has been its entrenchment of elitist governing practices that ensure the continued socio-economic marginalisation of African language speakers who constitute the large majority of South African citizens. If language planners are to convincingly address this problem, it is clear that a radically alternative model of language policy and national integration needs to be promoted and adopted.

# Chapter 1
# Introduction

The preamble to the post-apartheid South African constitution states that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity' and promises to 'lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law' and to 'improve the quality of life of all citizens'. This would seem to commit the South African government to, amongst other things, the implementation of policies aimed at fostering a common sense of South African national identity, at societal development and at reducing of levels of social inequality. However, in the period of more than a decade that has now elapsed since the end of apartheid, there has been widespread discontent with regard to the degree of progress made in connection with the realisation of these constitutional aspirations. The 'limits to liberation' in the post-apartheid era has been a theme of much recent research in the fields of sociology and political theory (e.g. Luckham, 1998; Robins, 2005a). Linguists have also paid considerable attention to the South African situation with the realisation that many of the factors that have prevented, and are continuing to prevent, effective progress towards the achievement of these constitutional goals are linguistic in their origin. This study sets out to describe and analyse the interplay of linguistic factors, especially those relating to language policy and planning activities, with processes of national identity formation and expression, both in a general theoretical sense and then with relation to the specific South African context. A sound theoretical framework will obviously strengthen any understanding and consequent description and analysis of a particular case study. Equally, insights from the study of specific case studies may aid the formulation or, indeed, rejection of principles that might entertain some claim to universality. In this way, then, the universal and the particular may be harnessed to operate in a mutually beneficial manner that facilitates the heightened understanding of both.

Although questions of language form the major subject matter of this study, considerable attention has been devoted to avoiding the sin of what has been termed 'linguicentrism' (Spolsky, 2004:ix). That is to say that a consciously multidisciplinary approach, which benefits from engagement with fields of study beyond linguistics or even just sociolinguistics, has been adopted. The reason for this is simply that to study questions of language in a societal context without reference to, or

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appreciation of, the numerous non-linguistic factors that impact upon the social life of communities is an unnecessarily myopic and limiting approach that will likely give skewed or plainly inaccurate results. As Spolsky notes:

> [L]anguage policy exists within a complex set of social, political, economic, religious, demographic, educational and cultural factors that make up the full ecology of human life. While many scholars are now beginning to recognize the interaction of economic and political and other factors with language, it is easy and tempting to ignore them when we concentrate on language matters. [...] My position, then, is that language is important and that any studies of societies that exclude (as they too often do) language are limited, but that language and language policy need to be looked at in the widest context and not treated as a closed universe. Language is a central factor but linguicentrism imposes limited vision. (Spolsky, 2004:ix–x)

Although it has been a valid criticism of much work previously undertaken in fields such as sociology and political theory that insufficient attention, if any at all, has been paid to matters of language, it is equally the case that much research into related issues such as language policy and language and identity has been overly 'linguicentric' in its approach. While disciplines such as political theory have recently increasingly begun to engage with language issues and to benefit from insights from the sociology of language and sociolinguistics (Patten and Kymlicka, 2003:1), it is important that this is not merely a one-way flow of knowledge. A reciprocal cross-fertilisation of research findings from the various academic disciplines that have some insights to offer in connection with improving our understanding of the issues at hand is clearly highly desirable. A linguicentric approach to the subject of 'language policy and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa' would be deficient in a number of ways. It would represent an attempt to describe the whole through a single part. Without input from other fields of research, such as social anthropology and sociology, this study would be quite incapable of producing any adequate general theorisation on the interrelated subjects of ethnicity, nationalism and national identity. This, in turn, would make for a deficient theoretical conceptualisation and explanation of language policy since, as this study goes to demonstrate, the character and content of language policies are very often strongly influenced by matters of ethnic and national identity. In the presence of these deficiencies, then, all that would be possible for a linguicentric approach would be to provide a descriptive or documentative, but not necessarily comprehensive, case-study specific account. While such an approach may be appealing to those with a particular contained interest, whether professional or amateur, in the particular case-study context, the inherent limitations of the approach mean that it is likely to make a minimal contribution to any general theoretical debates and discussions. Therefore, in order that this study may make some worthy general theoretical contribution to field of the sociology/politics of language a multidisciplinary approach has been adopted as of necessity.

## 1.1 Language Policy Theory and Normativity

In any study of language policy there is inevitably, and necessarily, some descriptive element, the function of which is twofold. Firstly, the description and presentation

of facts pertaining to the subject in hand may simply be of interest in their own right. Secondly, the descriptive element serves the purpose of providing necessary empirical support to any attempt at analysis and explanation. After all, phenomena such as language policies need to be described before they can be effectively analysed. In the field of language policy theory, as in other disciplines, a distinction is often drawn between *descriptive* and *normative* approaches, often with the suggestion that any account that goes beyond description must necessarily be normative. This is unfortunate and symptomatic of a problematic, yet seemingly unconscious or certainly unacknowledged, assumption that permeates a great deal of writing on language policy. The academic literature concerned with matters of language policy and planning is rich in normative theories seeking and claiming to derive a sociolinguistic 'ought' from a sociolinguistic 'is'. This presents a deep theoretical problem, a problem which is essentially one of philosophy, or more specifically, of metaethics and which might be termed the problem or, even, the error, of normativity (Mackie, 1977). To grasp the essence of this problem, it is necessary to understand exactly what normative claims amount to and, in doing so, some terminological care is required. Such claims are not simply seeking to establish *norms* of usage or of behaviour in the sense of subjectively determined standards or yardsticks, as do, for example, prescriptivist approaches to grammar and spelling. Normative statements are actually claiming a discoverable, objective status with an inherently prescriptive and compulsion-inducing status for the moral and political values they promote. For example, for the many normative theorists who advocate language rights it is not enough to say, for instance, that 'the promotion and respecting of language rights is advisable if one wishes to avoid linguistic conflict'. What such theorists are attempting to say is, in effect, something quite different and which essentially amounts to the following: 'it is true and right that language rights ought to be respected and promoted'.

To engage in normative ethical discussions necessarily implies acceptance, whether conscious or unconscious, of the notion that there exist such things as objective moral values or standards. The reason that normativity is so widespread within the field of language policy theory is perhaps that it has historically been a central characteristic of much general political theory and philosophy, especially liberal political theory, a branch which has recently shown an increasing interest in matters of language policy. From Plato's 'Forms of the Good' (Mackie, 1977:59) to the Kantian notions of the 'categorical imperative' and the 'Kingdom of Ends' (Korsgaard, 1996) to the Rawlsian conceptions of 'the good life' and 'public goods' (Rawls, 1971, 1985; Boran, 2003), ethical and political theory has made numerous attempts to establish an objective theory of political morality. The language of normative ethics has come to feature strongly in much writing on language policy. For example, a review of Skutnabb-Kangas' (2000) book on linguistic human rights and linguistic genocide was, giving a clear indication of the tone of the book, entitled 'Linguistic Diversity as a Categorical Imperative' and Stroud and Heugh (2003:2) have affirmed their 'commitment to the moral imperative behind the linguistic human rights paradigm'. Elsewhere, Kymlicka and Patten's (2003) prominent volume on language rights also explicitly 'examines the issue of language rights from the perspective of normative political theory'.

This is not the place to enter into a full-scale meta-ethical discussion on the issue of normative ethics but suffice it here to say that if one harbours doubts or even outright rejects the notion of the objectivity of moral values, it is clear that much work within language policy that styles itself as, or is unconsciously or unknowingly, normative is working within what Mackie (1977) terms an 'error theory'. This assertion may well prove unpalatable and unpopular to many individuals working within the field of language policy. One is aware that, in the eyes of many, an argument stripped of any moral pretensions may lose some of its persuasive force and attractiveness. After all, there can be little disagreement over the fact that an appeal to a moral truth argument often serves as a 'useful fiction' in compelling people to undertake a particular action which they may not otherwise perform. If one cannot assert the superiority of certain values which one cherishes, one may be liable to wonder if it is worth the effort to uphold and promote them and, admittedly, there may be no satisfactorily comforting answer to this concern. One might then wonder why the present author has been motivated to even raise the issue of normativity. The simple answer is that, in the name of academic rigour and honesty, it is an issue which requires attention and discussion. At the very least, it would seem necessary for those language policy theorists who operate within a normative framework to mount a defence or offer an explanation of their position on this issue. As of yet, though, there does not seem to have been even the slightest acknowledgement or suggestion that there might be an important theoretical issue here from those working within the language policy field. This is because the default position of normativity within the field of language policy does not appear to have had any explicit challenge or contestation. Consequently, many discussions of language policy, particularly those concerned with matters of rights and diversity, unthinkingly continue to take place within a questionable conceptual framework based on troubling unconscious assumptions about the ontological status of moral and political values, or on a flawed understanding of the significance of the type of claims being made.

Language policy theory does not necessarily need to posit the existence of objective moral values as part of its epistemological apparatus. Indeed, this insight could even be seen as a refreshing development by helping to undermine the many stultifying, navel-gazing discussions centring upon moral questions in language policy. Questions of what 'ought to' or 'should' be done can only be answered in relation to a set of pre-determined, subjective desires or interests, in the absence of which, such questions become ontologically redundant and meaningless. Value positions related to issues of language, or indeed to any issues, are to be made and not discovered.

None of this, of course, is to deride and dismiss all work on language policy from within normative paradigms as redundant and uninteresting. And, indeed, much writing on language policy that would qualify as normative is discussed and cited in the course of this study, particularly in Chapter 3. However, no normative response to, or assessment of, these works is given. Instead, the normative points of view that are discussed are analysed in terms of their internal coherence and cogency and the success with which they tackle the issues they engage with. For example,

in the discussion of the ecolinguistic arguments for preserving linguistic diversity (see Section 3.6.2), all of which tend to be explicitly normative, no moral case is advanced either way for the rightness or wrongness of linguistic diversity. Instead, attention is paid to issues such as the inadequate conceptions of linguistic diversity that many of these arguments promote, the dubious claims made regarding the linkages between language, knowledge and world-view and the use of misleading metaphors like that which compares the loss of linguistic diversity to the destruction of the world's biodiversity. Equally, the model of language policy and national integration outlined in Chapter 6 also makes no claim to any objective moral status. Careless analysis may well lead some to interpret it as normative, given the almost unconscious expectation of normativity that pervades the field of language policy theory. However, this would be a mistake. Admittedly, this model does indeed reveal some of the present author's *preferences* for a model of language and society in post-apartheid South Africa, which incidentally might well be shared by some individuals of a normative persuasion, but it does not claim to reveal any more than that.

## 1.2 Methodology

Two principal, complementary methodologies have been employed in the production of this study. The first involves a descriptive and analytical synthesis of primary and secondary source material. Primary sources include governmental policy documents, sociolinguistic surveys, census data and websites of relevant organisations (for example, that of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, see Section 4.5.1). As for secondary sources, one of the most abundant sources of information used in this book has been press reports. As any subscriber to the internet-based Language Policy List (LGPolicy-List) will no doubt be aware, there has, in recent years, been an abundance of press material concerning language policy issues in South Africa. These press reports have been an invaluable source of information both in terms of keeping up with the latest developments on the South African scene and for contributing to a rather less quantitatively definable appreciation of the relevant issues and situations. Other secondary sources include a wide range of academic writing (journal articles, monographs, edited volumes etc.) on issues relevant to the subject matter of the book. The second methodological approach adopted consisted of a series of informal semi-structured interviews with many language professionals and other academics, including sociologists, political theorists and historians, both within and outside of South Africa. This study contains no explicit description or analysis of these interviews themselves, rather their purpose was to allow the present author to gain a more profound, nuanced impression and understanding of the political and linguistic situation in South Africa. Needless to say, many of the ideas developed in this book owe much to the insights gleaned during the course of these interviews.

## 1.3 Outline of the Study

The main emphasis of this study is to investigate the role of language policy and planning in the formation and consolidation of national identities, first in a general theoretical sense and then with specific application to the South African situation. The initial chapters of this study develop a broad theoretical framework for the description and analysis of key concepts. Chapter 2 presents a discussion of the most central concepts relevant to discussions of ethnic and national identities. Of particular interest is the issue of definition. The definition of such concepts as *ethnicity, ethnic group* and *nation* has long preoccupied academic theorists of ethnicity and nationalism and has been a source of much debate and controversy. A central element of this problem of definition has been the question of how, if at all, one should go about distinguishing the kindred concepts of ethnic group and nation. It is argued that while not all theorists seek to make any meaningful distinction between the two, there remains good reason for doing so. It is recognised that while a core ethnic element is what unites the concepts of an ethnic group and a nation, they can be distinguished on account of the latter's politicisation and possession of civic elements. Consequently, a view of the nation as a combination of both ethnic and civic elements is advanced. The adoption of this view necessarily requires the rejection of the idea that individual nations can be neatly classified as either purely ethnic or purely civic communities, although it is still argued that the ethnic/civic dichotomy may retain some usefulness as a heuristic device in describing certain emphases of nationalist discourses. In the light of this insight, it is argued that many post-colonial nation-building projects are misguided in their attempts to promote purely civic conceptions of nationhood and overlook or bypass the ethnic component of national identity because it is generally deemed too recessive and divisive. Another issue discussed in Chapter 2 is that regarding the supposed modernity of nations. It is noted that while many modernist accounts of nation formation (e.g. Anderson, 1983; Breuilly, 1993; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990) offer several important insights, particularly regarding the role of a standardised public culture in the development of the national community, their emphasis on the total modernity of contemporary nations seems somewhat overstated. The view of nations developed in this chapter is more in line with that of Smith (1986; 1998; 2001), which sees nations as a fusion of pre-modern ethnic type elements with modern civic ones. Finally, the relationship between language and ethnic and national identity is considered in-depth. It is noted that while it is not possible to credibly assert an essential link between language and ethnic and national identities, thereby refuting the related theories of linguistic nationalism and linguistic determinism, language is frequently a highly central and salient marker of such identities. An attempt is then made to account for this language-identity relationship. The question of whether there is any significant difference in the relationship between language and ethnic group identity and between language and national identity is also considered.

Chapter 3 develops a theoretical framework for the study of the concepts of language policy and language planning. Again, considerable attention is given to the issue of definition. This is necessary since, as with many discussions of ethnicity

and nationalism, discussions of language policy are often beset by uncertain or careless usage of terminology. Having considered some of these terminological and definitional issues, an understanding of language policy as a tri-partite combination of linguistic ideology, practices and language planning or management activities is developed. Language planning, then, is not viewed as a phenomenon distinct from language policy but, rather, as a sub-element of language policy. Building on the link established between language and ethnic and national identities in Chapter 2, a unified notion of 'language planning as identity planning' is advanced. Following on from this, it is then possible to regard language policies as types of identity policy. This insight forms the theoretical basis for the typology of 'language-in-national identity policies' that is proposed in Section 3.4.1. Finally, this chapter ends with an extensive, in-depth analytical discussion of some of the most prominent trends and issues in contemporary language policy theory. Issues discussed include the 'ecol-inguistic' and 'Linguistic Human Rights' arguments for maintaining and promoting linguistic diversity. Noting that these arguments contain no scope for reconciliation between the desire to promote state-led nation-building and the desire to defend linguistic diversity, attention is then given to some notable attempts from within the so-called 'liberal culturalist' paradigm to make just such a reconciliation, chiefly through the advocacy of group-differentiated rights and, in doing so, solve the supposed 'pluralist dilemma'.

The focus of the remaining chapters of this study switches to the specific South African situation. Developing the notion of language policy as an ideological discourse process, Chapter 4 gives a historical overview of language policy and planning trends in South Africa from the earliest period of European colonisation to the present day. In particular, it seeks to describe and analyse the historical language and identity processes in South African society in the light of the concept of 'language policy as identity policy' developed in Chapter 3. The discussion focuses on how the differing ideologies of the various ruling regimes, from the earliest Dutch-speaking settlers to the present-day post-apartheid ANC government, have influenced attempts to construct and manipulate social identities through the formulation and implementation of language policy and planning measures. An assessment of the relative success of these policies is also given, with the main observation being that the history of attempts to construct and manipulate identities through language policy and planning in South Africa has largely been one of coercion and failure. The latter part of this chapter involves an extensive description and analysis of the failure of the post-apartheid regime to effectively implement a policy of nation-building through the institutionalisation of 'equitable multilingualism' that is line with the putative commitments to do so which are expressed in the language-related clauses of the South African constitution. This failure is attributed to the existence of a great discrepancy between official or overt government language policy and its covert policy which is revealed by the actual linguistic practices of government and other public organisations which tend to be highly monolingual-English. This facilitates the continuing strong persistence of the phenomenon of 'elite closure' (Myers-Scotton, 1990; 1993), which has the effect of preventing that majority of South African citizens without an adequate command of English from participating

effectively in the public life of the state and so also of ensuring their continued socio-economic marginalisation.

Chapter 5 looks at a specific case of contemporary language/identity conflict within the South African context, namely that surrounding the issue of the functions and status of the Afrikaans language in the post-apartheid era. It is shown how the political supremacy of the ANC's ideological discourse in the post-apartheid years has greatly contributed to the declining position of Afrikaans as a public language. The ANC's linguistic ideology is strongly monolingual-English and fundamentally hostile to any public multilingual practices which depart from that ideology. Afrikaans is particularly stigmatised by this ideology owing to the continued perception of it as the 'language of apartheid' and of white dominance over the black population, something which threatens the model of nationhood being advanced by the ANC and which also, therefore, lends great emotive force to the issue. For the Afrikaners, the ANC's *de facto* hostility towards Afrikaans is experienced as a grave threat to the most central and hallowed element of their national identity which, again, has leant a highly emotive element to Afrikaner participation in, and experience of, the debate. The debate is also examined from a nation-building perspective. It is shown how the persistence of this identity conflict works contrary to the interests of those seeking to promote an inclusive model of national integration. The essentially irrational nature of the conflict lends it an intractable quality which largely negates any rational, planned attempts to resolve it. Effective nation-building cannot occur in the midst of significant social conflict. Another theme developed in this chapter is how the continued perception and experience of the 'Afrikaans issue' as being solely an identity conflict between the white Afrikaans-speaking community and those loyal to the ANC model of nationhood has facilitated the continued marginalisation and invisibilisation of non-white speakers of Afrikaans from the debate. Consequently, most black and coloured L1 speakers of Afrikaans are, just like speakers of the African languages, prevented from contributing towards nation-building through the medium of their mother tongue.

Chapter 6 seeks to develop a model of language policy that may facilitate the effective incorporation of all South African citizens into the national system through societal development and the reduction of social inequality. The central ideological and structural factor which is preventing meaningful progress towards the integration of the most marginalised members of South African society is identified as the liberal, capitalist nature of the current political dispensation which has allowed the extensive institutionalisation of authoritarian, elitist governing practices despite the widespread affirmation of an ideology of equality and human rights. The linguistic element of this authoritarianism is manifested in the increasingly exclusive use of English by governmental and other public organisations. These evermore monolingual practices are ensuring the continued banishment of the African languages and, as discussed in Chapter 5, increasingly Afrikaans, from the public sphere. Several issues are discussed, and suggestions considered, pertaining to how one might effectively go about introducing practices which resist authoritarianism and entrench democratic linguistic practices in South African public life. For example, the issue of language activism, widely championed as a means of advancing linguistic

democratisation, is discussed from a nation-building perspective. Also discussed is the proposal, most notably championed by the South African sociologist of language and political activist Neville Alexander (1989; 1992; 2000), to harmonise the Nguni and Sotho language clusters and create a single overarching standard for each. Some of the potentially attractive aspects of the proposal, as far as furthering national integration is concerned, are considered and, of course, some of the very grave difficulties. It is noted that the proposal has failed to get off the ground and gain widespread acceptance partly as a result of the lack of active support for it from the population at large and due to the great resistance shown to it, firstly by those with a vested interest in promoting those ethnolinguistic communities institutionalised through the present official status of their corresponding standard languages and, secondly, and somewhat more inexplicably, by certain scholars who have continued to cling to these numerous standardised languages, many of which were deliberate constructions of the apartheid state. The proposal has also suffered as a result of misinterpretation, with many wrongly seeing it as a subtractive measure when it has actually been advocated as an additive measure. Finally, the issue of individual multilingualism is considered. From the perspective of national integration, the benefits of a situation of reciprocal societal multilingualism, that is to say an ideal-type situation in which all South African citizens would be meaningfully competent in Afrikaans, English and at least one African language, are explained. Unfortunately, this scenario will remain an unlikely prospect as long as native speakers of English and Afrikaans continue to have almost no instrumental or economic incentive to learn an African language. The question is then posed whether any language planning measures can realistically hope to bring about a change in this situation and advance the cause of national integration.

A concluding chapter begins by summarising the main findings of the book. This final chapter then ends with some suggestions for future research, highlighting both the need for further research within the specific South African context and in a more general theoretical context. In particular, some of the benefits of a comparative approach to the study of language policy and processes of identity formation and consolidation are outlined. One context that would potentially make a fascinating comparative study with the South African situation is the European Union. The interest in comparing these two polities stems from the fact that both have ideologically very similar official language policies (liberal democratic, rights-orientated, putative commitment to promoting linguistic diversity) despite their highly contrasting sociological and political contexts.

# Chapter 2
# Key Concepts in the Study of Ethnic and National Identities

## 2.1 Introduction: The Problem of Definition

The issue of definition has traditionally been a central feature of discussions of nations and nationalism (Renan, 1990; Stalin, 1973; M.Weber, 1948). Academic unanimity in response to the foundational question of 'what is a nation?' has been, and continues to be, notably lacking. Evidence of the uncertainty about what is precisely meant by the term *nation* is demonstrated by the fact that it is frequently (mis)used to refer to a number of different concepts. Probably the most regrettable and also the most puzzling (mis)employment of the term is when it is used to refer to a state. This is unfortunate and, to an extent, quite perplexing because, unlike a nation, a state is something that can be relatively easily conceptualised in time and space and defined quantitatively from without as a political-territorial entity occupying a certain geographical position. Yet, as Connor argues:

> Defining and conceptualising the nation is much more difficult because the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in the most vital way. (Connor, 1994a:36)

While essentially correct, the problem with Connor's remarks here is that they could equally be applied to ethnic groups. And indeed, it is not uncommon for the terms *nation* and *ethnic group* to be used interchangeably in both common and academic parlance. Often this may simply be the result of terminological carelessness or imprecision, for there are many undeniable similarities between the two concepts. Eriksen (2002:11) notes, for example, that 'the term "ethnic group" has come to mean something like "a people"'. Indeed, the word 'ethnicity' and its various cognate terms have their origin in the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning a people or tribe. Yet, the term *nation* is also frequently used to designate a *people.* The Russian word *narod*, for example, can mean both a *people* and a *nation.* Elsewhere, in Afrikaans, the terms *nasie* and *volk* are often treated synonymously (Jordaan, 2004:75) but both terms also carry a very strong suggestion of ethnic group identity. If the terms *nation* and *ethnic group* are to have any value as individual analytical concepts, and it will be argued that they can, it is necessary to look for characteristics which

J. Orman, *Language Policy and Nation-Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, 11–38,
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may distinguish them from one another instead of just focussing on the common characteristics which unite the two concepts.

The following discussion considers various different approaches to, and criteria for, defining the nation. Particular attention is devoted to the conceptual relationship between the kindred terms *nation* and *ethnic group* and the question of how one might go about identifying both their shared and differing characteristics. Also discussed and critically analysed is the traditionally popular ethnic/civic dichotomy which has often been invoked in attempts to classify individual nations. Finally, the discussion turns to the relationship between language and ethnic and national identities. Of particular interest is the question of whether, given the similarities and differences noted between ethnic groups and nations, there is any significant difference in the relationship between language and the two types of group. Among the other questions considered are whether it is necessary for ethnic and national groups to have a unique language of their own or even whether such groups can exist without possessing a common means of linguistic communication.

## 2.2 The Ethnic/Civic Dichotomy

Traditionally, the most common approach to defining the concept of a nation in general terms and then classifying individual nations has been based on the drawing of a dichotomous distinction between 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalisms (e.g. Schnapper, 1996). This distinction has also been conceptualised variously in terms of 'cultural' versus 'political' nationalisms or even 'Eastern' versus 'Western' nationalisms (Kohn, 1994). These two types of nationalism tend, with respect to the content of their ideological conviction, to promote quite different conceptions of the nation. According to ethnic nationalism, membership in the nation is, theoretically, largely involuntary and determined by a belief in shared culture and common ethnic origins. Conversely, following the civic tradition, membership of the nation is achieved, in principle, through formal belonging to the legal community of the territorial state in which members theoretically have uniform, undifferentiated rights and obligations, irrespective of race, gender, age or any ethnocultural traits (Smith, 1986:135). According to the civic model, the bonds of nationhood, that is to say the sense of solidarity and community which serves as the basis of the national identity, are located in the existence of shared political and philosophical values. The classic example of this phenomenon in action is the promotion of the values of *liberté, egalité* and *fraternité* (freedom, equality and brotherhood) as a central, defining feature of modern French republican nationalist discourse.

The origin and persistence of the ethnic/civic dichotomy can be better appreciated if one considers the particular significance and function of the state in each case. In those cases where a pre-existing ethnic group acquires its own state, or mobilises itself with the aim of acquiring one, a case of ethnic nationalism is normally said to have occurred. Those states which cannot appeal to any sense of pre-existing ethnocultural similarity and solidarity amongst their citizenry, normally conceive of, and

attempt to construct, a common national identity through an emphasis on belonging to what Anderson (1983:15) describes as 'an imagined political community'. In such cases, it tends to be certain political values that are promoted as the essence of the national identity in question. Consequently, a case of 'civic' or 'political' nationalism is said to have occurred.

It is important, at this point, to clarify that to talk of ethnic or civic *nationalisms* is not the same as talking of ethnic or civic *nations* (Oakes and Warren, 2007:13). Unfortunately, this distinction is not always appreciated. While the ethnic/civic distinction remains a useful device for classifying varying types and aspects of nationalist self-projection and aspiration, it does not follow that nations themselves can be so easily dichotomised according to such criteria. Although many nationalists would wish to believe otherwise, there is very rarely, if at all, a one-to-one relationship between the image and conception of the nation promoted by nationalist rhetoric, however sincerely believed in, and the sociological reality of the situation. Indeed, nationalist rhetoric tends to have a somewhat selective memory, representing as it does a set of aspirations, supposed destinies and mythologised pasts. Although different nationalist movements and other vested interests may style the nation in question as a purely ethnic or civic community, nations generally show themselves, often unwittingly, to be composed of both ethnic *and* civic elements.

### *2.2.1 'Ethnic' Nations*

The main problem in defining a nation *purely* on the basis of shared culture or common ethnic origin is that, in doing so, one is increasingly less able to distinguish it from the concept of an ethnic group. For some authors though, this is just as it should be, as they do not see any appreciative structural or functional differences between the two concepts. I.M. Lewis, for example, perceives the only difference between concepts such as 'tribe', 'ethnic group' and 'nation' as being one of scale, when he asks: 'Are these smaller segments significantly different? My answer is that they are not: that they are simply smaller units of the same kind' (I.M. Lewis, 1985:358). According to this view then, a nation should merely be regarded as an ethnic group writ-large. It also treats these concepts as synonymous with the concept of a 'cultural group' which, as shall be seen, is an ultimately inadequate approach. To return to the question in hand, it would appear that size is not always a satisfactory distinguishing criterion. To use such a method to distinguish nations from ethnic groups would frequently yield unsatisfactory results. Ethnic groups are not necessarily smaller than nations. For example, many immigrant communities in countries such as the USA or the United Kingdom are far larger numerically than, say, the populations of Iceland, Luxembourg or Estonia, yet most would unhesitatingly, and correctly, categorise the latter as nations and the former as ethnic groups.

One of the most notable defenders of an ethnic approach to the definition of the nation is Walker Connor (1991; 1993; 1994a; 1994b). However, Connor's approach differs from that of I.M.Lewis in that he sees some benefit in making a

conceptual distinction between 'ethnic group' and 'nation'. Yet, his criteria for making such a distinction present a number of difficulties. Firstly, Connor explicitly rejects the introduction of any political criteria in defining a nation when he talks of restricting usage of the term to 'its proper non-political meaning of a human collectivity' (Connor, 1994a:36). Accordingly, to talk of civic or political nationalism, which links the idea to the state, is terminologically inaccurate and misleading since '[n]ationalism, in correct usage, refers to an emotional attachment to one's people – one's ethnocultural group' (Connor, 1993:374). Again then, we arrive at a conception of the nation which is largely identical to that of the ethnic group. The sole criterion that Connor proposes in order to make a distinction between the two concepts is that of self-awareness.

> [A] nation is a self-aware ethnic group. An ethnic group may be readily discerned by an anthropologist or other outside observer, but until the members are themselves aware of the group's uniqueness, it is merely an ethnic group and not a nation. While an ethnic group *may*, therefore be other-defined, the nation *must* be self-defined. (Connor, 1994a:43)

Aside from the problem of how one determines whether a human collectivity is self-aware or not, something which is surely a question of degree and which varies considerably amongst individual members of the group concerned, Connor's position here would seem to conflict with some important anthropological perspectives on ethnicity. Certainly, it conflicts with Moerman's (1965) definition of ethnicity as an 'emic[1] category of ascription'. To demarcate ethnic groups solely according to other-defined, 'objectively' ascribed criteria, such as shared cultural traits, is often shown up to be an inadequate approach, as boundaries of ethnicity and culture frequently do not coincide. Perhaps the most notable research in support of this insight is that of Barth (1969; 1989). Barth's approach to the delimitation of ethnic groups emphasises the importance of the subjectively determined *boundaries* which delineate one group from another rather than the objective cultural traits which immure them. Barth (1969:14–15) writes that:

> [W]e can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities or differences [. . . ] [It] makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt behaviour – if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, [. . . ] they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A's. (Barth, 1969:14–15)

Furthermore, there may be more objective cultural variation within a single named ethnic group than exists amongst several others. This is certainly true of linguistic variation, for example (see Section 3.6.1). To refer to an objectively delineated cultural group as an ethnic group, as Connor does, is confusing because it suggests the presence of ethnicity where it may not necessarily exist. What Connor refers to as ethnic groups might better be called *potential ethnic groups*. That is to say they have a common cultural basis from which future sentiments of ethnic self-awareness might conceivably develop but which, as of yet, have not done so. Following this, it is therefore necessary to adopt a more subjective approach when delimiting ethnic

[1] A common anthropological term meaning 'from the native point of view'.

groups. What is important is not *actual* cultural difference but *perceived* or *believed* difference. As Eriksen notes:

> Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who *consider themselves* as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction [. . . ] The first fact of ethnicity is the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them. If no such principle exists there can be no ethnicity. (Eriksen, 2002:12–19) (Emphasis added)

Eriksen breaks with the traditional view of ethnicity as the 'quality of an ethnic group' (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975:1). Instead, he stresses that ethnicity should be seen as the property of the relationship *between* different groups. For that relationship to exist, communities must be aware of the existence of other groups and believe in their own difference from those groups, all of which must imply the existence of a certain level of group self-awareness. Smith (1986:22–3) draws attention to the important fact that ethnic groups always possess a collective name.

> Are there any unnamed *ethnie* (short of ruling them out by definitional *fiat*)? I do not know of any. [. . . ] [C]ollective names are a sure sign and emblem of ethnic communities, by which they distinguish themselves and summarize their 'essence' to themselves. (Smith, 1986:22–3)

Similarly, Calhoun makes the following observation:

> We know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinction between self and other, we and they, are not made [. . . ] Self-knowledge – always a construction no matter how much it feels like a discovery – is never altogether separable from claims to be known in specific ways by others. (Calhoun, 1994: 9–10)

The point here is that collective naming is an important aspect of the subjective, self-definition of ethnic groups. A group's acceptance and use of a name to refer to itself and distinguish itself from other groups again must imply a level of self-awareness. Outsiders may ascribe ethnic labels to groups of people either through ignorance or vested interest but that does not necessarily correspond to those peoples' own inhabited sense of group identity and belonging (Blommaert, 2006:38). Quite why the ethnicity of an ethnic group may be externally determined and imposed upon it, whereas nations are free to determine their own ethnic boundaries remains unclear. Indeed, this represents a contradiction at the core of Connor's distinction between ethnic groups and nations since it defines ethnicity according to different criteria in each case. If the boundaries of ethnic groups may be defined according to objective, external criteria but the ethnicity of a nation purely according to subjective perception, then we are clearly not talking about the same thing in each case, a fact which rather undermines the validity and purpose of the whole discussion. If we accept that ethnicity is present at the borders of both ethnic groups and nations, it seems odd, not to say nonsensical, to use different definitions of ethnicity in each case as the basis for deriving an analytical distinction between the two concepts.

In attempting to make such a distinction, what Connor sees as self-awareness (or lack thereof) is actually better conceived of in terms of political self-expression, mobilisation and organisation. Indeed, Connor (1994a:45) himself comes close to

acknowledging this when he writes that the 'level of ethnic solidarity that a segment of the ethnic element feels when confronted with a foreign element need not be very *important politically* and comes closer to xenophobia than to nationalism' (my emphasis). Setting aside the fact that nations seem equally capable of, and prone to, bouts of xenophobia, one comes much closer to a useful criterion for distinguishing between ethnic groups and nations when one considers the issue of the (non-) politicisation of ethnicity. The problem with ruling out any political factors in defining the nation is that it forces one to look elsewhere for, and insist upon, distinguishing traits, couched in non-political terms, such as self-awareness, which may cause one to draw false conclusions. In this case, the result is misleading because it confuses and conflates group self-consciousness and political mobilisation. The two phenomena are not the same thing. While political mobilisation certainly implies group self-consciousness, the reverse is not necessarily true. Many ethnic groups may be incapable or unwilling to organise themselves according to the nationalist principle of political and ethnic congruency, yet it does not follow that such groups do not perceive themselves as constituting distinct social communities. Gellner underlines this point, noting that the group self-awareness or self-identification of nations is not something unprecedented or unique to them:

> Will, consent, identification, were not ever absent from the human scene [...] [T]acit self-identification has operated on behalf of all kinds of groupings, larger or smaller than nations, or cutting across them, or defined horizontally in other ways. In brief, even if will were the basis of a nation (to paraphrase an idealist definition of the state), it is also the basis of so much else, that we cannot possibly define the nation in this manner. (Gellner, 1983:54)

Connor's criterion of 'self-awareness' essentially asserts a psychological difference between the concept of a nation and that of an ethnic group. However, given what we know about the nature and location of ethnicity, the validity of that assertion must be seriously questioned. Rather than looking for psychological differences, we should instead look for sociological differences between the two concepts. And, indeed, the most striking sociological difference between nations and ethnic groups is that concerning their respective levels of politicisation.

> A nation [...] must 'be in aspiration (if not yet in fact) a political community'. It must aspire to self-government, to *in some way* control 'a chunk of the earth's surface'.[2] In that way a nation is very different from something that is merely an ethnic group. (Nielsen, 1999:122)

This approach would seem to present a more satisfactory basis for distinguishing ethnic groups from nations. However, in looking to distinguish the two concepts one should be careful not to overlook their shared characteristics, of which ethnicity or ethnic character is undoubtedly the most prominent. The ignorance or denial of the shared characteristics of ethnic groups and nations is perhaps the greatest weakness in many modernist or purely 'civic' accounts of the nation as a sociological phenomenon.

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[2] The two phrases in quotation marks are taken from Miller (1995:24–5).

### *2.2.2 'Civic' Nations*

It has been argued that purely ethnic definitions of the nation which reject any non-ethnocultural criteria make it difficult to distinguish it from the concept of an ethnic group. However, by admitting political or civic criteria into the definitional arena, one is much more able to make a useful distinction between the two concepts. Some accounts of the nation, though, have made the mistake of rejecting ethnicity altogether and sought to define the nation *solely* according to non-ethnic, political criteria. Such is the case with so-called 'civic' models of nationhood which equate membership of the nation with membership of the political community of the state.

In his attempt to distinguish between *ethnies*[3] and nations, Smith (2001:13) lists the shared and differing attributes of each. Those shared attributes are a *proper name*, *common myths*, and *shared memories.* In other words, it is these subjectively determined ethnic-type attributes which unite the two concepts. The concepts are similar in that they both denote inhabited, collective cultural identities. Where they differ is with regard to their objectively observable civic or political attributes. It is helpful, as Smith (2001:14) suggests, to view the nation as a more specialised version of an ethnic group. The ethnic group, then, may be regarded as the more generic concept. The nation is the more specialised concept by virtue of the more numerous, specific conditions that must be fulfilled for it to be said to exist. For example, a nation, unlike an ethnic group, must possess or be seeking to establish a common public culture sustained by a standardised education system, a single economy and have a legal framework which (theoretically at least) enshrines common rights and duties for all members of the nation (Miller, 1995:27). A nation must also possess a territorial homeland (Krejči and Velímský, 1981). Without possessing a territory of its own, it is inconceivable that a common public culture and economic system could be established by a national group without overlapping and impinging on that of another national community, something which would likely be the source of intolerable tension and conflict (Smith, 2001:31). Whereas ethnic groups may, and frequently do, occupy their historical homeland, they need not necessarily do so, with it often sufficing for them to only possess the memory of, or some other link with, some territory of (believed) origin. May (2001:54) notes that 'the "nation" includes five key dimensions – psychological (consciousness of forming a group), territorial, historical, cultural and political'. An ethnic group may only include three or four of these dimensions. It includes the psychological, historical and cultural dimensions and may or may not include the territorial dimension. What it does not include is the political dimension. It is with the incorporation of the political dimension that the change from ethnic group to nation takes place.

A common mistake has been to pursue the diseased logic that because nations differ from ethnic groups by virtue of their civic or political attributes, they can therefore be defined purely according to such features. The myth of the non-ethnic,

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[3] Smith uses the French term in the absence of a single English word to denote an ethnic group.

political nation has been a seductive and persistent one. Partly, this can again be blamed on abuse of terminological licence with the interutilisation of, and resultant lack of, coherent conceptual distinction between the terms *nation*, *state* and *nation-state.* The frequent interchangeable use of the terms *nation* and *state* has given rise to a similarly frequent, imprecise use of their collocation – the term *nation-state.* Once belonging to the legal community of the state becomes conflated with belonging to the nation, it is easy to see how most states become almost indiscriminately referred to as *nation-states.* This confusion stems, to a great extent, from a reluctance amongst some modernist theorists to admit ethnicity as a qualifying factor for nationhood (Hobsbawm, 1990; Balibar, 1991). However, if one accepts that nations do indeed have an ethnic character, one is in a better position to unravel some of this terminological disarray.

Membership in the political community represented by the state is an objective status, realised and easily conceptualised through the granting of formal citizenship status. Yet, the granting of citizenship status does not automatically carry with it incorporation into the ethnic community of the nation with which the state is titularly associated. Even many states which style themselves as nation-states, such as France, cannot take the ethnicity of their citizens for granted. The fact that many immigrants from Africa and elsewhere have acquired French passports does not necessarily mean that they have become French in the fully appreciated sense of the term because, as has been argued, belonging to a nation denotes more than mere membership in a political community. Rather, one may say that it denotes membership in an *ethnopolitical* community, something which is less easily and tangibly acquired, requiring, as it does, acceptance into/by the ethnic community and subjective internalisation of that ethnic community's mythical and historical narratives. As Smith (1986:136) observes, 'the newly arrived, though formal citizens, could never be part of the *pays réel*, of the solidary community of residents by birth'. Even the adoption of aspects of the cultural behaviour of the native ethnic community, whilst perhaps facilitating some level of integration into society as a whole, does not necessarily lead to the easy incorporation of outsiders into the ethnic community of the nation.

Although certain nationalist discourses may style their associated nation according to purely universalistic, civic/political ideals, they inevitably reveal themselves to contain some ethnic content and to, perhaps unwittingly, impose some ethnic criteria which requires fulfilment for acceptance into the national community. This can be explained by what Connor (1994b:203) refers to as the 'dichotomy between the realm of national identity and that of reason'. This is to say that shared philosophical or political values do not appear to be a sufficiently potent basis for generating a meaningful sense of community and uniting people under the umbrella of a common identity. As Kymlicka notes:

> People decide who they want to share a country with by asking who they identify with, who they feel solidarity with. What holds Americans together, despite their lack of common values, is the fact that they share an identity as Americans. Conversely, what keeps Swedes and Norwegians apart, despite the presence of shared values, is the lack of a shared identity. (Kymlicka, 1995:188)

Instead, it is the subjective belief in shared culture, historical experience and common myths of descent which plays the most significant role in generating those communal identities which may be termed 'national'. What else, for example, can explain French references to 'nos ancêtres les Gaulois' (our ancestors the Gauls), a claim which would hardly stand up to rigorous genealogical analysis and which seems utterly ludicrous when applied to the populations of France's overseas departments and territories (the so-called DOM-TOM)? Ethnic myths need not and frequently do not contain a great deal of historical truth and accuracy. Their purpose is not so much to educate as to indoctrinate. What is important is that they are frequently perceived as containing truth (or elements thereof) and can therefore become sites for expression and possible mobilisation of identity. Those polities whose citizens have no elements of a pervasive, unifying identity are likely to struggle to command their allegiance, particularly if the state is also unable or unwilling to generate any meaningful instrumental attachments between itself and its citizens (see Section 6.4).

## 2.3 Modernity and the Idea of the Nation as Common Culture

Dissatisfaction with the ethnic/civic models of nationhood has led some scholars to try to transcend the dichotomy and propose an alternative option based on the existence of a common public culture. Proponents of the 'cultural nation' acknowledge that the purely civic nation is a fiction. However, they seek to separate out the concepts of culture and ethnicity, thereby effectively introducing a new cultural/ethnic dichotomy.

> [I]t is [...] a mistake to equate cultural nationalism with ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism, as all nationalisms, is cultural, but not all cultural nationalisms are ethnic. Cultural nationalism defines the nation in terms of a common encompassing culture. (Nielsen, 1999:125)

The problem here is the troublesome implication that this 'common encompassing culture' can be easily free of any ethnic content or significance. When this common culture is composed of elements, such as language, which are also strongly associated with the culture of a particular ethnic group, it is difficult, if not often impossible, to engage with them without perceiving or invoking their ethnic significance. It is doubtful whether culture, and particularly an element as central as language, can simply be 'de-ethnicised' in such a way (Oakes and Warren, 2007: Section 5.3).

The equation of nationhood with culture instead of ethnic identity has been an assumption of much modernist thought on the nation. According to Gellner (1983:135), similar cultural units which do not unite in common nation-statehood are in 'violation of the nationalist principle'. Modernist accounts have tended to focus on common culture, instead of ethnicity, as the basis for nationhood since the admission of ethnicity is perceived as undermining their thesis that nations are somehow uniquely modern phenomena. A clear-cut distinction or historical fissure

is often drawn between supposedly 'modern' nations and 'pre-modern' or even 'anachronistic' ethnic groups (May, 2001:25–28). The most notable and persuasive proponent of this modernist position on the origins and character of nations has been Gellner (e.g. 1964; 1983; 1987; 1997). Gellner argues that the pervasive level of public cultural homogeneity and the types of fluid, entropic social networks required by modern scientific-industrial society represent a historically unprecedented model of social organisation. And, indeed, there can be little disagreement with this view. To this extent then, the modernist position is eminently tenable. The problem arrives when one attempts to equate absolutely this modern complex of cultural conditions with the idea of the nation. If nations were simply just the sum of certain objectively delimited cultural behaviours then one would much more easily be able to assert their absolute modernity. However, to adopt this approach is to overlook the psychological dimension of nationhood. If one examines this psychological dimension, one finds a number of similarities and continuities with the psychological dimension of 'pre-modern' ethnic group identities. Both ethnic groups and nations make use of bygone symbols, historical myths (myths of origin, destiny, rebirth etc.) and memories as part of their collective psychological equipment. This is the thesis of 'ethno-symbolism' developed by Smith (1986) who argues that modern cultures need to possess a core of ethnic symbols, memories and myths, which often have their origin in pre-modern communities, if they are to generate sentiments of solidarity and community which may be termed 'national identities'. Of course, nations may invent and fabricate such myths and memories in the modern era, as Hobsbawm (1983) has most notably explicated (see also Thiesse, 1999), but to deny the possibility of inheriting any such memories from pre-modern (i.e pre-industrial) periods would seem to be a vastly overstated claim.

This last point can be further illuminated by the case of modern national languages in Europe. Most contemporary European national languages are standardised, elaborated varieties of vernacular forms belonging to the various European dialect continua (S.Wright, 2004:19). These languages are the result of conscious construction, as is evidenced by the fact that they are often categorised as *Ausbau* languages, from the German, meaning 'built up' or 'built away from' (Kloss, 1967b; Joseph, 1987; S.Wright, 2004:48–50). Such languages are the result of planning and selection, insofar as linguistic items are consciously included or excluded from them, normally on non-linguistic grounds. Although many European standard languages are modern constructs, being the products of modern nationalist movements, they are nevertheless still rooted in linguistic varieties spoken in the pre-modern era.

> National languages are not created out of thin air; most of them are, after all, based on idioms spoken by a large number of people. The national languages of the majority of east-central European states are based on Slavic regional dialects. Irish Gaelic, although admittedly spoken by relatively few people, had been used by monks for several centuries. Similarly, the modern Hebrew language spoken in Israel was not, as Hobsbawm has argued 'virtually invented' (Hobsbawm, 1990:54); rather it was based on a language that, although largely used for religious purposes and not for secular ones, has never died out. (Safran, 1999:83)

In other words, modern national languages, even though their functional expansion and elaborated corpuses are products of the modern nationalist era, still maintain a line of descent with their associated nation's pre-history.

Again though, one must be careful to distinguish between two distinct claims – namely between that regarding the modernity of nations and that regarding the modernity of nationalism. Nationalism, by which is meant the ideological doctrine which requires that the nation possess some measure of political self-government, may, indeed, be rightly regarded as a modern sociological phenomenon. Kedourie (1966:9), for example, observes that '[n]ationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century'. Whether nationalism can actually be said to have been invented by conscious human agency is debatable. Teleological, determinist theories, such as that of Gellner, see nations rather as a necessary, inevitable product of modern, industrial social conditions and not the result of the force of some human idea, hence Gellner's (1983:55) famous remark: 'It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round'. However, the significance of Kedourie's observation for this discussion is that it traces the origin of nationalism as a pre-eminent, political ideology to a reasonably specific (historically speaking) period in time and geographical location (Europe). Furthermore, we can agree that the existence of national identities as mass phenomena, pervading all levels of society, is a product of the modern nationalist age. The classic illustration of this fact is found in E. Weber's (1979) renowned study on the modernisation of rural France. Weber shows how, even as late as the beginning of the twentieth century, many peasants in France still did not conceive of themselves as Frenchmen/women, continuing to identify solely with their highly localised communities. Weber (1979:73) cites one 19th century observer of rural French life who noted that: 'Every valley is still a little world that differs from the neighbouring world as Mercury does from Uranus. Every village is a clan, a sort of state with its own patriotism'. Undoubtedly, this situation was replicated throughout Europe at the time. Again though, one should not infer from this that the content and function of a national identity, once it eventually becomes fully established throughout society, is itself necessarily a unique product of that age. The spread of national identities in countries such as France might better be conceived in terms of *ethnic-core expansion (both social and geographical) with concomitant cultural modernisation and politicisation*. That is to say that cultural modernisation provided the conditions for elite ethnic identities to simultaneously expand downwards through the social class structure and spread outwards from a geographical centre. In this way, under modern conditions, that pre-existing ethnic identity is transformed into a shared mass, vertical national identity whilst still retaining some or much of its previous ethnic psychological content and function.

In post-colonial contexts, the existence of a state-associated national identity is, on the whole, not (yet) a multi-class phenomenon whereas in most European countries a sense of common national identity permeates all levels of society. A writer such as Connor (1994b:210–226) would argue that one cannot readily talk of a national identity until it has become a mass phenomenon. It is partly this assertion which leads Smith (1998:164) to talk of 'Connor's modernism with regard

to the advent of the nation'. Yet, should the restriction of an identity to a social elite or middle class mean that one cannot *a priori* term that identity 'national'? There would seem little good reason for doing so. As already mentioned in this chapter, mass membership is a characteristic of many nations in the modern era, but not of nations *per se.* Furthermore, nation formation is a gradual process of accumulation and expansion and so, in reality, no sharp division can be drawn between pre-modern and modern eras. What one might say is that many post-colonial societies are currently at an earlier stage of sociological modernisation than their European counterparts. Yet, does this fact invalidate the 'nationness' of those groups of individuals in post-colonial societies who do in fact identify with a national community represented and safeguarded by the state? The question of 'when is a nation?', in the sense in which Connor poses it, is scientifically uninteresting and somewhat unanswerable without the imposition of some artificially arbitrary and contrived criteria. To impose any such criteria would necessarily prefigure the outcome of one's analysis and potentially support an impartial agenda. If one wanted to show the absolute modernity of nations, then certainly, imposing the criterion of mass membership would aid one in developing a credible argument to that effect. However, to do so is to skew the analysis to fit a pre-determined conclusion. To avoid this, the analysis must lead us to the conclusion without the interference of vested interest, which requires that no unnecessary, contrived criteria be imposed onto the exercise. Therefore, given that the nation is ultimately a psychological principle, we can say that the nation, or at least the ethnic core of the nation, exists whenever any people entertain a genuine, subjectively determined belief in its existence. As Eriksen has observed:

> At the identity level, nationhood is a matter of belief. The nation, that is the *Volk* imagined by nationalists, is a product of nationalist ideology; it is not the other way round. A nation exists from the moment a handful of influential people decide that it should be so, and it starts, in most cases, as an urban elite phenomenon. (Eriksen, 2002: 104)

As a final word on the question of the modernity of nations, one can assert that nations are a blend of both modern and pre-modern elements. The modern elements are those civic/political characteristics which distinguish nations from ethnic groups. Yet, no nation can be said to exist without some ethnic core, some subjective belief amongst its members that they constitute a historical community represented through symbols, myths and memories. It is this ethnic core which prevents us from qualifying nations as a uniquely modern phenomenon since ethnicity also existed prior to the coming of the era of nationalism. New ethnic identities may indeed develop in the modern era, as Joireman (2003: 129–145; see Section 2.4) illustrates in the case of Eritrea, but they can only be regarded as novel in their particular, situational sense and not in some wider phenomenal sense. Ethnicity, then, is the common factor, the historical continuity between the non-politicised ethnic identities of the pre-modern era, many of which still exist and flourish today, and the politicised national identities of the modern era.

## 2.4 The Routes to Nationhood: Politicisation of Ethnicity Versus Ethnicisation of Polity

Two broad routes to nationhood can be identified. Traditional analyses of nation formation have often tended to classify them separately as the 'nation-to-state' route or the 'state-to-nation' route. The former may be seen as analogous to the idea of 'ethnic' nationalism and the latter to that of 'civic' nationalism. While the basic emphasis of this distinction is correct and useful, it is also slightly unsatisfactory since it implies the necessary presence of a state, or rather, the necessary aspiration for ownership of a state for nationalism to be said to have occurred. Although nationalism implies some degree of politicisation and the existence of some form of polity, it need not *necessarily* be a state.[4] That is, it need not necessarily be a state in the common understanding of the term. For example, in common understanding, provincial government structures are not generally conceived of as states. However, in Québec, for instance, official reference is often made to *l'état du Québec* with regard to the governance that comes with provincial powers (Leigh Oakes: personal communication). Equally, an argument could be made for the state-like character of the European Union, as it acquires ever more influence over the lives of European citizens. Might it be in the future that the current member states of the EU come to be regarded as provincial sub-divisions of a wider EU state or 'super-state'? This is a relatively minor point in the context of this study but it does go to illustrate the way in which the meaning and usage of such politically significant terms is not immutable, insofar as the specificity of the concept to which they refer is liable to fluctuate and may be subject to contestation by vested interests. However, for the remainder of this discussion the term 'state' will be employed according to its most widespread contemporary understanding.

In order to avoid the necessary equation of nationalism with the concept of the state, instead of thinking in terms of 'agitation or aspiration for a state' it is preferable to think in more general terms of 'politicisation' and instead of the more specific notion of a 'state', one should employ the more generic concept of a 'polity'. As Sharp (1999:67) notes: 'The international courtesy that describes all states as "nation-states" hides the fact that they do not have a monopoly on nation-building'. In fact, if all states were indeed nation-states then the concept of nation-building would be redundant. It is precisely the widespread absence of nation-states (Beer and Jacob, 1985:1) that makes nation-building projects such common phenomena. Part of the ideology of nation-building is to assert the existence of a nation that is coterminous and inseparable from the state but assertion alone does not bring the nation-state, as a discernible sociological form, into existence.

The first route to nationhood is consequently better formulated as the 'politicisation of ethnicity'. This occurs when an ethnic community begins to organise itself with the intention of securing some measure of self-government, sometimes with the intention of acquiring its own state or sometimes aspiring no further than

[4] See, for example, McRoberts (2001) on Catalan nation-building.

gaining a more limited degree of self-government within a wider state structure. Nationalist demands for group self-determination do not always extend as far as to constitute demands for fully independent statehood. For example, Welsh demands for representation within the United Kingdom seem to have been largely satisfied by the introduction of some degree of devolved government and by measures aimed at the protection and promotion of the Welsh language (Jenkins, 1991). As May (2001:79) notes: 'The history of Welsh nationalism [...] clearly demonstrates that there are means other than state recognition by which national distinctiveness can be attained and maintained'. The absence of their own state does not make groups such as the Welsh any less national than those groups that do possess a state. The presence or absence of a state does not significantly impact upon the fundamental nature of the psychological bonds of national identity.

The second route to nationhood occurs through what may be termed the 'ethnicisation of a polity'. In such cases, a polity, typically a state although not necessarily, in the absence of any appropriately correspondent ethnic/national identity, seeks to create one amongst its diverse citizenry. This process has become known as 'nation-building' (Eriksen, 1990; MacLaughlin, 2001; Weinstock, 2004; S. Wright, 2000a; 2004). Kolstø (2000) describes nation-building as 'an architectural metaphor which [...] implies the existence of consciously acting agents such as architects, engineers and carpenters, and the like'. The conscious will of nation-builders is reflected in the formulation and implementation of things such as education and language policies and the choice and promotion of national symbols, all of which aim at social engineering. This leads us to another characteristic of nation-building policies, namely that they are invariably top-down endeavours. That is to say that they have tended to consist of the state or other polity imposing measures, such as the introduction of particular languages or educational curricula, upon its population with little or no consultation and often a good degree of coercion (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997:196).

Geldenhuys (2000) observes that '[t]he very notion of nation-building suggests that something is amiss: the "nation" in question either does not exist and needs to be built anew, or suffers from serious defects and should be repaired'. In most African cases, it is generally a case of building the nation anew. Owing to the somewhat arbitrary nature of their genesis, the frontiers of most African states are generally incongruent with ethnic boundaries and contain a multitude of diverse ethnic groups and, therefore, tend not to have a naturally corresponding national unit (Fardon and Furniss, 1994). Consequently, African (and other post-colonial) nation-building has frequently been a question of creating a common national identity amongst disparate groups from scratch. When used in the European context, the term 'nation-building' tends not to carry so much the suggestion of the nation having been built anew. Rather, it invariably suggests the dominance and (attempted) incorporation of peripheral (socially and geographically) ethnic groups by a single core ethnic group. This is certainly the case in countries such as France, Spain and Britain where a single core ethnoculture was imposed and promoted (with varying degrees of success and resistance) to the detriment of the various regional ethnocultures in each country. In these cases, the political dominance of the core ethnic group meant that the ethnic character of the state-associated national unit could be taken somewhat

for granted. In most post-colonial African states, the ethnic foundations of nation-building are not so easily determined. The often extreme ethnic diversity found within most African states means that the selection and promotion of a pre-existing ethnoculture (or elements thereof) as the basis of the state-associated national identity is likely to prove a highly controversial and divisive measure. Post-colonial nation-building projects have often been blighted by the fact that there is little pre-existing ethnic material which may serve as an acceptable basis for the creation of a new, shared national identity. Given the serious difficulties involved in trying to engineer a sense of national identity in such ethnically diverse and frequently deeply divided societies, it is perhaps not surprising that the ethnic element of nation-building is often overlooked or seen as inappropriate. Consequently, nation-building discourses in countries such as South Africa tend to promote a highly political or civic conception of national identity which is to be clearly distinguished from group identities based on ethnocultural loyalties. The idea of the state-bounded political nation has been advanced as a means of overcoming potentially divisive ethnic attachments.

> The political nation refers to a group of people – which can include the whole population, but not necessarily – who are bound together by a loyalty to the state, its institutions and symbols and to the population as a whole. This emotional union, or patriotism, takes precedence over group loyalties (for example, towards linguistic, cultural or religious communities) [. . . ] With the government as the agent of nation-building, ethnic identity is underemphasized and even suppressed, while a new national identity and loyalty is consciously cultivated. (Geldenhuys, 2000)[5]

The influence of the ethnic/civic contrast when conceptualising nationhood appears to be strong. Webb (2002a:141), for example, chooses to use the term *nation* to refer to 'the people of a territory united under a single government, country, state' as opposed to its 'other meaning' of a 'stable, historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and language in common'. Elsewhere, Elaigwu (1992:429) writes that '[n]ation-building [. . . ] is the widespread acceptance of the processes of state-building; it is the creation of a political community that gives fuller meaning to the life of the state'. Webb's preferred definition of nation (in the South African context, at least) leads one to ask 'what is it that actually unites the people of a territory under a single government, country, state?' Presumably, the implication is that, in the absence of a historical sense of community, distinctive culture and common language, people are expected to unify around a set of common political values. Nation-building, then, is styled in this case as the creation of a political identity that can be neatly distinguished from any ethnocultural identities that citizens may have.

> Implicit in this view of nation-building is the idea of *multiple identities.* In the modern state, whether in Europe or Africa, citizens have more than one identity, some of these identities being cultural and the others political. In the same way as a citizen of Belgium can have

[5] This translation and, indeed, all other subsequent translations from non-English language sources are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

> a Flemish identity, be a Belgian and also a European, so citizens of African states can be Buthelezi's, Zulu's [sic] as well as South African. (Webb, 2002a:143)

Some further comment is needed on this notion of 'multiple identities'. Smith (1998:201) distinguishes the notion of 'multiple identities' from what he refers to as the 'onion character' of ethnic identities, whereby an individual may have several ethnic identities that may be visually conceptualised in terms of concentric circles, with each smaller circle being encompassed by the larger. For Smith, the term 'multiple identities' implies the existence of social identities of a fundamentally different sort. It implies the co-existence, although not necessarily in harmony, of national or ethnic identities alongside identities centring upon such things as class, gender or other 'lifestyle' identities such as religion or sexuality. Smith would regard Webb's example above, whereby a South African identity encompasses a Zulu identity which encompasses a Buthelezi identity, etc. (as an additional thought, one might also conceivably insert an additional circle into that example, namely a circle of black identity between the South African and Zulu circles), as an example of concentric ethnic identities and not of multiplie identities. Now, it is not known whether Webb has used the term 'multiple identities' in the strict sense that Smith demands. After all, there is no fundamental illogicality in Webb's use of the term. There is no real reason why the term 'multiple identities' may not refer to a multiplicity of ethnic/national identities. However, the fact that Webb has made a distinction between 'political' and 'cultural' identities in this context indicates that he, unlike Smith, does indeed view the 'state' identities he refers to (Belgian and South African) as being of a fundamentally different sort, i.e. political and non-ethnic, from the sub-state ethnic identities (Flemish and Zulu).

This distinction between the political and the cultural nation is somewhat reminiscent of Connor's (1994b) distinction between *ethnonationalism* and *patriotism*, although Connor would divorce totally the concept of a nation from that of patriotism. For Connor, loyalty to the political-territorial state must not be confused with loyalty to one's ethnocultural group, the former being a case of patriotism rather than nationalism. According to this view, then, to refer to attempts to create a state-bounded political identity as 'nation-building' is a misnomer – 'Contrary to its nomenclature, the "nation-building" school has in fact been dedicated to building viable states' (Connor, 1994a:40). Can this confusion be explained merely as the consequence of terminological inaccuracy? Certainly, in popular understanding, the terms *nationalism* and *patriotism* are frequently perceived as being synonymous. Dictionaries also often seem less sure of any absolute conceptual distinction between the two terms. The explanation of terminological inaccuracy would perhaps be possible if one could indeed draw and maintain such a razor sharp distinction between political and ethnocultural identities. However, the empirical data would not seem to support such a conclusion. In many cases, the line between patriotism and nationalism cannot always be so neatly demarcated. For example, Smith (2001:16) notes that:

> [T]he English have always found it impossible to distinguish their own English ethnonationalism from a British patriotism, which they conceive of equally as their 'own'. [...]

> [I]t reflects the way in which British patriotism was felt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to be a 'natural extension' of English ethnic nationalism and how a British nation came to be viewed by the English and not a few Scots (North Britons), as a coming together of the various nations inhabiting a united kingdom. If we recall the frequency of nationalism without nations, does it invalidate the idea, and the historicity, of a British nationalism (as opposed to a British patriotism, in Connor's sense), if ultimately an integrated British nation failed to materialize? (Smith, 2001:16)

In other words, can we confidently assert that sentiments of Britishness are activated only by a loyalty to the British state and its institutions and are devoid of any sense of historical communality, memory and solidarity that might bind the English, Welsh, Scottish and Ulstermen together, particularly when faced with foreign, i.e. non-British, elements, and which therefore might be described as ethnic? One must naturally be aware of overstatement but it would seem misleading to pretend that, despite the existence and persistence of some significant historical internal divisions and hostilities, many British citizens are not also bound in some (albeit perhaps fairly loose) way by a perception of shared cultural attributes and a sense of common historical experience.

The distinction between nationalism and patriotism is even less clear in the French case to the extent that it almost fades into irrelevance. How does one separate a French patriot from a French nationalist? As Smith (2001:16) again asks: 'How can we in practice separate the French nation from France, the national state, when so many of the key symbols of French nationalism are political?' The point here is that, in the French case, the political and the ethnic are so irredeemably intertwined as to be almost inseparable. One might counter by arguing that in African and other post-colonial contexts where the state does not have any naturally associated ethnic identity there is no need to endow it with one. However, the question that needs to be entertained by those engaging in nation-building projects in such contexts is whether widespread loyalty to, and identification with, the state can be cultivated amongst its citizens purely on the basis of political values and in the absence of any unifying ethnic-type sentiments. Whilst constitutional or institutional patriotism (Habermas, 1996; Ingram, 1996) is certainly highly desirable and important as far as securing the legitimacy of the state is concerned, it is doubtful whether it alone is a sufficiently substantial force for the long-term maintenance of a viable social order. Smith (1986:17) highlights this point when he writes that 'in order to forge a "nation" today, it is vital to create and crystallize ethnic components, the lack of which is likely to constitute a serious impediment to "nation-building"'. This is in line with the understanding of the concept of the nation, established in this chapter, as a community displaying both ethnic and political characteristics. Therefore, if nation builders are to do as their name suggests, it seems incumbent upon them to seek both an ethnic and a political basis for nationhood. Seeking an ethnic basis is no easy task, of course. Attempting to inculcate the population of a country such as South Africa, for example, with a perceived sense of common history, descent and shared culture may appear to many as a hopeless endeavour given the extent of the ethnic diversity and the deep inter-communal historical divisions and suspicions that exist. One must remember, however, that most post-colonial African

states are relatively recent constructions in comparison with many of their European counterparts which have had centuries in which to create ethnic myths and forge a sense of shared historical experience amongst their previously diverse and disunited populations (Thiesse, 1999).

Most African states have been judged failures on the basis of less than half a century of nation-building efforts. Yet, this should not lead us to dismiss the possibility of states forging some new ethnic identity amongst their citizens. Joireman's (2003) discussion of Eritrea provides evidence of the emergence of a new ethnic identity in the post-colonial period. Joireman (2003:129) writes that the Italian colonisation of Eritrea 'left a people with a unique historical experience that was the basis for a separate ethnic identity and "ultimately" a nationalist movement of great force'. This Eritrean identity was further crystallised and politicised in the subsequent war of independence with Ethiopia. This war facilitated the styling of the Ethiopians as the common foe, as the 'Other' in contrast to which Eritrean national identity was to be constituted. The important point here is that Eritrean nationalists did not concentrate on promoting a purely civic/political conception of the Eritrean nation in order to recruit ideological loyalties. Joireman highlights how they embarked upon a conscious campaign of national myth making.

> The EPLF [Eritrean People's Liberation Force] engaged the arts in the creation of a national myth – the myth of a shared history among diverse ethnic groups with different livelihoods and different historical experiences. The use of drama, music, visual art and poetry allowed the EPLF to reach and educate an Eritrean population that spoke many languages and included many people who could not read or write. The EPLF was incredibly effective in creating a national myth. By the time of independence, Eritrea was a country of Eritreans with a shared identity. (Joireman, 2003:135)

The Eritrean case highlights the importance of not neglecting the ethnic dimension of nation-building, as it is invariably this aspect which lends a nationalist movement its great ability to inspire deep emotional solidarity and attachment. Now, this is not to say that all post-colonial states are likely to be as successful as Eritrea in fostering a new, united sense of ethnic identity amongst their populations, nor is it to imply any normative compulsion that they should attempt to do so. What is being said is that if top-down nation-builders wish to effectively create a state-associated national identity, some attention must be paid to the creation of some ethnic content. The serious difficulty of this task does not, in any way, negate its necessity as far as nation-building is concerned. It is necessary because an appeal to certain political values and institutions is highly unlikely to prove an adequate means of uniting diverse and frequently conflict-ridden societies. At the same time, there also appears to be an inevitable degree of antagonism between the ethnic and civic dimensions of nationhood.

> [A]sserting the principle of citizenship would not be in itself sufficient to create a community of citizens. Sovereignty and citizenship are fictions. You cannot rally individuals to such abstract ideas. [...] The democratic nation, even though it is founded on the notion of citizenship, cannot but maintain the ethnic dimensions of collective life. There is an essential tension between, on the one hand, the formally rational and abstract ideal of citizenship, of a political and legal nature, and on the other hand the necessity in every

> society to create a social link that is necessarily 'ethnic' or 'community-orientated,' that is direct and emotional between the citizens. (Schnapper, 1996:231–2)

Appeals to rationality in the name of citizenship are always likely to come second to the emotional force of appeals to sub-state ethnic identity if the two ever come into conflict (Connor, 1994b:196–209). Consequently, the state-promoted national identity must acquire some emotional power of its own if nation-building is to have any hope of success. Schnapper (1996:232) goes on to describe the notion of a 'community of citizens' as a paradox. Nation-building requires that people become more than 'fellow citizens', rather it requires that the citizenry becomes a historically situated, self-aware community. For this to happen, it is necessary that citizens come to develop sentiments reflecting some degree of ethnic solidarity. As inconceivable as it may sound, given the levels of inter-ethnic conflict and the negative connotations associated with the very concept of ethnicity, the building of a new national identity in a country such as South Africa requires the creation of what is essentially a new South African ethnic identity, much as occurred in Eritrea, which may complement the political dimensions of nationhood such as adherence to, and advocacy of, the values expressed in the country's constitution. Quite what the basis and contents of that new ethnic identity might be is not evident *a priori* and can only be determined through popular acceptance or rejection of particular elements. Given the frequent centrality of language to ethnicity, it would be remiss of nation builders not to pay serious attention to the possibilities that language may offer in attempts to create and consolidate the national community. The role of language in the specific South African nation-building context is discussed from various perspectives in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. However, let us now turn to the matter of the relationship between language and national identity in more general, theoretical terms.

## 2.5 The Relationship Between Language and Ethnic and National Identities

The fact that questions of language have frequently been the site of nationalist movements and struggles on every continent of the earth, from the Basques in Spain (Conversi, 1997) to the Tamils in Sri Lanka (Jeyaratnam-Wilson, 2000) and the Afrikaners in South Africa (see Chapter 5), suggests an intimate relationship between language and national identity. Having discerned the existence of some form of linkage between the two, the task becomes one of identifying the precise nature of that relationship. This task is complicated by the fact that in pursuing this relationship, it soon becomes obvious that one cannot readily make universal generalisations from the analysis of specific cases. Indeed, it is extremely doubtful whether a universal, *a priori* predictive model of language and national identity could be constructed. One of the questions which has most preoccupied theorists of language and nation is whether language is a determining feature of national identity. This question spawns a number of other questions such as 'does loss of language equal loss of identity?' and 'can a nation exist in the absence of a common language?' In this section, an

attempt will be made to answer some of these questions. First, though, in line with our understanding of the nation as a kindred, though more specialised, version of the ethnic group, we would do well to begin by reflecting on the relationship between language and ethnic identity.

### *2.5.1 Language and Ethnic Identity*

Earlier in this chapter, an understanding was reached that ethnic groups are constituted through a process of subjective self-differentiation. Ethnicity, it was argued, occurs at the boundaries which delimit one group from another. These boundaries are usually constituted by the subjective belief in (elements of) cultural difference. The particular cultural elements that are erected as group boundaries may vary from case to case. Language, as a highly salient cultural form, may therefore readily serve a boundary function. And, indeed, linguistic boundaries often coincide with ethnic ones. However, in some cases they do not, and when this is so, some other diacritical element must take the place of language.

> [L]anguage may be a salient marker of ethnic identity in one instance but not in another. While a specific language may well be identified as a significant cultural marker of a particular ethnic group, there is no inevitable correspondence between language and ethnicity. In effect, linguistic differences do not always correspond to ethnic ones – membership of an ethnic group does not necessarily entail association with a particular language, either for individual members or for the group itself. Likewise, more than one ethnic group can share the same language while continuing without difficulty to maintain their own distinct ethnic (national) identities. (May, 2001:129)

At the most fundamental level, there would appear little more to say about the relationship between language and ethnicity. Sometimes language will serve as a marker of ethnic identity, sometimes it will not. In the same way, religious differences will sometimes serve as ethnic boundaries and sometimes they will not. The same can also be said for certain physical characteristics such as skin colour. This conclusion obviously denies any essential link between any particular cultural element and ethnic identity. What is important is that *some* cultural element is erected as a boundary marker. None of this is to imply that the selection of cultural elements as ethnic boundaries is some kind of aleatoric happening. The ethnic salience of certain cultural forms is obviously dependent on the particular communities and sociohistorical contexts in question (Giles and Coupland, 1991:99). However, although one must deny any absolute, essential language-ethnic identity link, one can readily observe, and ask why it should be, that language seems to be the most frequently invoked marker of ethnic identity.

The reason that language is so often a central feature of ethnicity is a consequence of its simultaneous capacity to both include and exclude (Heller, 1987). Knowledge of a particular linguistic variety enables one to communicate with those who also speak that variety or quite similar varieties. Conversely, lack of that knowledge seriously constrains one's ability to do so. The ability to communicate may allow the bonds of identification and, hence, a sense of community to develop between

fellow speakers of a language (S. Wright, 2000a). In this light, Anderson (1983:133) notes language's 'capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*' (emphasis in original). We may say, then, that language is a frequent facilitator of ethnic group (self-)identification. Yet, the examples of ethnic groups which have neither a unique language of their own, nor a language which all members speak but may share with members of other ethnic groups, preclude us from invoking any universal principles regarding the nature of the relationship between language and ethnicity. For instance, one thinks of diaspora immigrant groups, such as the Jews, whose common ethnic identity remains intact in spite of the fact that most have assimilated to the majority language group of the different societies that they inhabit. For example, it is highly unlikely that a functionally monolingual-English American Jew would be able to communicate effectively with most fellow Jews from somewhere such as Ukraine or Russia. However, even in the Jewish case, one should not overlook the symbolic importance of the Hebrew language, which was used regularly, and still is, even before its modern revival in Israel (Fishman, 1991:289–291) for ceremonial purposes by Jewish communities throughout the world. Hebrew may therefore be seen as serving as a central symbolic expression of Jewish ethnicity, suggesting that even in the absence of a common means of vernacular communication, there still exists a significant relationship between language and ethnicity in this case. Similar claims have also been made regarding the relationship between the Irish language and Irish ethnic/national identity (Oakes, 2001:3), although the difference with the Jewish example is that the Irish do also possess a common means of everyday communication, namely the various linguistic varieties which go under the name of Irish English. The unmistakable distinctiveness of Irish English means that it is also able to serve as a potent marker of Irish identity, suggesting that a single identity may be represented by, and enacted through, more than just one single linguistic variety.

The empirical reality that language either may or may not be a central feature of ethnic identity would seem to deal a fatal blow to the related theories of 'linguistic nationalism' and 'linguistic determinism' (in its absolute version) which have been the subject of much discussion amongst contemporary and historical theorists. The theory of linguistic nationalism is best associated with the German 'Romantic' writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most notably Herder, von Humboldt and Fichte. These writers conceived of the nation as an organic, perennial, divinely inspired entity whose essence or *Volksgeist* was located principally in language. For von Humboldt, a nation's language was 'its spirit and its spirit is its language' (Cowan, 1963:277). Fichte (1968:184) confidently asserted that 'it is beyond doubt that, wherever a separate language can be found, there a separate nation exists'. This, of course, raises the question of how one goes about defining a separate language – a question of very little conceptual value or relevance to the science of linguistics (see Section 3.6.2.3) – and is itself illustrative of the unscientific approach of such writers, hence the label 'Romantic' that is commonly attached to them. Given the supposed absolute centrality of language to national identity, Fichte's assertion of the superiority of the German language naturally entailed the assertion of the superiority of the German nation. This superiority supposedly derived from the

fact that, according to Fichte: 'the German speaks a language which has been alive ever since it first issued from the force of nature, whereas the other Teutonic races speak a language which has movement on the surface but is dead at the root' (Fichte, 1968:58–59). For Fichte, languages such as French and English which contain high numbers of borrowed, foreign words and constructions were viewed as composite, derived and therefore corrupt languages which made spontaneous, sensuous speech and thought impossible. German, on the other hand, is supposedly an uncontaminated 'original' language which 'does not exert an influence on life; it is itself the life of him who thinks in this fashion' (cited in Kedourie, 1966:67).

Furthermore, from this supposed critical centrality of language to national identity, the Romantic writers claimed to be able to derive normative prescriptions, as Kedourie (1966:68) notes of their thought: 'A group speaking the same language is known as a nation, and a nation ought to constitute a state. [. . . ] [A] group of people speaking a certain language may claim the right to preserve its language'. Obviously, applying the rigour of scientific analysis to these ideas makes them appear as ontologically unsound pieces of pseudo-religious, deeply prejudiced, mystical yearning. Of course, there was a clear partisan agenda behind much of the German Romantic nationalist writing. In large part, it was a reaction against the so-called Age of Reason and Enlightenment philosophy associated with the French Revolution and the modern French state. Kedourie (1966:60) also attributes it to the jealousy of German intellectuals who resented their lowly position in German society while the French intellectual and cultural tradition was revered by the privileged classes throughout Europe. This animosity towards the French often manifested itself in quite choleric terms. Herder (1881:128–30), for example, in his poem *An die Deutschen* (To the Germans), in reference to the French language, famously exhorted the German people to 'Spew out the ugly slime of the Seine, Speak German, O You German!'.[6] The difference between the classic French Republican view on the relationship between language and national identity and that of the German Romantics is perhaps best illustrated by Ernest Renan's oft-cited remark that: 'Language may invite us to unite, but it does not compel us to do so' (Renan, 1990:16). In contrast to the German Romantic position, the French position views national identity as a matter of voluntary participation and affirmation, as a kind of 'daily plebiscite' (Renan, 1990:19) and not as a matter of involuntary, objective blood ties.

Beyond the renowned trio of Herder, Fichte and von Humboldt, similarly unscientific, empirically unverifiable views were also expressed by German writers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) who observed that '[e]very nationality is destined through its peculiar organisation and its place in the world to represent a certain side of the divine image' (cited in Kedourie, 1966:58). The central feature of a nation's 'peculiar organisation', that is the element that endows it with its individual national character, was held to be its particular language. In other words, it is supposedly this particular language which determines the ontological form and content of each ethnoculture. Consequently, the idea of a *Volk* without a language of

[6] The translation of the original German is taken from Kedourie (1966:59).

its own is treated as a logical absurdity or *Unding* (literally 'non-thing') to use the German term (Barnard, 1965:57). Such views have been largely, and correctly, repudiated by modern(ist) theorists of nationalism who have rejected the idea of nations as 'bounded cultural objects' (Handler, 1988:27). However, many linguistically focused nationalist movements have been, and continue to be, founded on beliefs similar to those of the Romantic theorists (Fishman, 1996). Edwards (1994:129) lists numerous nationalist slogans which encapsulate a belief in an absolute link between language and national identity. For example, the Manx slogan 'Gyn chengey, gyn cheer' translates as 'no language, no country' and the Gaelic 'Sluagh gun chanain, sluagh gun anam' as 'a people without its language is a people without its soul'. As shall be seen later in this study (specifically Sections 4.3, 4.4 and Chapter 5), Afrikaner nationalists in South Africa have also made similar claims regarding the relationship between the Afrikaans language and Afrikaner ethnic identity. It would seem then, that the empirical findings of scientific sociological analysis frequently bear little resemblance to, or have minimal influence upon, the intoxicating, affective discourses associated with ethnonationalist movements.

### *2.5.2 Language and National Identity*

Having reflected upon the nature of the relationship between language and ethnic identity, one is now in a position to ask the question whether there is any significant difference between that relationship and the relationship between language and national identity. Does the change from ethnic group to nation bring about any fundamental functional or symbolic changes with regard to the role of language in group identity?

We can agree that ethnic groups may or may not share a common language and that that common language may or may not be unique to that group. As a general principle, the same can also be said of nations. However, some caution is needed when making an assertion that two or more nations or ethnic groups share a 'common language', as it may falsely suggest that language is an unimportant feature of the respective identities in question. The fact that, for example, Australians, New Zealanders, the English and the Scottish speak (for the most part) mutually intelligible linguistic varieties, all of which are endowed with the label 'English', in no way dilutes their respective senses of individual nationhood. Indeed, even in those cases where separate nations or ethnic groups are perceived as speaking the same language, an admittedly unscientific assertion, one can still often point to a strong relationship between language and ethnicity. In such instances, the link between language and ethnicity is expressed in the form of local speech styles and other linguistic peculiarities. These local peculiarities may take numerous forms including accent, forms of greeting and address and the use of particular lexical or morphological items. Certainly, most nations within the English-speaking world have an easily identifiable, distinctive national accent which, to most native English speakers at least, serves as just as potent a marker of the national origin of the

speaker in question as do so-called 'foreign' languages, i.e. not varieties of English. Native English speakers are, on the whole, just as able to identify an Australian as they are, say, an Italian from hearing their native speech performances. The same may also be said of, amongst many others, the Spanish and Mexicans, the Germans, Swiss and Austrians, the French and Québecois and the Dutch and Flemish.

> [E]thnic verbal markers are usually a very direct and overt expression of social differentiation in interethnic interaction [...] Language characteristics are often necessary to distinguish group memberships – for example, an American from a Canadian, perhaps Catholics from Protestants in Northern Ireland, an Australian from a New Zealander, and between many ethnic minorities in the United States. (Giles and Coupland, 1991:98)

Of course, many nations do indeed have a language that may be regarded as uniquely their own. Examples would include isolate language groups such as the Hungarians, Basques, Japanese and Koreans. In such cases, it is not surprising to find that language is an extremely strong ethnic marker since, owing to their uniqueness, these languages are an unmistakable indicator of group belonging.

A question which has provoked considerably more debate is whether a national identity can exist in the absence of a common language or, to put it more accurately, in the absence of a commonly intelligible linguistic variety. Stalin (1973:19) was in little doubt about the matter: '*a common language* is one of the characteristic features of a nation'. However, such a universal assertion is not fully supported by the empirical evidence. While there is an extremely high incidence of nations with a common language, there are also exceptions to this pattern. Although rare, it is possible for nationality to transcend language. Switzerland is the most commonly cited example in this regard. As Anderson observes:

> [N]ations can now be imagined without linguistic commonality [...] [T]he appearance of Swiss nationalism on the eve of the communications revolution of the 20th century made it possible and practical to 'represent' the imagined community in ways that did not require linguistic uniformity. (Anderson, 1983:127)

In the Swiss case, the lack of a unifying means of internal communication between the various linguistic communities still does not mean that Swissness cannot be expressed linguistically. The highly distinctive varieties of Swiss German (*Schwyzertütsch*), which often depart hugely from standard German (*Hochdeutsch*) and which speakers of German from other German-speaking countries often have enormous difficulty in understanding, serve as extremely salient markers of Swiss identity, at least within in the German-speaking world (Russ, 1994:76–99).

Beyond the Swiss example, however, listing nations without a common, inclusive everyday means of linguistic communication becomes more difficult. It might be argued that many post-colonial countries in Africa and elsewhere, whose populations display great linguistic diversity and who do not share any common language, provide additional examples of nationhood which transcends language. However, one must be careful in making such an assumption. This is because, in such contexts, the nation is basically synonymous with that thin social stratum which constitutes the ruling elite (see Section 4.5 on 'elite closure'). The great majority of many post-colonial populations remain outside the national system and consequently have

not come to identify with it and internalise the values of its nationalist discourse and so cannot be said to belong to the state-associated national group. The ruling elites' sense of national identity is facilitated by the fact that they frequently do possess a common language, very often, although not exclusively, the language of the ex-colonial power.

At this stage, the reader may wonder why the relationship between language and ethnic identity and that between language and national identity have been treated separately given the strong ethnic content of national identity. The reason for this is simply that, as far as national identity is concerned, language fulfils *more* than just an ethnic function and it is in this regard that the modernist perspective is perhaps at its most illuminating. It was discussed earlier in this chapter that one of the characteristics that distinguishes nations from ethnic groups is the former's possession of a common public culture. The maintenance of a public culture relies on what Gellner (1983) terms 'context-free' communicative exchanges between individual citizens and between the citizenry as a whole and the public authorities. The efficacy of such exchanges is obviously heightened if there is a common language that is spoken and understood throughout the national community. It is clearly more efficient for the state to communicate with its citizens through the medium of one language rather than several, provided that all citizens understand that language sufficiently well. Consequently, most states have regarded the spread of a common national language as a central component of their nation-building policies and have implemented policy and planning measures accordingly (see Section 3.4). The invocation of a central relationship between language and national identity is not, then, just purely a feature of so-called 'ethnic' nationalisms. Language has also frequently occupied a central place in what would be commonly be classified as civic nationalist discourses. The classic example here, of course, is France (Oakes, 2001). In traditional post-revolutionary French nationalist discourse, the French language has not been styled as the property of any one ethnic group but rather as the property of all French citizens (i.e. members of the supposed civic nation). This position has meant that the recognition of minority languages has been impossible within such an ideological framework (see Section 3.4.3). To recognise, say, the Basque language as the language of the Basque ethnic group would contradict the promotion of French as a supposedly de-ethnicised medium of civic communication. An alternative recognition of the Basque language (or Breton, Occitan etc.) as being the property of the civic French nation would neither be credible nor desirable according to traditional French nationalist discourse. Therefore, official French language policy has tended to proceed largely as if such minority languages do not exist, as illustrated by France's refusal to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (Judge, 2007:140–144; S. Wright, 2000b).

A further example of a civic nationalist discourse which has placed extreme importance on the issue of language comes from the USA and the so-called 'Official English' movement or the 'English-Only' movement as some have chosen to name it (May, 2001:204). A central focus of this movement has been to campaign against all forms of public bi- or multilingualism and, in particular, against publicly funded bilingual education programmes and to strengthen English-language requirements

for immigrants (Adams and Brink, 1990; Tarver, 1994). Among the most common reasons advanced for the 'English-Only' position are that a linguistically fractured population is a threat to social harmony and unity, that learning English is the only means of allowing immigrants to participate in the democratic process and that bilingual schooling is harmful for a child's educational development (Marshall, 1986; Marshall and Gonzalez, 1990). May (2001:204–224), amongst many others, has shown the clear ethnic agenda lurking behind the civic veneer of this movement and has convincingly challenged the validity of many of the claims made on behalf of it but the ultimate empirical validity of these claims does not alter their significance as far as the image of the language/national identity link they promote is concerned.

Just as, in reality, all nations contain both ethnic and civic elements, the promotion of a particular linguistic variety for supposedly civic purposes cannot be shorn of all ethnic content or significance. In addition to serving instrumental or integrative ends, the spread of a common national language also serves an important complementary ideological function which may have the effect of further reinforcing the language/ethnicity linkage. The common language is frequently abstracted as a symbol of nationhood in nationalist discourse and often becomes the object of strong emotional attachment (this phenomenon is discussed in relation to Afrikaans in Chapter 5 and the instrumental/sentimental distinction is considered in depth in Chapter 6). It is this sentimental dimension of sharing a common language that can enable a sense of solidarity and mutual identification to develop which is a necessary basis for the establishment of a national community. Therefore, we can say, as far as nation-building is concerned, that from a context-unspecific, theoretical point of view, language has the potential to serve a dual ethnic/civic function which is crucial to the development of a national identity.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with several key issues pertaining to discussions of ethnic groups, ethnicity, nations and nationalism and the relationship of language to these kindred phenomena. In connection with the issue of definition, an issue which has long beset academic discussions of ethnicity and nationalism, it was argued that while the concepts of an ethnic group and a nation are in many respects highly similar, the two should not be treated synonymously since there remains good reason for drawing a distinction between them. However, the basis for this distinction should not, as some prominent authors have suggested, be a psychological one, nor should it be one of scale. Rather, it should be an objective sociological distinction related to respective levels of politicisation and organisation. A unified understanding of the nation as a form of 'politicised ethnic identity' was reached. The commonly invoked distinction between 'ethnic' and 'civic' nations, while a useful device for classifying certain emphases of nationalist movements, was shown to be a misleading method of describing the sociological reality of individual nations, which inevitably reflect a combination of both ethnic and civic elements. Let it be emphasised that this is

not to reject outright the ethnic/civic dichotomy, as some commentators have done (Bourque, 2001; Seymour et al. 1996; Taylor, 2001; Venne, 2001), but merely to qualify the extent of its value as an analytical device. As one commentator has noted:

> Binary oppositions are an analytical procedure, but their usefulness does not guarantee that reality can thus be divided. We must be suspicious vis-à-vis anyone asserting there are two kinds of people, two kinds of reality or process. (M. Douglas, cited by Schnapper, 1996:229)

Another issue addressed in the preceding discussion was that concerning the modernity of nations. It was demonstrated that while some modernist theories of nations and nationalism make many incisive observations about some of the most striking, novel features of modern nations, the claim that nations are entirely modern phenomena utterly distinct from any cultural and identity communities of the pre-modern (i.e. pre-capitalist-industrial) era is overstated. Modern nations reflect a combination of modern and pre-modern elements and probably the most significant continuity between the modern and pre-modern eras is the ethnic character of national communities. Overlooking the necessary ethnic component of national identity has been a mistake of many post-colonial 'nation-building' endeavours which have tended to promote highly civic conceptions of nationhood in the absence of an appropriate existing ethnic basis for the aspired-to national community. Successful nation-building cannot simply jettison the ethnic component in favour of a purely political image of the nation since evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the existence of shared political values and practices is not, by itself, a sufficiently powerful generator of the sentiments of fellowship and solidarity which are necessary for the founding of a national community. This is where language can become of great importance for nation builders. Because of its frequently strong linkage to ethnicity, language must be considered as a strong potential candidate to form the necessary ethnic component of the nation which the nation builders are attempting to construct. Of course, in many multilingual, multiethnic settings the selection and promotion of a single national language is likely to cause conflict and alienate some linguistically non-represented groups from the state-associated national community (see Chapter 5) and this is an issue which nation builders must consider when deciding which national integration policies to adopt.

The relationship between language and ethnic and national identity was also discussed. One of the most fundamental observations to be made in this regard amounts to the rejection of any universalist assertions of an essential relationship between language and ethnic and national identity. This involves, amongst other things, the repudiation of determinist theories of linguistic nationalism. Language may often be a central, defining feature of ethnic and national identities thanks to its strong ability to act as a highly salient delimiter of cultural boundaries and its resultant capacity to generate inter-personal solidarities. However, language may not be such a central feature of identity if the group in question possesses some other equally distinctive, socially meaningful distinguishing characteristic. Although not every ethnic group or national group may possess a common means of everyday communication, it is still nevertheless difficult to list ethnic or national groups for whom language is utterly unimportant and whose language practices do not in some way reflect their

group identities. For example, Krejči and Velímský note the following of the 73 European ethnic groups or nationalities that they surveyed:

> Forty-seven ethnic groups can be identified by their exclusive use of their own literary language. Thirteen ethnic groups are in a sense bi-lingual: they speak both their own special language and language which they share with another ethnic group. Of these, in eight cases the native language is more or less a literary one, whereas in the remaining five cases it had remained at the level of a dialect. In another 13 cases both the spoken and literary language of the respective group is the same as that of kindred people in another, usually neighbouring state. (Krejči and Velímský, 1981:220)

These final 13 cases that Krejči and Velímský refer to include nationalities such as the Flemish and Scottish. While it is true that these two groups do indeed share a common literary language with neighbouring national groups, the assertion that they share the same spoken language is potentially misleading, for in both cases there are distinctive spoken features (predominantly accent and vocabulary) which act as highly salient ethnic/national markers (see Section 2.5.2). In the case of the Flemish, their spoken varieties are even known by a different label (*vlaams*) from those spoken in the Netherlands (*nederlands*). Ethnic or national distinctiveness cannot only be expressed through the possession of a unique literary/standard language. Therefore, if one considers elements such as vernacular varieties and accent, in Europe at least, it becomes increasingly difficult to list ethnic or national groups who are utterly identical linguistically. Again though, no universal rule can be invoked to predict the content of the language-identity relationship in specific contexts. The only universal, context-unspecific assertion that one can readily make with regards to the language-ethnic/national relationship is that of uncertainty although, of course, this uncertainty is tempered to an extent by observable patterns.

# Chapter 3
# Language Policy, Language Planning and National Identity: Theoretical Perspectives

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter develops a broad theoretical approach to the study of the phenomena of language policy and language planning. Firstly, and of necessity, the murky issue of definition is addressed. Definitions and conceptions of language policy tend to vary considerably in scope and precision. Consequently, an attempt is made to work towards a valid comprehensive and inclusive definition of language policy. In doing so, language planning is established as being a specific component of language policy and the various types of language planning activity that may be undertaken are discussed. The focus of the chapter then shifts onto the link between language policy and planning activities and ethnic/national identities. In view of the link between language and ethnic/national identities, the notion of language policy and planning as a form of identity policy and planning is proposed. This notion forms the basis of the typology of language-in-national-identity policies that follows. The chapter ends with a discussion of some contemporary academic thought in the field of language policy theory. Of particular interest are the various discernible scholarly attitudes towards nationalist motivations in language policy and planning, many of which seem to have undergone quite a radical change in the last few decades as concerns for linguistic diversity and minority rights have come to the fore. The main question under consideration in this regard is whether nationalist/nation-building interests can be reconciled with a desire to promote linguistic diversity and/or minority group rights.

## 3.2 What is Language Policy and Planning?

Employed in its narrowest sense, the term 'language policy' usually refers to the formulation of laws, regulations and official positions regarding language usage and the allocation of linguistic resources by some government or other political organisation. However, for a broader, more nuanced appreciation of the nature of language policy, it is necessary to go beyond reference to just official or governmental positions on language and instead, consider the range of linguistic variables

J. Orman, *Language Policy and Nation-Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, 39–76,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4020-8891-9_3, 

which comprise the language policy (or policies) of a particular social group or speech community.[1] Spolsky identifies three different components that determine the character of a speech community's language policy:

> A useful first step is to distinguish between the three components of the language policy of a speech community: its language practices – the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire; its language beliefs and ideology – the beliefs about language and language use; and any kind of language intervention, planning or management. (Spolsky, 2004:5)

This approach to defining language policy allows us to view all collectively acting groups as having a language policy. Indeed, even individual persons may be said to have their own language policy. After all, each person has a repertoire of linguistic practices and has beliefs, however unconscious or poorly articulated, about language and its usage and some individuals may, and frequently do, consciously seek to affect the linguistic behaviour of others. These first two components (language practices and beliefs/ideology) make up what Schiffman (1996) terms a speech community's *linguistic culture.* Accordingly, we may view language policy as a combination of linguistic culture and language planning. The terms *language policy* and *language planning* though, are unfortunately often used interchangeably with little or no conceptual distinction drawn between the two. What, in fact, turns out to be language planning is frequently referred to as language policy. This is not especially problematic if, as Schiffman (1996:3) notes, language planning is to be the principal expression of the language policy in question. However, in many cases, to refer to language planning as language policy is to use a *totum pro parte* term. For general purposes, it is more helpful to regard language planning or language management as an element or subdivision of a wider language policy. Kaplan and Baldauf define language planning as

> a body of ideas, laws and regulations (language policy), change rules, beliefs, and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop change from happening) in the language use in one or more communities. To put it differently, language planning involves *deliberate,* although not always overt, *future oriented* change in systems of language code and/or speaking in a societal context. (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997:3)

One might argue, for example, that attempts to prevent or reverse linguistic change cannot really be described as future-oriented but the above definition captures the essential trait of language planning, namely that it involves deliberate intervention in a linguistic corpus (corpus planning) or in the sociolinguistic environment (status and acquisition planning). Language planning may therefore be viewed as a sometimes absent, conscious, action-orientated dimension of language policy. The absence of conspicuous, concrete language planning measures within a speech community does not, though, imply the absence of a language policy. One may have

[1] A distinction is commonly drawn between 'linguistic communities' and 'speech communities' (Silverstein, 1998). According to Blommaert (2006:243): '[T]he former are groups professing adherence to the normatively constructed, ideologically articulated "standard language" ("we speak English") and the latter are groups characterized by the actual use of specific speech forms'.

language policy without language planning but no society is without a language policy (Eastman, 1983:6). This does not necessarily mean, however, that a community's language policy is easily locatable or readily observable. Several factors may contribute to the obscuration of language policies. Firstly, in those cases where there is no official language policy and questions of language are not particularly salient or high profile, language policy may only exist implicitly. Such implicit policies can only be ascertained by observation of the linguistic practices of the community in question. Locating language policy is also often rendered problematical by the existence of what may be termed an unharmonised language policy situation, which may be defined as the existence of some discrepancy or, indeed, outright contradiction between the *de jure* and *de facto* language policies that operate within a polity. Examples abound in which overt, official language policies are undermined and often rendered essentially meaningless by the existence of covert policies. Post-apartheid South Africa, for example, represents a clear case of an unharmonised language policy situation (see Section 4.5). Spolsky (2004:222) asks the question 'Will the real language policy stand up?' This appeal may seem a reasonable one in the light of the conflicting language policies that frequently operate within speech communities. However, by retaining the distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* language policies, one can spare oneself the task of agonising over the question of what constitutes the 'real' language policy of the society in question. This view allows one to see most language-related behaviour as the consequence of some language policy, albeit often unconscious or covert. The most important question to be answered is: which of the language policies in operation tells us more about the relationship between a speech community and the repertoire of linguistic varieties that exist within it?

The answer to the above question is, undoubtedly, that language practices (i.e. *de facto* policy) are, on the whole, far more revealing than official policies, as they may be viewed as a representation of what might be termed 'ideology in action' (Jaffe, 1999). Where official policies are not consistent with language practices and beliefs, empirical observation would overwhelmingly seem to suggest that they are likely to have negligible effect (at least in the manner intended by the policy) on the linguistic environment of the society in question. Such policies are likely to meet with one of two responses. Firstly, they may be ignored or not enforced and therefore rendered largely decorative. Secondly, the attempted enforcement of such policies may generate resistance and refusal to co-operate amongst their target populations. However, even in cases where the language policy situation is not unharmonised and official policy and planning broadly reflect the prevalent beliefs and practices, one should be wary of crediting the policy with having engineered the prevailing sociolinguistic situation.

> Another problem with some approaches to questions of language policy, language planning, language loyalty, and other sociolinguistic issues, is that that some researchers seem to interpret reasons for various developments as *outcomes* of policy when it is clear that they are elements *underlying* the policy. That is, conclusions are drawn about supposedly causal relationships between language and policy that seem [...] totally turned around. (Schiffman, 1996:3)

All this would seem to point to the relative ineffectiveness of official language policy and planning in attempting to bring about non-evolutionary, engineered changes in the sociolinguistic environment. Nevertheless, language planning activities continue to be keenly engaged in by polities throughout the world. Why do so many states persist with language planning measures which do not coincide with, or complement, linguistic ideologies and practices at the grass roots level, given the extremely modest success rate of such endeavours? Several explanations may be offered in answer to this question. The simplest, and perhaps most cynical, explanation is that many language planners, especially those who are not trained sociolinguists or sociologists of language and are largely unaware of any historical or theoretical precedents in language planning, unquestioningly continue to believe that language is something which may be easily planned and managed (Rubin and Jernudd, 1971). In this regard, Fishman (1994:97–8) makes the pertinent observation that 'very little language planning practice has actually been informed by language planning theory'. At the most basic level, attempts at language planning may simply originate in a fundamental human instinct to problem-solve and engineer the social environment to suit particular ideological and practical needs. However difficult a problem may be to overcome, certain individuals (in this case, language planners) seem compelled to at least try and undertake the task of doing so. Pessimism is generally regarded unfavourably, whatever the extent of the task in question. At the individual level and perhaps even more so at the societal level, to sit back and do nothing in the face of a problem seems rarely to be a satisfactory course of (non)-action. Where states and other governmental agencies are concerned, to be seen not to be even trying to solve language-related (and other) problems is likely to lead to politically damaging accusations of negligence. Where genuine political will and/or competence to undertake language planning is lacking, some forms of weak, largely unimplemented, token planning measures may still exist in order to fend off allegations of remissness. Attempts at language planning, then, may be the consequence of political ideology or political pragmatism or, indeed, a combination of both. However, neither of these motivating factors is a necessary guarantee of successful language planning outcomes.

Language planning activities have traditionally been divided into three types, namely *status planning, corpus planning* and *acquisition planning* (Cooper, 1989; Haugen, 1968; Paulston and Heidemann, 2006:293). *Status planning* refers to the deliberate, authoritative allocation of particular language varieties to certain functional domains at the societal level (Hornberger, 2006:29; S.Wright, 2004:43–47). Examples of status planning might include the formulation and enaction of legislation which allows or, indeed, demands some form of official or institutional use of a particular named linguistic variety. *Corpus planning* is concerned with managing or changing the internal properties of language itself (Haugen, 1983). Cooper (1989:31) defines it as 'the creation of new forms, the modification of old ones, or the selection from alternative forms in a spoken or written code'. Corpus planning activities may include, for example, spelling reform, the development of new lexical items or resistance to the use of foreign loanwords. Status and corpus planning have been referred to as 'two sides of the same (language planning) coin' (Fishman,

2006:315), the implication being that neither activity generally happens in isolation from the other. Indeed, status and corpus planning are often co-occurring, complimentary processes. There is little use in a linguistic variety being promoted and sanctioned for use in particular status domains unless it is equipped with an appropriate corpus which may allow it to be employed effectively. Equally, the extended development of a corpus for a linguistic variety that is unlikely to acquire any further status domains seems a largely redundant exercise. However, as Fishman (2006:316) observes, due to the much greater difficulty of status planning, particularly in highly unequal, multilingual 'development settings', corpus planning frequently precedes status planning as it may often be a less (though not always) politically provocative endeavour. The third type of language planning – *acquisition planning* – is concerned with the question of who uses which particular language varieties. It involves activities aimed at facilitating the spread of language varieties throughout particular communities or parts of such communities. Acquisition planning may involve the systematic learning of a foreign or second language or it may involve efforts aimed at the *reacquisition* of a historically associated language. Language maintenance endeavours should also be mentioned as a type of *anti-deacquisition* planning. In contrast to acquisition planning, it should be noted that its antithesis, namely *non-acquisition* planning, might also possibly form part of a polity's language policy. In such cases, policy may be designed and implemented with the aim of preventing a particular population group from acquiring or expanding competence in a particular language or languages. For example, there was certainly a non-acquisition intention behind the apartheid-era Bantu Education policy, designed as it was to prevent the majority black population from acquiring any useful competence in English and Afrikaans, the two official languages of state administration. However, as is discussed in Section 4.4, a slight complexity is to be delineated here because in this case, the actual language planning processes often had the reverse effect by creating a favourable language-learning situation, although this did little to alter the general negative perception of the policy as an initiative aimed at non-acquisition.

Although we may recognise status, corpus and acquisition planning as quantitatively distinct activities operating within a broader notion of language planning, each type of activity can nevertheless be shown to reflect a concern, whether conscious or unconscious, for matters of identity. Consequently, one is in a position to advance the concept of 'language planning as identity planning'.

## 3.3 Language Planning as Identity Planning

Even language planning which, on the surface, may appear to have a purely pragmatic or instrumental rationale generally reveals itself to have some affective identity-related agenda. For example, the principal motivation for the Icelandic Language Council's petitioning of Microsoft to produce an Icelandic language version of Windows is unlikely to have been the fact that most Icelanders are unable to use the English (or even Danish) version. Instead, it is the symbolic importance

of having an Icelandic version that seems to be the strongest underlying rationale in this case (Spolsky, 2004:62). So, it can be seen that what on the surface may seem like a piece of purely pragmatic status planning (i.e. acquiring a new domain of use for Icelandic) is inextricably caught up with questions of identity and ethnolinguistic self-esteem. Instrumental reasoning often fails to account for certain status planning decisions. What else, for example, other than power of affective, sentimental factors can adequately explain the continued status of Irish as the 'first official language' of Ireland?

Equally, instrumentalist accounts are frequently incapable of locating fully the motivation behind particular corpus planning initiatives. A good example is the decision of the Norwegian government in the 1950s to change the way of saying all two-digit numbers over 20 (Jahr, 1998). Previously, Norwegians had always said such numbers in the same way as speakers of Dutch, Afrikaans, German and Danish by counting the units before the tens. However, it was decided in 1951 that Norwegians should follow the English and Swedish habit of counting the tens before the units. The reason given for this change was that this method was supposedly both more logical and more 'international'. It is difficult to believe that the alleged illogicality of the previous counting system impeded in any significant way the ability of Norwegians to conduct their lives, just as it does not do so today for speakers of Dutch, Afrikaans, German and Danish. Instead, as Jahr (1998:265) observes, this piece of *Ausbau* corpus planning was essentially an attempt to further distance the Norwegian language from Danish (the Danes being the most significant 'Other' in opposition to which Norwegian identity has historically been constituted) and align itself with English, the language of greatest international prestige – a clear identity-related initiative. Attempts to influence identity are also clearly evident in much language acquisition planning. Acquisition planning has been an important feature of many nation-building projects as states (and some sub-state polities), especially in Europe, have viewed the acquisition of a single, 'national' language by a previously heterogeneous population as a necessary condition for the creation and consolidation of a common national identity. Acquisition of a language allows for (at least some degree of) participation in its associated culture(s), something which may, although not necessarily, have implications for the identities of the individuals and communities concerned (see Section 2.5.1).

Given the potential pertinence of all three types of language planning to matters of identity, one is able to propose a unified notion of language planning as *identity planning*. In fact, use of the term *identity planning* seems, somewhat surprisingly, to have made only highly infrequent appearances within the sociology of language literature (e.g. Freeman, 1994; Pool, 1979). This can perhaps be partly attributed to a previous scholarly tendency to concentrate on economic and other instrumental motivations for language policy and planning. Yet, this still seems a curious oversight given what we know about the relationship between language and identity (see Section 2.5). Identity and culture are intimately connected and language, as perhaps the most immediate and salient expression of culture, is therefore also inextricably linked to identity (Fishman, 1989:66–94). In simple terms, language affects identity and vice-versa, although the strength of the correlation between the two variables

may vary significantly from case to case (May, 2001:129). It should be noted, however, that asserting the existence of a link between language and identity is not to make the claim that language loss necessarily equals loss of identity (Sachdev and Bourhis, 1990). The language-identity link may be upheld without suggesting that the relationship is in any way primordial (see Section 2.5.1). The countless immigrant communities, for example, that have maintained a linkage with their identities of ancestral origin despite experiencing complete loss of their traditionally associated mother tongues effectively disproves any *essential* relationship between a particular language and an identity. When, over time, a community switches to another language it does not inevitably eradicate all linkage with its historical ancestry. However, neither does this mean that the identity of the community in question will necessarily remain unaltered. Language shift represents a change in a community's cultural content, so it should not be surprising that some concomitant changes in the content of its identity may also occur.

> [A] different language in the ethnoculturally encumbered interactions is indicative of a differently realized and implemented ethnocultural identity, a differently enacted and expressed ethnoculturally contrastive context, even if the same ethnic label is still utilized due to the elements of continuity that may remain even after language shift occurs. (Fishman, 1989:401)

The question of whether language shift is a phenomenon to be regretted and resisted is another matter entirely and essentially involves a perspectival value-judgement regarding the relationship between language and ethnocultural identity and language and knowledge (see Sections 3.6.2.1 and 3.6.2.2). Language shift involves both loss and gain. In cases of language shift, some elements of identity and inherited knowledge are well likely to be lost, yet some new elements of identity may also be gained in the form of the newly acquired language and all the cultural material that comes with it. For example, the way some immigrant communities which have experienced language shift claim hyphenated identities (e.g. Italian-American, Indian-British) demonstrates this. The value of the losses and gains that occur in instances of language shift are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine empirically, despite the attempts of numerous normative accounts to do so. However, there still does not appear to be a universally accepted mainstream theory of response to situations of language shift amongst normative theorists within the academic discipline of the sociology of language.

In the light of the interrelationship between language and identity, Pool (1979: 5–6), somewhat laboriously, makes the following conclusions regarding the relationship between language planning and identity:

(1) Since language affects identity, an increase in language planning means that planners are having an increasing effect on identity. In other words, identity planning (whether deliberate or not) is increasing.
(2) Since good planning takes account of side effects, language planners should study the effects of planned linguistic change on identity.
(3) Since identity affects language, language planners should study identity planning as a means of accomplishing their goals.

(4) Since language affects identity, those wanting to influence identity should consider language planning as a means.
(5) Those wishing to foil the efforts of language planners should consider using identity, and those wishing to foil the efforts of identity planners should consider using language, to accomplish their aims. (Pool, 1979:5–6)

The question of whether one undertakes language planning to change identity or vice-versa is somewhat circular and serves only to confuse. Is not identity planning that strives to affect language just language planning? To plan language is to plan identity or, at least, an (often central) element of identity. Identity planning need not just be about language of course and so may concern itself with other elements. For example, during the apartheid era in South Africa, racial categorisation (in combination with, and complementary to, language planning) was an important component of the governing regime's identity planning project (see Section 4.4). One should therefore view language planning as a type of identity planning. Indeed, it is perhaps the most common, or at least most salient, type of identity planning. However, the mere fact that language planning exists does not necessarily mean that language lends itself particularly well to such activity. Pool's assertion above that 'an increase in language planning means that planners are having an increasing effect on identity' does not necessarily follow. An increase in *ineffective* language planning will not have an increasing effect on identity and history should caution us against taking an overtly optimistic view of the potential of language planning to successfully accomplish its language and identity goals. For example, instances of successfully planned reversal of language shift (RLS) are far outweighed by the number of failed RLS attempts (Fishman, 1991). Given that language and identity are closely linked and that changes in one will likely lead to changes in the other, the question that presents itself is 'to what extent can identity become the object of deliberate, effective manipulation through planned intervention in the linguistic environment?' This question is especially relevant in the context of 'nation-building'. The fact that so many people and agencies have engaged, and continue to engage, in nation-building activities would suggest that the belief that language and identity can be readily planned is widespread. However, one should again be wary of overestimating the capacity of language planning by explaining changes in identity as being outcomes of language planning activities, when they are in fact non-deliberate, unconscious developments. One must attempt to distinguish between planned and unplanned language change. Although they confusingly refer several times to 'unplanned language planning' – one can have unplanned language *policy* but to talk of unplanned language *planning* is a contradiction in terms whatever way one looks at it – Kaplan and Balduaf (1997:299) highlight the importance for language planners of identifying and distinguishing between planned and unplanned language change.

> [T]here is much in the way of unplanned language policy and planning occurring in societies, and this often goes unnoticed and therefore unrecorded by language planners. This has an impact on language change and the ability of language planners and bureaucrats to implement language change. Unplanned language change is a 'problem' for language planners because it alters the language eco-system making it more difficult to develop accurate

> and effective language planning strategies; yet as it occurs as a 'natural' part of the system, it needs somehow to be taken into account. (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997:299)

It is necessary to be able to identify the unplanned elements in processes of identity formation and change if one wishes to make any meaningful judgements regarding the success or failure of particular language planning measures. It can equip one with the ability to see through dishonest or false claims of language planning success where unplanned linguistic changes happen to coincide with the aims of language planners (see quotation of S. Wright, Section 3.4.3). As far as language planners themselves are concerned, taking cognisance of unplanned linguistic changes is an important step in formulating an appropriate language planning agenda which sets realistically achievable goals.

## 3.4 Language Policy and National Identity

If we can talk of language planning as a type of identity planning, it follows that we can view language policies as types of identity policy and when they operate at the level of nations and states we may then talk of *language-in-national identity policies.* Language policies which operate at a state-wide level can be broadly divided into two categories: those which promote a monolingual conception of national identity and those which advocate a multilingual or pluralist model of national unity. Of course, the significance of the policy adopted by a state, whether monolingual or multilingual, depends greatly on the ethnolinguistic complexity and diversity of its population. Ever since the rise of modern nationalism in the 19th century, most states have tended to adopt what may be termed monolingual national identity policies. The idea of 'one language, one nation' has tended to prevail over that of the multilingual national culture, even in some of the most multilingual and multiethnic states. Linguistic uniformity has frequently been viewed as a precondition for the creation and consolidation of national unity. Even language policies that may be described as multilingual may still promote a monolingual understanding of the relationship between language and national identity (see Section 4.4 on apartheid language policy). Examples of language policies that promote a truly multilingual understanding of national identity seem to be relatively few (Stewart, 1968). The following section considers the various types of state within which language policies reflecting either monolingual or multilingual conceptions of national identity may occur.

### *3.4.1 Types of Language-In-National Identity Policy*

Spolsky (2004:58) attempts to correlate language policies with the ethnic complexity of the state. In doing so, he identifies three types of state:

> The first type is made up of countries that are ethnolinguistically homogenous. Such countries, like Japan or China or the United States may contain linguistic minorities, but these are perceived to be small and insignificant and are geographically or socially marginalized.
>
> The second type consists of dyadic (or triadic) countries, which include two or three ethnolinguistic groups relatively equal in numbers or power. Prototypical examples are Switzerland, Belgium, Fiji and Canada.
>
> The third group consists of mosaic societies, multiethnic states like Nigeria and India and Papua New Guinea which contain a large number of ethnic groups. More than half the countries of the world [...] have five or more substantial ethnic communities. (Spolsky, 2004:58)

Although Spolsky's classification makes no explicit mention of national identity, it provides a useful foundation upon which to develop a typology of *language-in-national identity* policies that operate at the state level. Not all states, however, can be said to conduct such policies. In certain cases, particularly in areas of sub-Saharan Africa, it is even a moot point as to whether one can credibly claim the existence of the state. Although there may be international recognition of certain states, many governments have very little or no control over significant proportions of their states' putative territories. As Blommaert (2006:240) observes, in many instances core 'state' functions such as the provision of education and medical services (if they are provided at all) either have been or still are performed by agencies and organisations other than the state such as the UNHCR or international NGOs. Therefore, any language policy that may be in operation in such instances cannot credibly be attributed to, or derive any authority from, the non-functioning state. Building upon Spolsky's classification and with some refinements and additions, we can identify the various types of state within which different forms of *language-in-national identity* policy may operate. These states are the pure monolingual/monoethnic state, the monolingual state-nation with small and/or highly marginalised minorities, the dyadic or triadic multinational state and the post-colonial polyethnic state.

### *3.4.2 The Pure Monolingual/Monoethnic State*

The monolingual/monoethnic state may be defined as one containing a single, homogenous ethnolinguistic group and no indigenous ethnolinguistic minorities, however small. Few states can credibly claim to contain no indigenous linguistic minorities. Of the exceptions, Iceland is commonly cited as the clearest example of a completely monolingual and monoethnic state (Vikør 2000). Icelandic is apparently spoken as a first language by 100 percent of the population and is spoken between Icelanders in all domains of life. Consequently, the linguistic character of Icelandic national identity can be taken for granted and is fully inclusive of the whole Icelandic population. It represents a monolingual identity solution to a monolingual sociolinguistic situation. The possibility of a multilingual national identity is unavailable because there exists no domestic multilingualism. As Spolsky (2004:62) observes: 'Iceland is a nation-state that is monolingual in practice, ideology and language management.' A consequence of this absolute domestic monolingualism

is that language management activities are usually of a corpus planning type since status planning measures are a reaction to a competitive multilingual environment. In Iceland, language planning has long been preoccupied with matters of purism (Thomas, 1991), which has involved concerted efforts to resist the use of foreign loan words in Icelandic and to promote supposedly authentic, often archaic Icelandic terms instead (Halldórsson, 1979). However, as the example of Icelandic and Microsoft discussed earlier demonstrates, it is likely that with the increasing effects of globalisation and the penetration of English into many higher level domains, especially new, hi-tech ones, in non-native English speaking countries, language status planning will become an issue of increasing importance, or indeed necessity, for even the most domestically monolingual of states.

Other countries that could possibly be included in this category are South Korea and North Korea, for whom *Ethnologue* lists a single language (Korean).[2] The Republic of Ireland is an interesting, possibly unique, example of a bilingual monoethnic state. It contains two linguistic communities (Irish and English speakers) but a single indigenous ethnic/national community.

### *3.4.3 The Monolingual State-Nation with Small and/or Highly Marginalised Minorities*

Another type of state is the monolingual state-nation with small and/or highly marginalised indigenous minority groups. This state may be defined as one that is monolingual (and monoethnic) in ideology and in language management but multilingual in practice. In these countries, only one language is associated with the state-promoted national identity despite the existence of several minority ethnolinguistic groups. Such is the influence and widespread acceptance of the notion of 'one language, one nation' that language policies in these states frequently depict minority languages and domestic multilingualism as an obstacle to national unity. As such, they represent (attempted) monolingual solutions to multilingual situations. Consequently, an important element of such language policies has involved the delegitimisation or even outright denial of the existence of any minority languages and the converse validation of the language that is held to represent the state-bounded national identity. The delegitimisation of the non-national minority languages may take several forms, some more overt and coercive than others. The case of Turkey represents a particularly extreme example of a state attempting to assert the 'one language, one nation' ideal in the face of a manifestly multilingual reality (Kirisci and Winrow, 1997). Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak (1994) document how the Kurdish-speaking minority was rendered invisible and illegal by the policies of the modern Turkish state. The following constitutional provisions clearly

[2] http://www.ethnologue.com

demonstrate the monolingual, monoethnic model of nationhood promoted and, indeed, fanatically insisted upon by the Turkish state:

> The state of Turkey is in its state territory and state citizens an indivisible whole. Its language is Turkish. (Constitution, Article 3).
>
> Everyone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk. (Constitution, Article 66, Paragraph 1).
>
> No language other than Turkish may be taught as a native language to citizens of Turkey in instructional and educational institutions. (Constitution, Article 42/9)

The following laws were not annulled until 1991:

> The mother tongue of Turkish citizens is Turkish. (Law 2932/3)
>
> It is prohibited to disclose, publish or broadcast ideas and opinions in languages other than those which are the primary official languages of states recognized by the Turkish State. (Law 2932/2)
>
> It is forbidden to claim that there exist minorities in Turkey. It is forbidden to protect or develop non-Turkish cultures and languages. (Section 81 of Law No.2820 on Political Parties) (cited in Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak, 1994:355–6)

The patently false assertion that Turkish is the mother tongue of all Turkish citizens is clearly an aspiration of state policy (or wishful thinking, perhaps) rather than an expression of considered, unbiased sociolinguistic research. To an extent, these ludicrous claims are unsurprising since the indivisible, monolingual model of nation subscribed to by the Turkish state does not contain any ideological space for allowing even an admission of the existence of sub-state minority cultural expressions of any type.

A state with a broadly comparable national identity policy to Turkey is France. Post-revolutionary French language policy and planning has traditionally adopted a steadfastly monolingual approach in dealing with the multilingual, multiethnic reality of its population (Ager, 1999; Oakes, 2001). The notion of 'La France: une et indivisible' is one of the founding myths of the modern French state and its doctrine has been strictly adhered to in the formulation and enactment of state language policy. Again, the promotion of this indivisible, monolingual conception of nationhood in the midst of a multilingual environment has meant that an important emphasis of French language policy and planning has been to portray domestic multilingualism as problematic and politically divisive. The French state's failure to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages is indicative of its reluctance to give any form of recognition to domestic minority ethnolinguistic groups (S. Wright, 1999). Indeed, in 1996, this Charter was declared unconstitutional by the French Council of State (May, 2001:162). Linguistic varieties other than standard French have also often been depicted as backward, inferior and even unworthy of being called languages, instead often being referred to derogatorily as *patois* (Ager, 1990:26). This type of national identity policy has been described as propagating an 'ideology of contempt' towards minority languages (Grillo, 1989:173). Indeed, such has been the pervasiveness of this ideology in France that:

> it has [. . . ] entrenched deep into the French national psyche a view that the promotion, and even simply the maintenance, of minority languages (and cultures) are fundamentally at odds with the principles and objectives of the French state. As a result, there have been

> remarkably few exceptions to this assimilationist imperative in French language and education policy. (May, 2001:160)

Not all ideologically monolingual states are able to adopt such an extreme position as France and Turkey. Even France and Turkey have recently begun to come under greater international (and internal) pressure to recognise minority languages to some degree (See May, 2001:162; Oakes, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak, 1994:358; S. Wright, 2000b). Many states are compelled, by reasons of political expediency, to acknowledge some degree of domestic multilingualism. An example of such a state would be Austria which has recognised several regional languages including Slovene, Hungarian, Slovak, Czech and Croatian despite the fact that these languages are spoken by only around 2% of the country's total population. However, in such cases, this recognition tends to fall well short of promoting any minority language to the status of 'national' language, avoiding any suggestion of there being any linguistic equality between the minority language(s) and the main language of the state. Consequently, only one language continues to be associated with the state bounded national identity. The recognition of some kind of multilingualism does not necessarily entail deviation from a monolingual conception of ethnic or national identity but it does allow for the possibility of *plural identities,* something not permitted by the French and Turkish models of nationhood. However, plural identities tend only to be tolerated where they are strictly sub-national in character and do not seriously threaten the unity of the state and the essential character of its associated national identity. The type of assimilationist nation-building discussed above is deeply hegemonic in that it requires minority ethnolinguistic groups to accept the political and cultural values and characteristics of the dominant, state-owning ethnic group. In France, this type of hegemony has, notwithstanding some small degree of peripheral resistance, taken hold with considerable force. The pressing question here, then, is 'to what extent has language planning instigated and maintained such hegemonic processes'?

Having identified the national identity policies discussed above as being of a similar type, it is important to consider what criteria one should use in order to measure their degree of success. When one talks of the success or failure of a policy, one is usually referring to the degree of effectiveness with which planning measures taken on behalf of the policy have been implemented. Admittedly, French minority languages have suffered a severe decline in the past two centuries (Héran, 1993). However, they have not disappeared and many minority language movements continue to struggle vigorously for recognition in the face of an unyielding state. In its ultimate goal then, i.e. of achieving state-wide monolingual linguistic uniformity through the eradication of minority languages, French (and Turkish) policy must be regarded as having failed, giving credence to the view that language planning is very often an ineffective enterprise:

> How effective has French language policy been? Considering that it has been fighting the regional varieties since before the Revolution, it is a wonder that they still survive at all. Two hundred years of active language management should surely have been enough to destroy them completely. This is further evidence of the powerlessness of language management. (Spolsky, 2004:74)

Short of genocide or mass deportation history suggests that ethnolinguistic groups cannot simply be planned out of existence. Furthermore, in most cases it is by no means certain that even the decline and attrition experienced by minority ethnolinguistic groups in the face of this type of monolingual national identity policy is, at origin, the consequence of consciously pursued, top-down language management decisions. By asserting the influence of language planning measures in such circumstances, one risks underestimating the importance of economic and demographic changes, which are beyond the control of language planning, in producing changes in the sociolinguistic environment. For some, the extent to which national languages and identities spread during the age of nationalism may seem like a triumph of top-down language and identity acquisition planning. However, to adopt this view is to miss an important feature of the nation-building era, as S. Wright observes:

> [L]anguage learning on an ideological basis was achieved in nation building [...] because top-down and bottom-up movements coincided: the spread of the national language was central to nation building; acquisition of the language was useful for individual success and social mobility. (S. Wright, 2004:169–70)

This is in line with the view of nation formation outlined by Gellner (1983) who argues that the spread of state-bounded national cultures was a necessary consequence of the prevailing economic and sociological conditions of the time (see Section 2.3) According to this position, language planning merely has the role of a facilitator in the spread of the national language, rather than being the actual motor of sociolinguistic change itself. Language planning can only really be successful insofar as it is in harmony with the socio-economic *Zeitgeist*, that being when the desirability of the measures attempting to be implemented is widely accepted by the target population. Consequently, the notion of language *management* is perhaps more appropriate than that of language *planning*, as it gives a more modest, realistic assessment of the extent to which consciously acting agents can affect the linguistic behaviour of whole communities (Spolsky, 2004:8).

### *3.4.4 The Dyadic or Triadic Multinational State*

In the dyadic or triadic multinational state, the promotion of a monolingual state-bounded national identity is generally not a politically feasible option. The presence of two or three ethnolinguistic groups of similar size and/or power is likely to mean that giving a single linguistic variety the status of 'national language' or, indeed, the existence of any form of salient linguistic inequity will generate resistance amongst those groups whose languages are not adequately represented. Language conflict is often a highly visible characteristic of the political life of such states. Therefore, it is generally expedient for the state to recognise and promote several languages in order to negate secessionist tendencies and maintain its structural unity. The promotion of a monolingual national identity may also be rendered impossible on practical grounds by the simple fact that the population in question may not share a common language. This type of multinational state may encounter a number of problems in

attempting to foster a pervasive state-nationalism. For it to succeed, it is necessary that loyalty to the state does not conflict significantly with loyalty to any of the state's constituent national groups. The perception of some form of state-promoted inequality between the different groups that inhabit multinational states is frequently a cause of conflict. Where such conflict remains largely unresolved, expressions of sub-state ethnonational identities are often likely to be considerably more salient and politically mobilising than any expressions of identification with the state. Identity conflicts, whether about language or some other issue, present a serious obstacle to the development of a shared identity (see Chapter 5 on identity conflict surrounding Afrikaans). Consequently, the major thrust of language planning in such societies tends to be concerned with the avoidance or resolution of inter-ethnic linguistic conflict.

Language policies in dyadic or triadic states may reveal a quite complex set of linguistic arrangements in order to reduce the potential for linguistic conflict. However, one common feature is that there is usually some partitioning of the linguistic space (Spolsky, 2004:161). This may be done either according to the 'personality principle' whereby the distribution of language rights is dependant upon the (ethno)linguistic status of the individual citizen or according to the 'territoriality principle' whereby such rights are distributed geographically (Réaume, 2003). In each case, the state-bounded national identity may, in theory, be enacted by any of the official languages of the state. Finland is a good example of a state which has sought to diffuse a historical tendency towards language conflict through the application of the personality principle (Gambier, 1986; McRae, 1997).

Switzerland represents the classic example of a state which has, by and large, successfully applied the territoriality principle in order to avoid language conflict. The federal division of Switzerland into mainly monolingual, self-legislating cantons has greatly depoliticised the country's language question. Because of these political arrangements, a common, supralinguistic Swiss nationalism has been able to flourish, despite the fact that there remains quite a low level of interaction between Swiss citizens from the four main language groups (Dürmüller, 1997). This suggests that a multilingual model of nation does not *necessarily* mean that all members of the nation should themselves be multilingual. Clearly, there will always be the need for some multilingual individuals to act as brokering agents in such societies but mass multlingualism,[3] while clearly helpful, would not appear to be an *absolute* requirement for the formation of a national identity. However, Switzerland does have some credible claims to uniqueness and it is doubtful whether certain features of the Swiss case may be readily applicable to other states (see Section 4.5).

The ethnolinguistic composition of multinational states means that their populations are generally more resistant to state-led projects of identity construction, especially when sub-state groups are large enough and have sufficient institutional development to be said to constitute their own 'societal culture' (Kymlicka, 1995). The disintegration of the former-Yugoslavia and the USSR are illustrative of this.

[3] A distinction is often made between societal *multilingualism* and individual *pluralingualism*.

Belgium, a state with a roughly comparable ethnolinguistic composition to Switzerland, is an example of a country in which the historical inability to resolve language conflict has inhibited the growth of a state-led nationalism. The federalisation of Belgium only occurred in 1992 after centuries of language conflict between the Dutch and French-speaking populations. The legacy of this conflict is that separate Flemish and Francophone identities are much stronger and inspire far more loyalty than the notion of a unified Belgian nation does. Deprez (2000:26–27) attributes this to the fact that the political solution to the language question means that Belgians no longer interact with each other:

> Belgians do not have a common language any more. [...] Education and media have been completely split up. Even in Brussels two exclusively monolingual networks – schools (at all levels!), cultural centres, theatres, and the like have been developed in spite of the city's bilingual administrative status. The result is Flemings and Francophones no longer know each other. They do not read each other's newspapers, do not watch each other's television channels, no longer know each other's authors, do not visit each other's theatres, etc. [...] there is hardly a Belgian nation left. (Deprez, 2000:26–27)

The Belgian case would seem to suggest that conflict prevention alone is not a sufficient condition for the formation of an overarching state-bounded national identity. The resolution of linguistic conflicts may often only satisfactorily be achieved through some form of devolution or federalisation. A possible consequence of this weakening of centralised state power is that it lessens the degree to which many people recognise the state-associated culture as being the primary locus of their identity. The resurgence of regional national identities following decentralisation in multinational states such as Spain and the UK might be regarded as evidence of this (May, 2001: Chapter 7).

It must be remembered that states do not generally give up power unnecessarily or of their own volition. The promotion of multilingual national identities in dyadic or triadic states stems less from an ideological commitment to, or appreciation of, multilingualism *per se* than from the pragmatic necessity to compromise by accommodating competing ethnolinguistic demands. Sub-state national groups that demand multilingualism and linguistic representation at the state level often have highly assimilationist policies towards their own immigrant populations, reinforcing the monolingual nature of their particular regionally dominant culture and identity. Such is the case in Belgian Flanders, for example, where

> the general attitude towards language in society is strictly homogeneistic and monolingual. Immigrants, for instance, are continuously blamed for not or badly knowing Dutch, and part of their inferior socio-economic status is explained by their failure to learn or speak Dutch. [...] The government also expressed its intention [...] to promote the use of Dutch outside the public and business sphere, because this would be the best way to realize the 'integration' of ethnic minorities. 'Integration' has a strong assimilationist ring to it, and though exotic cuisine, foreign music and dances can be tolerated as expressions of multiculturalism, societal bi- or multilingualism as a result of the integration of migrants is seen as definitely undesirable. (Blommaert, 1996:242–3)

This demonstrates that the assimilationist impulse is still frequently very much present in multinational states. However, because of the fine inter-ethnic balancing

of power that is required to maintain social peace and the unity of the state, the state cannot normally get away with policies, whether implicit or explicit, which promote the assimilation of one native national group into another. Immigrant populations, on the other hand, are mostly much smaller, less politically organised and lacking any territorial base, meaning that there is considerably less pressure on the state to grant them any extensive cultural/linguistic recognition. Immigrant languages are generally not viewed as valid media for the expression of national identity and there is normally the expectation that immigrants must assimilate linguistically into the host society, at least in public life.

All national identities are fundamentally linguistically selective. Even the most pluralistic do not allow for unfettered multilingualism. The linguistic scope of most multilingual national identities normally only extends to include several named, territorially based languages. It is this need for selection and therefore exclusion of linguistic varieties, which lies at the heart of the tension between multilingualism and the nation-building process. An important question to consider is 'how much multilingualism can a single national identity tolerate?', a question which leads us neatly on to a discussion of the next type of state in our typology, namely the post-colonial polyethnic state.

### *3.4.5 The Post-colonial Polyethnic State*

A more extreme example of the problems faced by dyadic/triadic states in their attempts to construct a unifying national identity is to be found in the polyethnic post-colonial state. This type of state is characterised by a very high level of ethnolinguistic diversity. Spolsky (2004:173) defines it as a state which contains at least twelve ethnolinguistic groups, although some may actually contain several hundred. Spolsky's choice of twelve ethnolinguistic groups as a qualifying criterion does admittedly strike one as an unnecessarily arbitrary imposition, but this is a minor point. The most linguistically diverse state is generally held to be Papua New Guinea which, according to *Ethnologue,*[4] has 820 named languages in use. However, as is discussed in Section 3.6.1, counting language names is not actually a scientifically rigorous method of measuring linguistic diversity. Therefore, some caution is advisable when making or agreeing with such claims. Many of the world's most linguistically heterogeneous states were at one time part of the colonial empire of one of the European imperial powers – Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy. The boundaries of such states were often highly arbitrarily drawn up, reflecting competing colonial spheres of influence instead of any indigenous ethnolinguistic frontiers. Consequently, many ethnic groups find themselves living alongside other groups with whom they historically have no elements of shared culture or sense of identity. Indeed, they may often find themselves inhabiting the same state as groups with which they have a history of conflict and violence.

[4] http://www.ethnologue.com

Such high ethnolinguistic diversity and conflict potential obviously makes any attempt to engender state-wide unity and a sense of common identity and purpose a daunting task. Yet such states are inevitably compelled by the logic of their situation to undertake such efforts in order to prevent their own disintegration. Also, to use European patterns of national identity development as the standard by which to judge the efforts of post-colonial nation-building endeavours is to overlook a significant difference in time-scale. It took several centuries until the vast majority of Europeans were integrated into their respective national state systems (Thiesse, 1999). In most cases, post-colonial nation-building did not begin until at least the 1960s. The fevered sense of urgency behind many post-colonial nation-building efforts may lead one to hastily formulate overly negative judgements regarding their efficacy. However, an appreciation of historical precedents which suggest that national identities are not generally created and spread over such short periods of time can allow one to make more realistic assessments with regards to what constitutes reasonable progress and success in post-colonial nation-building contexts.

As far as nation-building is concerned, the problem faced by polyethnic states is not fundamentally different from that experienced by dyadic/triadic states. The task is still to forge a shared, unifying national identity between diverse ethnolinguistic groups. However, the difficulties encountered in doing so tend to be exacerbated by several factors in polyethnic societies. Firstly, the extreme ethnic diversity means that there are many more potential loci for inter-ethnic conflict. The frequently conflicting demands of many groups, rather than of just two or three communities, may need to be satisfied in order to maintain social peace. Yet social peace alone, achieved either through some recognition of diversity, is unlikely to be sufficient to generate and maintain a shared national identity.

> In most polyethnic states, some degree of supra-ethnic symbolism is required – if only to avoid riots and unrest. To depict the nation as identical with a 'mosaic of ethnic groups' could, at the same time, threaten to undermine the project of nation-building since it focuses on differences instead of similarities. (Eriksen, 2002:116)

The basis of a national identity cannot be located in the recognition of difference. National sentiment resides in a belief in commonality. Where language cannot be the basis for this commonality, some equally distinctive marker of identity must take its place (see Section 2.5.1). Often however, there may be no shared characteristic between the various ethnic groups that inhabit such states which may readily serve as an appropriate basis for a shared nationality. In such cases, the state is faced with the improbable prospect of creating an identity *ex nihilo*. Secondly, most polyethnic countries are in the developing world where participation in the civil life of the state and the proportion of the population receiving anything more than the most basic level of education tends to be much lower. The spread of literacy is further hampered by the fact that many languages have no standardised written form and remain purely oral vernaculars. Also, limited social and geographical mobility, itself a consequence of inadequate education and other causes of societal underdevelopment, mean that contacts between individuals from diverse ethnolinguistic groups remain relatively quite limited. Consequently, identities often remain highly localised as

most people draw little meaning from wider social networks such as those associated with the state and its institutions (see Section 4.5.2).

Polyethnic states may actually adopt either monolingual or multilingual nation-building policies. A good example of a multilingual, 'mosaic' policy is India's 'three-language formula' whereby a local language, Hindi and English would all be used at secondary school level (Khubchandani, 1997). The crucial element of the policy is that it seeks to promote languages of wider communication at three different levels – regional, national and international. Therefore, as Schiffman (1996:172) notes, this policy represents a compromise between unlimited multilingualism and a monolingual policy. Again though, it is highly selective with regard to the multilingualism that it endorses. The idea that multilingual policies are merely negotiated compromises, rather than the consequence of any deeply felt ideological commitment, is supported by the fact that many post-colonial multiethnic states adopt highly monolingual policies. Two main factors allow states to pursue monolingual policies in such linguistically diverse societies. The first is to do with power relations. In many post-colonial contexts there are great socio-economic inequalities and a highly unequal distribution of political power. As a result, ruling elites are less compelled to seek to satisfy the demands of minority groups. They are often able to get away with promoting monolingualism because their hold on power is not greatly inconvenienced by doing so. The second factor that may enable states to pursue monolingual policies is the linguistic inheritance of the colonial era. Many post-colonial states have undertaken nation-building projects by promoting the ex-colonial language as *the* language of national unity, for example Botswana (see Section 4.5.3). This has been facilitated by the widely held, but mistaken, belief that the ex-colonial language has an ethnically and politically neutral quality. The idea that the conflict-laden potential of selecting certain indigenous languages to serve as national languages can be neatly side-stepped by opting for monolingualism in the ex-colonial language has been evident in many post-colonial states' language policies, be they overt or covert. However, although such policies may have reduced conflict in some cases, their facilitation of 'elite closure' has meant that they have been markedly less successful when it comes to inclusive nation-building (see Section 4.5.3).

In some other post-colonial circumstances, a supra-ethnic, indigenous lingua franca has been promoted as the language of state administration, education and as the sole carrier of national identity. Examples include the promotion of Bahasa Indonesia in Indonesia and Swahili in Tanzania (S.Wright, 2004: Chapter 4; De Swaan, 2001: Chapters 5 and 6). Again though, it remains difficult to make any firm judgement regarding the success of these policies. Seemingly contradictory tendencies can be noted. Although it seems to have had some reasonable success in spreading Bahasa Indonesia (S.Wright, 2004:88), Indonesia has also experienced quite severe inter-ethnic violence and some highly active anti-state separatist movements. Blommaert (2006:248) comes to equally ambivalent conclusions with regard to the success of Tanzanian language planning, which appears to represent a case of successful language acquisition planning but without the desired attendant identity consequences.

> Thirty years of concentrated efforts toward the goal set forth in the 1960s resulted in the generalized spread of Swahili. Sociolinguistically, Swahili and its varieties have become the identifying code of public activities throughout Tanzania. The campaign in that sense was exceptionally successful. But what did not happen was the ideological homogenization of the country. While Swahilization was manifestly a success, the monoglot ideal in which language, political ideology, and identity would be coterminous was a failure. (Blommaert, 2006:248).

Whether one regards a certain activity as success or failure depends largely upon one's expectations. Language policies that fervently seek to bring about the rapid ideological and cultural homogenisation of highly plural societies are rather inviting one to label them as failures when this inevitably fails to occur. It is not in the nature of states and other governmental organisations to display any diffidence either with regard to their achievements or to their future ambitions. Therefore, language policy and planning conducted upon their behalf is often likely to suffer from a degree of overestimation and overambition.

The preceding discussion has shown that most states have, at some stage in their modern history and with varying degrees of success, attempted to use language policy and planning as a tool to facilitate nation-building and, indeed, many continue to do so today. This has generally meant the pursuit of policies which aim to move towards cultural and linguistic homogenisation and which only tolerate divergence from the national standard in cases where it is politically expedient to do so. In an earlier period when academic discourse was strongly influenced by modernist thinking and broadly aligned with the prevailing nationalist spirit of the age, the desirability of language policy and planning activities pursued on behalf of nationalist movements were generally seen as self-evident and consequently, such endeavours were viewed somewhat uncritically. However, the last few decades have witnessed something of a paradigmatic shift within the field of language policy and planning theory (S.Wright, 2004:96). The influence of postmodernist thought, coupled with the failure of modernism to fulfil its prophecy of instrumentally motivated homogenisation and the consequent local and global power inequalities generated by that failure, has led many to contest the legitimacy of the assumptions and motivations behind nationalist language policy and planning. Where linguistic homogenisation was once the normatively acceptable motivation for language planning, many contemporary language policy and planning theorists are increasingly unanimous in their advocacy of language policies which prioritise the protection linguistic diversity. The following section shall consider some of the theoretical tensions that have arisen as a result of the paradigmatic shift away from nationalist/modernist approaches to language policy and planning towards post-nationalist/post-modern methods of engaging with the discipline.

## 3.5 Nation-Building and Contemporary Trends in Language Policy Theory

It has been observed that the urge to nation-build seems to be characteristic of most liberal democracies (Patten and Kymlicka, 2003:37; Costa 2003). Historically, most

ethnolinguistically heterogeneous states have placed a premium on establishing a common sense of national identity and patriotism amongst their diverse populations. However, some insights from contemporary political and sociolinguistic theory are increasingly unanimous in their recognition of certain models of nation-building as being both counter-productive and morally objectionable. Nation-building policies, of which language policies naturally form an important part, have become the object much normative agonising amongst certain academic theorists. In particular, those nation-building policies which, whether implicitly or explicitly, promote a reduction in linguistic diversity through assimilation into a single common linguistic and cultural formation have been the target of severe criticism (Réaume, 2000; Weinstock, 2003:253). Some authors, such as Degenaar (1994), have even explicitly rejected the desirability of the concept of nation-building altogether. Monolingual, assimilationist language policies that promote a single majority language to the detriment of minority languages have been condemned from a number of discernible normative standpoints within sociolinguistics and political theory. The most commonly heard and most unqualified criticism has come from what may be termed the 'diversity argument' associated with the 'ecolinguistics' school (see Fill and Mühlhäusler, 2001) and, also, with the 'Linguistic Human Rights' (LHRs) movement (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Kontra et al., 1999) with which it is closely aligned philosophically. 'Preserve linguistic diversity above all else' has become the *cri de guerre* for many politically engaged contemporary sociolinguists. Concerns for national unity have become increasingly viewed as illegitimate and irrelevant in the face of the increasing diminishment of the world's linguistic diversity.

Other authors, however, have sought to find some middle ground between the nationalist/modernist and post-nationalist/post-modern positions and establish models of nation-building which can be reconciled with, and, indeed, facilitated by, policies which tolerate and even promote (at least a certain level of) ethnolinguistic diversity (see Kymlicka, 1995; Patten and Kymlicka, 2003). The discussion that follows provides an analysis and critique of some of the most prominent and commonly rehearsed academic arguments surrounding matters of national identity and nation-building from the rapidly growing literature concerned with questions of language rights and linguistic diversity. In particular, some prominent normative arguments in favour of language policies which have the promotion of linguistic diversity and/or language rights as their ultimate goal will be considered and their cogency assessed. Finally, an attempt will be made to answer the question of whether a desire to promote a common national identity can be theoretically reconciled with language policies that seek to maintain and legitimise cultural and linguistic diversity.

## 3.6 Language Policy and Linguistic Diversity

How are we to determine the validity of objections to assimilationist patterns of national (and global) integration based upon the assertion that linguistic diversity is good *per se* and something which must be protected ahead of any other concerns? Also, to

what extent can the aim of simply 'maintaining linguistic diversity' serve as a theoretically coherent ideological basis for the formulation of a language policy which aims to contribute to nation-building? These questions will be considered in the discussion that follows. However, before assessing the various arguments in favour of maintaining linguistic diversity, it is important to first reflect upon what we actually mean by linguistic diversity and, in particular, how we choose to measure it.

### *3.6.1 Measuring Linguistic Diversity*

Many discussions concerned with the threat to linguistic diversity begin in what has now become a very familiar manner, reporting that a large number of the world's 6,000 or so languages are faced with relatively imminent endangerment or extinction. For example, Krauss (1992:7) claims that 'the coming century will see either the death or the doom of 90% of mankind's languages'. This approximate figure is arrived at by counting language names. To the non-specialist, counting the number of languages may seem the most obvious way of measuring the extent of linguistic diversity. However, such a method of measurement soon reveals itself to be problematic. Defining the concept of 'a language', as opposed to 'language' itself, is a notoriously unscientific affair and one generally motivated by non-linguistic, political factors (Pennycook, 2006). The concept is also inappropriate for measuring linguistic diversity because it equates linguistic diversity with the number of named languages rather than with the sum total of linguistic variation or the diversity of human linguistic behaviour. Consider the case of the language situation in the former Yugoslavia. Does the fracturing of the language formerly known as Serbo-Croat into three separate languages, namely Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian, mean that there has been a three-fold increase in the linguistic diversity of the linguistic area in question? The same question could equally apply to the almost identical linguistic varieties now, for nationalist reasons, known separately as Romanian and Moldovan but which were previously just labelled 'Romanian' (Dyer, 1999; Dumbrava, 2004). The answer to this question is 'surely not'. A further problem with addressing linguistic diversity by dealing in units of named languages is that this procedure tends to overlook intra-language diversity in favour of concentrating on inter-language diversity (Blommaert, 2001:135). A single language name may refer to a far greater degree of linguistic variation than several other named languages. For example, a greater divergence of linguistic behaviour is covered by the language names 'German' or 'Chinese' than is covered by the two language names 'Bulgarian' and 'Macedonian' or 'Czech' and 'Slovak' etc. It is consequently of far greater use to think in terms of 'linguistic variation', than of the indistinct concept of 'a language' in helping one to understand the nature of linguistic diversity. The term 'linguistic variation' may therefore be viewed as partially synonymous with the diversity linguistic of items, by which is meant any type of syntactic, morphological, phonological or terminological feature. The extent of the linguistic variation contained within a given geographical area is not necessarily a reliable indicator of the number of different

languages that people may perceive to exist there. Consequently, a more sophisticated approach than merely just counting language names is required in order to arrive at a scientifically meaningful appreciation of the notion of linguistic diversity.

Nettle and Romaine (2000) discuss two methods of quantifying what they term 'divergence between languages'. Again, though, their phrasing still indicates that they are positing the existence of discrete languages as part of their theoretical apparatus. Given the problems, discussed above, associated with defining 'a language' or 'languages', a more accurate term to use would be the 'extent of linguistic variation'. One possible way of measuring linguistic diversity, discussed by Nettle and Romaine, is to use the method of *genetic classification* (Nettle and Romaine, 2000:34–35). This method deals with historical relationships between linguistic varieties and attempts to group them together into language families or 'stocks' that share a common provenance (Nichols, 1999:24–5). A stock may then be further subdivided into phyla or branches. For example, Germanic, Celtic and Baltic are some of the composite phyla of the Indo-European language stock. Some language stocks may only consist of one branch and are known as *isolates.* Examples include Basque, Korean and Japanese, all of which appear to share no confirmable historical origin with any other linguistic variety. This approach would appear to offer a more satisfactory way of measuring linguistic diversity since the concept of a language stock is a more scientifically rigorous concept than that of 'a language' because it can be deduced from a purely linguistic analysis. Counting the number of language stocks in a given area would seem to reflect a more nuanced understanding of the nature of linguistic diversity. The level of diversity within a particular language stock could then be ascertained by counting the number of phyla of which it is made up. In this regard, Nichols (1999:232) introduces the concept of 'genetic density' as a measure of genetic linguistic diversity, which she calculates by dividing the area of a given geographical region (in million square miles) by the number of stocks contained within it. However, even this method of measuring linguistic diversity is not without some difficulties. Proving or disproving historical linguistic relationships can be a difficult and controversial endeavour and the requisite evidence may simply not be available for meaningful judgements to be made either way.

The other technique proposed for measuring linguistic diversity is that of *typological classification* which 'group[s] languages together on the basis of contemporary structural similarity, such as a common word order, or the same number and type of vowel sounds' (Nettle and Romaine, 2000:34). For example, according to this technique, two historically quite unrelated linguistic varieties, which may coincidentally both happen to have a SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) word order may be classified together. The problem with this approach is that it does not seem obvious which aspect(s) of linguistic structure one should prioritise when attempting to construct a typological classification. For example, should morphological considerations come ahead of phonetic ones, or vice-versa and, if so, why?

While the genetic and typological classification methods may be two potential ways of measuring the diversity of linguistic forms, they do not provide a means of measuring the diversity of meanings. As Pennycook (2004:226) asks: 'is it glossodiversity we should be concerned with, or semiodiversity: diversity of forms as well

as meanings, or just diversity of meanings?' Semantic diversity is not necessarily predicated upon structural diversity. Different semantic contents may be encoded in identical linguistic forms or, conversely, the same meaning may be expressed through the use of different linguistic forms. This point highlights the fact that a bi-dimensional appreciation of the term 'linguistic diversity' is possible. Furthermore, such an insight is necessary in order to better understand and assess those arguments put forward which seek to espouse the benefits and rectitude of linguistic diversity, many of which seem to be unknowingly working with an inadequate conceptualisation of the thing they claim to hold most dear. It is to these arguments that we now turn.

### *3.6.2 Arguments for Maintaining Linguistic Diversity*

Having considered briefly the highly intricate question of what is meant by linguistic diversity and how one might go about measuring it, one can now turn to the equally complex question of why many linguists place normative value upon such diversity and actively seek to preserve it. After all, the view that linguistic diversity is beneficial and desirable is not one that has traditionally found favourable expression in Western thought. Quite the contrary is true. One thinks of the fictional biblical story of the Tower of Babel, for example, in which a multitude of languages was imposed upon the descendants of Noah as a divine punishment for their presumptuousness. More recently, the philosophy of the so-called 'Enlightenment' thinkers supported assimilationist nation-state ideologies in order to destroy the proliferation of supposedly backward, superstitious, irrational, pre-modern cultures. Movements supporting the universal adoption of artificial languages such as Esperanto or Volapük, which achieved a widespread following from the latter half of the 19th century onwards, also revealed an inherent hostility towards linguistic diversity (Mühlhäusler, 2001:159). Emphasising strongly the instrumental, communicative functions of language, such strands of thought supported the notion of 'the fewer languages, the better'. However, many contemporary sociolinguists have come to adopt an entirely contrary standpoint and have sought to advance a moral case for the protection of the world's languages. Four broad, often mutually reinforcing, strands of arguments can be located within this supposed moral case for the maintenance of linguistic diversity. These may be called the *public goods*, the *world-view*, the *biodiversity* and the *rights* arguments.

#### 3.6.2.1 Linguistic Diversity as a Public Good

The concept of *public goods* is a useful analytical frame of reference in attempting to understand and classify some of the most commonly proposed arguments advocating the protection of linguistic diversity. Precisely how one defines a *public good* has been the subject of much conjecture within political philosophy and definitions vary widely (Cullity, 1995). However, Boran (2003:194) identifies three essential

features that must supposedly be present in order to qualify something as a public good.

> [A] good that has at least the following features can qualify as a public good: (1) *jointness* (in supply and consumption): if a good is available for one person, it is available for others; its consumption by one does not diminish the consumption by others; (2) *non-excludability*: if a good benefits anyone, no one else can be prevented from doing so; and (3) *indivisibility*: the good cannot be divided into private goods. Examples are clean air, an unspoiled environment or street lights. (Boran, 2004:194)

To employ a public good argument is to make an undifferentiated appeal to an interest supposedly shared by all members of society, an interest from which one can then allegedly derive moral behavioural prescriptions. The assertion of linguistic diversity as a public good rests on two main arguments, which we may call the *aesthetic* and *scientific* arguments (Boran, 2003). The aesthetic argument holds that the existence of a diversity of languages is an asset that enriches human experience by expanding the range of cultural resources available to us. According to this view, pleasure is derived from the simple fact of linguistic diversity *per se*, in a similar way to how one might possibly rejoice at the existence of different architectural or musical styles. To what extent though, can one derive political duties and obligations from this preference for linguistic diversity? If one were to successfully employ a public goods argument in this instance, it would seem necessary to demonstrate that any deviation from, or disinclination towards, this aesthetic appreciation of linguistic diversity is both unlikely, unreasonable and, hence, *wrong*, in some cosmic sense. Yet to assert such a view potentially sits uncomfortably, particularly for those writing from within a liberal tradition and even more so for those who reject the ontological validity of the very notion of normative philosophical statements. A liberal instinct would seem to suggest that the appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of linguistic diversity is something about which people may reasonably differ. It is not inconceivable that certain individuals gain more pleasure from linguistic uniformity. After all, as was mentioned above, there is a tradition within Western thought that regards linguistic uniformity as preferable to diversity. Although many linguists may lament the fact, linguistic diversity is unlikely to feature highly on most individuals' list of things that make life worth living. Consequently, some individuals may display little or no preference on the matter. The aesthetic argument on its own makes only a very weak case for the maintenance of endangered languages and some might argue that it makes no case at all. It risks reformulating what is essentially a predilection on the part of some individuals for a particular linguistic environment into a universal human aesthetic requirement.

This argument for the aesthetic benefits of linguistic diversity is also complicated, somewhat ironically, by the fact that many human beings, particularly Westerners, are currently being exposed to and are experiencing more linguistic diversity than has ever previously been the case, at a time when worldwide linguistic diversity is decreasing at a faster rate than ever. Grin (2003:179) highlights this when he distinguishes between *objective* and *subjective* diversity.

> Many components of *objective* linguistic diversity [...] are obviously under threat. This threat is evidenced not only by the demise of small languages (with the passing away of their last remaining speakers), but also by the worldwide spread of specific cultural contents in forms of entertainment, types of consumer goods, and socio-political models of society [...] At the same time, *perceived* or *subjective* diversity is an increasingly prevalent feature of modern societies. Several trends coincide in this evolution, in particular the reassertion of long-suppressed manifestations of ethnic identity (including language) after the fall of the Berlin Wall; large-scale migration flows, with a much more varied range of combinations of country of origin and country of destination; the deepening and broadening of supra-national organizations such as the European Union; and the advance of what is usually referred to as 'globalization', and attendant processes such as the intensification of international trade. (Grin, 2003:179–80)

This distinction between objective and subjective diversity again shows that the conceptualisation of linguistic diversity is not a critically unproblematic endeavour. The innate tension that exists between the subjective experience and the objective reality of linguistic diversity is one that does appear to be fully countenanced in much of the ecolinguistic discourse. Let us consider the form of a world with fully maximised levels of linguistic diversity. In theory at least, it would consist of countless, small isolated groups of people that had no contact with each other. In other words, subjective linguistic diversity would be approaching zero. To actively experience linguistic diversity and the benefits thereof, increasing inter-societal and inter-linguistic contacts need to occur. When these contacts occur between communities of unequal power the threat of language shift often looms large. To experience the aesthetic pleasures of linguistic diversity is not necessarily commensurate with the protection or maintenance of that diversity. Some trade-off between objective and subjective diversity would therefore seem to be necessary. One might counter this by arguing that cultural and linguistic contacts can occur without any *necessary* detriment to any party involved. Is it not possible to enjoy the aesthetic benefits of linguistic diversity without simultaneously endangering it? Is such a form of 'linguistic eco-tourism' conceivable? Historical and contemporary patterns of language shift occurring as a result of contact between Western-style, modern industrial cultures and pre-modern indigenous cultures would seem to present extremely discouraging evidence.

Another argument that conceives of linguistic diversity as a public good emphasises the scientific and epistemological value of having a multiplicity of linguistic varieties. Many authors writing within the ecolinguistics paradigm highlight the fact that many of the world's most endangered languages are vast repositories of knowledge and information, particularly with regards to the naming and classification of items in the natural world (Nettle and Romaine, 2000: Chapter 2). Much of this knowledge is apparently undocumented and/or unknown to Western society. According to the ecolinguistic standpoint, the loss of these languages would represent an irretrievable loss of knowledge that would weaken the adaptational strength of our species. However, it should be noted how this scientific argument is often highly Western-centric. The Western world has undoubtedly profited from its discovery of worldwide cultural and linguistic diversity and the knowledge derived from it. Capitalist economies have found new resources to plunder and new markets and labour forces to exploit. Knowledge from indigenous languages has been imported chiefly

to serve the needs of Western societies in the form of pharmaceuticals etc. The high levels of ethnolinguistic diversity found in colonial settings was greatly beneficial to the Western colonial powers insofar as it facilitated their implementation of divide and rule strategies to consolidate their dominance over the indigenous colonised populations. The West's experience of (particularly indigenous) cultural and linguistic diversity has been mainly profitable. But can we claim the reverse? It is certainly a moot point. For example, have indigenous cultures' subjective experiences of cultural and linguistic diversity, in the form of contact with Western societies, been beneficial? Such contact has exposed many of these indigenous cultures to disease and gross acts of violence and oppression and has led to their degradation and in many cases, disappearance. Also, the importation of Western knowledge in the form of, say, systems of government, religion and education, has often proved inappropriate. The point being made here is simply that linguistic and other forms of cultural diversity may be experienced positively *or* negatively. Indeed, it may be experienced both positively and negatively simultaneously. Western societies are generally keen to benefit, aesthetically and materially, from the linguistic and cultural diversity found in indigenous communities far from home, but they have traditionally been far less tolerant of domestic diversity.

The fact that linguistic diversity may be experienced either positively or negatively undermines the claim that it constitutes a public good because this violates the principle of non-excludability (see above). While some societies may benefit from exposure to, and interaction with linguistic diversity and its other associated cultural products, some other societies may suffer from it. The pure fact of linguistic diversity is neither good nor bad and no objective value can be placed upon it. It is how such diversity is harnessed and appropriated for particular ends that determines the subjective value one can place upon it in particular circumstances.

#### 3.6.2.2 Language and World-View

Ecolinguistic arguments do not just concern themselves with the threat to practical, scientific knowledge caused by the endangerment of linguistic diversity, they also emphasise the potential loss of philosophical knowledge and existential interpretations of the world. The relationship between language and world-view has long been a subject of debate within sociolinguistic theory. Fishman (1991:20) describes what he terms the 'indexical relationship' between a language and its related ethnoculture, emphasising how each language has been fine-tuned over time to communicate certain attitudes and beliefs.

> That language which has traditionally been linked with a given ethnoculture is, at any time during which that linkage is still intact, best able to name the artefacts and to formulate or express the interests, values and world-views of that culture. Since the two, the language and the ethnoculture (if we permit ourselves to separate them for a moment) have 'grown up together' over an extensive period of time, they are better attuned to each other, at any time when the linkage between them is generally intact, than is any other language to that culture at that time. (Fishman, 1991:20)

There can be little disagreement with Fishman's assertion here. However, some ecolinguists, pursuing a kind of pseudo-logical extension to this argument, go on to assume an essential relationship between language and knowledge (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000:259). Invoking a strong, deterministic version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1956; Kay and Kempton, 1984), they claim a strong, nay absolute, link between a language and a particular *Weltanschauung* or world-view.

> Most perceptions of the world and parts of the world are brought into being and sustained by languages. Speakers of different languages, therefore, do not perceive the same world. Instead, different languages emphasize and filter various aspects of a multi-faceted reality in a vast number of ways. [...] [E]ach language may be seen as a provisional interpretation of a world so complex that the only hope for understanding it is to approach it from as many different perspectives as possible. If we regard each language as the result of a long history of human endeavour to gain knowledge of the world, we may begin to see why linguistic diversity is an invaluable resource rather than an obstacle to progress. (Mühlhäusler, 2001:160)

Kibbee (2003:50) notes that the adoption of a strong Whorfian position has led many ecolinguists to attribute negative characteristics to dominant international languages. For example, while indigenous languages supposedly determine a greater respect and appreciation among their speakers for the natural world, Western languages such as English, with their emphasis on human causativity and lack of structural distinction between real and imaginary nouns, are held to be inherently inadequate for the espousal of ecological/environmental discourse (Goatly, 1996; Mühlhäusler, 2001; Schleppegrell, 1997). Only by maintaining other languages, which are able to formulate alternative visions of the way in which human beings may interact with the natural world, will we be able to avoid environmental disaster, so the ecolinguistic argument goes. English is allegedly perfectly suited to expressing the values of industrial pollution, consumerism, global capitalism and imperialism or 'McDonaldization' as some authors choose to name it (Phillipson, 2003:72; Heller, 2003; Gorter, 2006:4)[5] . One can accept the indexical relationship between a language and its associated ethnoculture described by Fishman above, since this position does not deny the possibility, and indeed, the reality of translated cultures. However, the ultra-determinist perspective offered by the ecolinguists does just this. Yet, the argument that language loss *necessarily* entails the loss of knowledge seems vastly overstated. To deny the possibility of importing knowledge from one language to another is simply not empirically sustainable. Of this argument for protecting linguistic diversity, S.Wright (2004:221) notes that it

> would only be the case if the strong Whorfian claim that translation is ultimately impossible were true. However, translation is possible. The very fact that Mühlhäusler and Chawla can

[5] The term 'McDonaldization', which was originally used in the title of a book by Ritzer (1993), is often used by Phillipson and others similarly philosophically aligned without inverted commas, suggesting an assumption on the part of the author that the term is a universally accepted one. This is not the case. For example, Kibbee (2003:53) is of the opinion that to employ such a term without any discernible sense of humour or dramatic exaggeration is to unnecessarily stereotype American cultural influence around the world as consisting merely of this 'symbol of mediocrity.'

> point out that Westerners ignore important aspects of the environment, and that new ways of expressing our experience might change how we behave towards it, exemplifies Sapir's claim that elaboration and adaptability are always possible. Speakers of SAE [Standard Average European languages] could gain insights from peoples whose languages make the need to respect the environment more explicit. If a certain language does not have the lexis for a particular subject, it can be borrowed or invented. If it does not have a particular structure, it can be developed. If there is a particular way of reasoning or conceiving a topic in a language, it can be copied. If precise ways of talking about the ecosystem make speakers more aware of diversity and of damage and encourage them to be active stewards of biological and ecological diversity, then these can be copied and learnt. (S.Wright, 2004:221)

To adopt the strong Whorfian position would actually amount to absolving Western states of responsibility for their poor environmental records, something which may be likely to inhibit the initiation of political and social action to rectify them. If their languages make them unable to conceptualise the world in a manner that prevents them from causing ecological damage, then how can one readily criticise them? Such an argument may also be turned against speakers of threatened indigenous languages. If Western languages are deemed incapable of allowing their speakers to think ecologically, one may equally accuse indigenous languages of being unsuitable for use in modern applications. The consequences of such thinking can be disastrous. For example, speakers of African languages in South Africa have long suffered from an extreme lack of linguistic self-esteem, believing their languages to be incapable of expressing modern technical and scientific thought (see Section 4.5.1 for a detailed discussion of this). This has led to the stigmatisation of these languages as inappropriate for anything other than use in informal, private functions, which has contributed to the extreme socio-economic and political marginalisation of many of their speakers. Consequently, it can be seen that to practise this extreme version of linguistic determinism is to play a dangerous game, as it supports a highly dubious type of discourse, which may be manipulated to serve undesirable political ends and actually work against the interests of speakers of marginalised languages, interests which ecolinguists so fervently claim to represent.

#### 3.6.2.3 Misleading Metaphors: Linguistic Diversity and Biodiversity

When Nettle and Romaine (2000:50) note that 'languages, like species, are highly adapted to their environments and [...] all extinctions have as their cause environmental change', they invoke a metaphor popular in much of the literature surrounding language loss and preservation. This metaphor relies on drawing equivalences between linguistic diversity and biodiversity. Inferring more widely from the premise that biological diversity is desirable *per se* and also necessary for biological sustainability, similar claims are often made regarding linguistic diversity. According to Crystal (2000:33), the need to maintain linguistic diversity 'stands squarely on the shoulders' of arguments to maintain biodiversity. Some authors have also pointed out correlations between linguistic and biological patterns of diversity, noting that linguistic diversity is greatest in areas of high biodiversity and even coining

the term 'biolinguistic diversity' in order to highlight the link[6] (Nettle and Romaine, 2000:43). Consequently, any loss of linguistic diversity is metaphorically equated with a loss of biodiversity.

The extent of the usefulness of this biological metaphor to describe language loss is doubtful, however, as it posits a number of quite uncomfortable assumptions about the very nature of language itself. Firstly, let it be stated that it is not the intention here to question the desirability and necessity of biological diversity for biological viability. Neither is it the intention in any way to argue that linguistic diversity is necessarily undesirable. It is the validity of the biological metaphor that is being questioned and which, ultimately, must be rejected. For one to accept the validity of the metaphor, one would have to accept the analogy between languages or speakers of languages and biological species. While species are the natural unit of biological investigation, linguistic theory does not need to posit the existence of separate, discrete languages (Harris, 1990:45; Pennycook, 2004:234). The language/species equivalence falls down on numerous counts. When languages come into contact, they can influence each other's content or even develop into a new linguistic variety. Individuals can acquire new languages and even forget old ones in some cases. Biological species cannot interbreed in such a manner. Kibbee (2003:52) observes that 'in an ecological conception of languages, all lexical, phonological, morphological or syntactic borrowings are attacks against a language, an artificial deformation'. This view is highly reminiscent of the position, discussed in the previous chapter, of the German Romantic writers who viewed all foreign linguistic influences as sources of degradation, corruption and inauthenticity (see Section 2.5.1). However, such borrowings, while often resisted by some 'purists' for reasons of identity and symbolism (see Section 3.3), do not necessarily degrade the communicative functions of languages. Indeed, they may even be sources of enrichment. The biological metaphor may also be employed to undermine efforts to reverse or prevent language loss, as it overlooks the critical importance of social forces, implying that inherent characteristics somehow determine the vitality of a particular linguistic variety.

> Unlike natural species, languages have no genes and thus carry no mechanism for natural selection. Their prospects for survival are determined not by intrinsic traits, or capacity for adaptation, but by social forces alone. (Crawford, 1998:155)

Languages do not have an inevitable, pre-programmed life cycle in the way that biological species do. Languages may grow and decline any number of times depending on the social, economic and political forces acting upon them. Reliance on the biological metaphor tends to obscure this fact and may indeed give rise to the suggestion that language decline or expansion is some kind of 'natural' process (May, 2001:2–3). This can then potentially be used against arguments advocating language maintenance/preservation through the importation of a discourse espousing a kind of linguistic Darwinism. The vitality of a language is a reflection of the vitality of

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[6] Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) has even suggested that this correlation might be indicative of a causal relationship between linguistic and biodiversity.

the community that uses it, something determined by wider, non-linguistic, socio-economic and political variables. Metaphors are generally employed to improve our understanding of a concept or process. However, this 'biolinguistic' metaphor singularly fails to do this because it projects a view of language which falls down after little more than the most cursory scrutiny. The attractiveness of the metaphor is, to a limited extent, understandable, since it does serve to highlight the extent to which linguistic diversity is threatened in the current era. Yet, serious critical engagement shows the metaphor to be irredeemably flawed and requires that alternative models be developed in order to represent the reality of linguistic diversity and any factors which may cause it to decrease or, indeed, increase.

#### 3.6.2.4 Linguistic Diversity and 'Linguistic Human Rights'

A theory of universal language rights has been proposed as both a means of, and reason for, maintaining linguistic diversity. This argument has been the basic tenet of the 'Linguistic Human Rights' (LHR) paradigm which is most widely associated with the work of Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson.

> The perpetuation of linguistic diversity can [...] be seen as recognition that all individuals and groups have basic human rights, and as a necessity for the survival of the planet, in a similar way to biodiversity. (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994:84)

Taking the fundamental desirability of linguistic diversity as a starting point and asserting its maintenance and promotion as the ultimate normative goal of language policy and planning, this paradigm presupposes a generally unproblematic, clear-cut relationship between linguistic diversity and linguistic justice.

> Fundamentally, the ideology of rights and the ideology of diversity are not at variance with one another. [...] [A] defence of linguistic diversity will generally coincide with a defence of human rights. (Grin, 2003:187)

Biological and environmental metaphors and equivalences are also frequently drawn in support of this argument for language rights. Majoritarian language policies which do not officially recognise all minority languages and which promote linguistic convergence, i.e. a reduction in linguistic diversity, are criticised for violating supposedly universal language rights.

> Linguistic rights should be considered basic human rights. Linguistic majorities, speakers of a dominant language, usually enjoy all those linguistic human rights which can be seen as fundamental, regardless of how they are defined. Most linguistic minorities in the world do not enjoy these rights. It is only a few hundred of the world's 6–7,000 languages that have any kind of official status, and it is only speakers of official languages who enjoy *all* linguistic human rights. (Phillipson et al., 1995:2)

Criticism of such language policies is often couched in extreme terms. Policies that deny these so-called LHRs to minority language communities have been accused of propagating 'linguicide' or 'linguistic genocide' (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; 2006). The languages of powerful socio-political communities which pressurise minority language speakers into abandoning their native languages have been labelled 'killer languages' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001). The use of

such emotionally loaded terms is not restricted solely to contexts in which a language or several languages are in danger of imminent disappearance but is used to refer to all instances of monolingual, assimilationist language policies (Phillipson, 2003:161). A fundamental assertion of the diversity/LHR argument is that any pressures for linguistic consolidation are necessarily unjust and immoral and the consequence of some abuse of power by a majority (ethno)linguistic community. Such an assertion carries within it the implication that all macro-level sociolinguistic dynamics can be reduced to the consequences of human agency. It is upon this central claim that Phillipson (1992), for example, builds his much discussed thesis of 'linguistic imperialism.' Phillipson sees globalisation as a process of neo-imperialism mediated chiefly through the English language which maintains the political and economic hegemony of the USA and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain. While this thesis is of some use in exposing global political power relations, it has been the subject of considerable and, one might add, justifiable criticism and scepticism, chiefly for its claim that the position of English can be explained as the result of consciously implemented language planning measures by bodies such as the British Council and various US organisations (S. Wright, 2004:167; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Canagarajah, 1999). It was mentioned earlier in this chapter how prevailing sociolinguistic trends are often falsely deemed to be outcomes of language policies when they are actually underlying elements of policies. This insight suggests that the effect of conscious agency on linguistic behaviour may often be inadvertently exaggerated. Whilst one should not underestimate or deny the power inequalities that frequently underlie instances of language decline and desuetude, one should be careful not to underestimate the influence of wider structural forces over which consciously acting agents have little or no control.

Let us return to the claim of proponents of LHRs that a defence of linguistic diversity necessarily corresponds with a defence of (linguistic) human rights. This is a matter which requires further critical reflection. Must we regard all forces that militate in favour of a reduction of linguistic diversity as unjust, insidious and malign? Certainly, the tendency of many states to undertake coercive, Jacobinist nation-building projects may be regarded as instances of linguistic diversity being eroded under deeply oppressive conditions. However, as Levy (2003) argues, there are certain pressures towards a reduction in linguistic diversity which originate spontaneously, cannot be attributed to malicious human agency and may even be highly desirable. The spread of literacy within modern states is one such pressure.

> Even independent of any injustices in the world, there are real pressures toward linguistic homogenisation in a modern world made up of modern states. These pressures are intensified by the spread of mass literacy and printing [...] In laments for the lost world of casual polyglottism, or enthusiastic reports of that world's persistence in parts of Africa or Asia, one fails to see that it is much harder to be literate in several languages than it is to be conversant in them. Once 'knowing a language' comes to include the ability to read and write in it, each language (including the native language) requires a much greater investment of time, energy and education to acquire. This of course does not force anyone into monolingualism. But it does put downward pressure on how many languages any one person is likely to know. Moreover, *any* downward pressure on the number of languages any person is likely to know also places downward pressure on the number of languages that can sustainably be spoken in any given region. (Levy, 2003: 231)

The point made by Levy here is an important one. Even the most ardent advocates of the so-called moral case for maintaining linguistic diversity surely would not oppose the acquisition and spread of literacy in previously illiterate societies. In non-modern, non-literate societies an exclusively oral multilingual competence is sufficient for both people's identity and communicative requirements. However, under modern conditions, people's communicative requirements expand considerably to include literate competence. Purely oral ability in a language, while it may often be sufficient for some affective identity purposes, does not permit one to participate in the full range of cultural options available in modern societies. Literacy, however, is not something that can be casually or incidentally acquired. Additional time and resources have to be allocated in order to achieve full or, at least, a meaningful level of literate linguistic competence. Consequently, when faced with the choice of which languages to acquire literacy in, communities will inevitably undertake some form of cost-benefit analysis and prioritisation of languages, which, in the long term, could well lead to the marginalisation and eventual disuse of some spoken varieties. Even a language which has a tradition of literacy may become threatened if its user-base withers to the point where the opportunity costs of continuing to use it become too high. It seems, therefore, that some degree of diversity needs to be traded-off in order for widespread, societal literacy to become established. As for language rights then, those rights which permit and facilitate the acquisition and spread of literacy do not necessarily work in favour of maintaining former levels of linguistic diversity.

Linguistic convergence may also occur as the unforeseen and unintended consequence of other, otherwise desirable, human activities such as the building of transport infrastructure networks (roads, railways, increased air travel etc.) and the spread of broadcast media, all of which allow for increased nationwide (and global) communication exchanges. Yet, one does not tend to hear defenders of linguistic diversity decrying or opposing these activities on moral, or any other grounds, something which the logic of their position would seem to require. None of the foregoing is to deny the fact that a defence of linguistic rights will most likely correspond broadly with a defence of a certain degree of linguistic diversity. After all, the increasing interest in questions of language rights has been largely stimulated by dissatisfaction with Jacobinist policies of national integration and the subtractive language learning associated with the role of English in the context of globalisation. However, the argument here is that the emphasis of the diversity argument is misplaced. If one believes that the primary function of language rights should be to combat linguistically mediated oppression and marginalisation, as advocates of LHRs claim – Skutnabb-Kangas' and Phillipson's (1994) edited volume on LHRs was, after all, subtitled 'Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination' – one needs to look beyond a concern for linguistic diversity, which, as we have seen, may be experienced positively and negatively. As Patten and Kymlicka (2003:50) observe, 'the key issue is not whether the language dies but whether language change, including language death, takes place in a context of oppression and injustice.'

Contrary to the claims of advocates of LHRs, arguments about language rights and linguistic diversity do not necessarily amount to the same thing. A reduction

in linguistic diversity is not synonymous with linguistic exploitation, abuse or imperialism, unless one sees the diversity itself, rather than people, as the object of abuse, a view which would lead one to the absurd position of demanding rights for an abstract concept. Let it be stated once again that what is being advocated here is not that diversity is somehow bad, or necessarily needs to be treated as problematic, but, merely, that if one has the aim of defending the interests of minority or endangered language speakers, in some cases other considerations and concerns have more pressing claims to supersede it. For instance, it is conceivable that a programme of rights formulated with the intention of language preservation may work contrary to the interests of speakers of threatened languages. A policy preoccupied with preservation is unlikely to give due attention to the needs and desires of such speakers to acquire majority languages of greater instrumental value. Far from protecting the rights of minority language speakers, the diversity argument may actually impose unwanted *duties* upon them.

> Let us say that the aesthetic or educational value of diversity does justify imposing certain costs on people in the majority culture. Why then does the value of diversity not also justify a duty on the members of the minority to maintain their traditional culture? If the benefits of cultural diversity to the larger society can justify restricting individual liberties or opportunities, why does it matter whether these restrictions are imposed on people inside or outside the group? [...] It is difficult to see how the diversity argument can make this distinction. Because it appeals to the interests of the larger society, it cannot explain why minorities should be able to decide for themselves whether or how to maintain their culture. (Kymlicka, 1995:122–3)

The notion of linguistic justice promoted by proponents of linguistic human rights is purely outcome-based. The argument may be summarised as follows: linguistic convergence is bad and undesirable, therefore anything which contributes towards a reduction in linguistic diversity is necessarily unjust and must be condemned and resisted. Yet, as was discussed above, to pursue such logic may lead to the undesirable and unjustified condemnation of such things as the spread of literacy, infrastructure networks and broadcast media. Furthermore, forms of linguistic diversity may be promoted through oppressive, repellent methods, apartheid South Africa being a notable example (see Chapter 4). Clearly, from a liberal perspective, the ends do not always justify the means in matters of language policy and planning. The universality of the linguistic human rights paradigm is perhaps its greatest weakness (Pennycook, 1998). It would seem to lead to an in-built inflexibility which makes it incapable of positing anything more than a set of quite minimal tolerance or negative-freedom type rights because it cannot deal with the theoretical and practical complexity engendered by the fact that different groups will tend to have linguistic demands and needs that vary considerably in nature and scope, according to the particular historical and socio-political context(s) in question. However, if one adopts a procedural notion of linguistic justice, by judging means instead of outcomes, one is better able to assess the legitimacy of language policies on an individual basis. By employing a procedural approach one can avoid the automatic, binary caricaturisation of language policies as 'bad' or 'good' depending on whether they lead to linguistic convergence or promote linguistic diversity. It can allow us to identify

and separate those factors which contribute towards linguistic convergence that are indeed oppressive from those which cannot be attributed to malicious design and which may even be desirable. The diversity argument and the LHR argument (which is essentially a form of the diversity argument expressed in legalistic terms) are unable to make this distinction because of the obsessive prioritisation of (a poorly formulated conception of) diversity. Consequently, the concept of nation-building, which by definition implies some degree of convergence (ideological and cultural), cannot be accommodated within the diversity/LHR framework.

## 3.7 The Pluralist Dilemma: Reconciling Nation-Building and Linguistic Diversity?

It is clear that state-led, top-down nation-building cannot be reconciled with a universal theory of language rights which has the maintenance and promotion of linguistic diversity as its principle normative motivation. However, as we have seen, the diversity and LHR arguments also provide a theoretically inadequate and often incoherent critique of nation-building language policies. Patten and Kymlicka (2003:38) make the relevant observation that 'it would be a mistake to simply dismiss nation-building on the grounds that it is "insensitive to difference"'. After all, the linguistic ideology of the nation-state does have some potentially attractive elements, in addition to its more pernicious ones. With regard to the possession of a common language, there are obviously some significant benefits to be had for both majority and minority groups (Kelman, 1972:194–7). For example, theorists of 'deliberative democracy' have stressed the important role of a common language in allowing minority voices to be heard publicly and so make a meaningful contribution to opinion-forming in the wider society (Dryzek, 1990; Young, 2000: Chapter 1). The importance of the sense of shared citizenship and common solidarity that can be facilitated by the existence of a common language has long been emphasised by liberal political theorists (Kymlicka, 1995: Chapter 9). Given the many potential benefits of having a common language, a liberal position would likely claim that any theoretically satisfactory objection to assimilationist nation-building policies needs to be based on something other than a desire to protect and promote linguistic diversity, since a predilection for diversity cannot be anything more than a *preference* for a particular linguistic model of society. This preference for linguistic diversity cannot lay realistic claims to any objective moral, categorical imperativeness, nor, indeed, can any linguistic model of society (see Section 1.1), despite the passionate arguments of ecolinguists.

One of the most favourably received attempts to undertake the task of formulating a non diversity-based counter argument to coercive, assimilationist language policies is to be found in the work associated with the liberal culturalist paradigm and, in particular, in the work which builds upon the theory of 'group-differentiated rights' developed by authors such as Kymlicka (e.g.1989; 1995) and Young (e.g.1989; 1990). This approach asserts that individual languages (and other

cultural behaviours) are not inherently valuable *per se* but, rather, that they are worthy of respect and protection only insofar as individual speakers of those languages deem them valuable and meaningful, whether for affective or instrumental reasons, or both. Unlike the diversity argument, this approach has the advantage of not imposing any duty upon groups to maintain their associated language and culture. It merely states that they should be free to do so if they wish. Accommodating the reasonable demands of minority groups for cultural recognition and protection has required some degree of departure from 'traditional' liberalism. It is claimed that the universal, undifferentiated notion of individual rights and duties promoted by classic, orthodox liberal theory frequently gives unsatisfactory and unjust results when applied to questions of language rights, as it invariably leads to a situation of majoritarian ethnolinguistic hegemony (often cloaked in the rhetoric of a universal civism) and the political and economic subordination and possible disintegration of smaller, less powerful groups (May, 2001). The liberal culturalist position does not reject the most fundamental tenet of liberalism though, namely the prioritisation of the protection of the freedom of the individual. Instead, it seeks to marry this traditional liberal concern for the individual with the legitimate claims of groups to political representation and protection. Indeed, liberal culturalists argue that individual freedom is actually highly dependent on membership in a societal culture since that group culture supposedly affords the individual an option-laden context within which to pursue his or her particular conception of the 'good life' (Kymlicka, 1995: 75–106).

In a multicultural, multiethnic society of unequal inter-group power relations a universal, undifferentiated notion of citizenship fails to provide minority groups with adequate political and legal resources with which to protect themselves from the cultural formation of the dominant majority group. However, making a binary distinction between majority and minority rights is too simplistic because several types of minority group can be identified and they may often differ significantly in terms of their social organisation and in the degree to which they are marginalised within the state. For example, when it comes to questions of language rights, authors such as Kymlicka (1995) and May (2001; 2006) claim that we should make a distinction between minority indigenous ethnolinguistic groups and immigrant minority groups, as both the type and extent of the language rights which each demands are likely to differ considerably. This stems from the quite different requirements that these groups can reasonably be expected to have concerning their relationship with the state. Indigenous minority groups may often go so far as to demand some degree of, or even total, self-governance. Very often their incorporation into the wider state was involuntary and the result of some imperialist domination and so they may reject as illegitimate the right of the state to exercise power over them. As for immigrant groups, their ambitions generally revolve around gaining acceptance into the mainstream society, although this does not mean they are prepared to renounce all forms of behaviour and expression associated with their cultures of origin. Kymlicka (1995) uses this distinction between indigenous and immigrant minorities, which has been the target of some criticism (e.g. Pooge, 2003), as the basis for his theory which advocates the distribution of group-differentiated

rights. He proposes that native minorities which constitute a full 'societal culture' should be entitled to 'self-government rights' which permit and facilitate the devolution of power to them, whilst immigrant minorities should benefit from integrative 'polyethnic rights' which 'are intended to help ethnic groups and religious minorities express their cultural particularity and pride without it hampering their success in the economic and political institutions of the dominant society' (Kymlicka, 1995:31). Kymlicka also proposes a third category of rights, namely 'special representation rights' which are intended for the protection of non-ethnic minority social groups such as women, homosexuals or the disabled. This third category can also have an impact on language policy debates although they tend to centre on questions concerning the use of appropriate, 'politically-correct' terminology.

So where does the granting of different categories of rights to majority groups, indigenous minorities and immigrant minorities leave state-led nation-building? The existence of a situation of differentiated citizenship seriously undermines the ability of the state to pursue assimilationist policies which promote a homogenous view of society. It also seriously questions the legitimacy of such policies (Carens, 2000). Nevertheless, all states seem compelled to search for some source of unity amongst their diverse populations, no matter how tenuous or fallacious it may appear, in order to avoid inter-group conflict and to negate secessionist tendencies. Indeed, it is difficult to deny some of the benefits and attractions of social unity. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is a prudent or desirable idea to attempt to explicitly engineer it in situations where it has not developed spontaneously. This conflict between the promotion of a single state-bounded identity and the granting of group-differentiated rights has become known as the 'pluralist dilemma'. Bullivant (1981: x) defines it as 'the problem of reconciling the diverse political claims of constituent groups and individuals in a pluralist society with the claims of the nation-state as a whole'. For proponents of the diversity and linguistic human rights arguments, no such dilemma exists because they are concerned with sources of diversity, not sources of unity and so therefore, any claims made on behalf of an aspiring nation-state are automatically viewed as illegitimate. However, liberal culturalists do not reject all aspects of the nation-state ideology out of hand. As Laitin and Reich, (2003:89) note: 'The liberal culturalist approach attempts to capture the nationalist perspective but contain it within liberal principles'. For many in the liberal tradition, an ethnolinguistically homogenous society bound together by a sense of common civic duty and purpose represents something approaching the ideal political-cultural formation. The central question here then for liberal theory is: what measures, if any, can be legitimately pursued to generate such sentiments in plural societies? This is the crucial difference between liberal group rights and the linguistic human rights attitude to nation-building policies because the latter does not even try to answer this question. As for the feasibility of answering this question adequately, this is perhaps the most pertinent issue. The pluralist dilemma would seem to present an irreducible degree of tension between what Schermerhorn (1970:81) has described as 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' tendencies. Centripetal tendencies refer to convergent social trends and cultural practices and values which strengthen adherence to the central state while centrifugal tendencies refer to those

which incite conflict with, or separation from, the dominant group and the wider society. This engenders a highly complex problematic if theorists are to resolve the dilemma satisfactorily in favour of, or find a favourable compromise between, both tendencies. Also, it must be noted that practical resolution does not necessarily follow seamlessly on from theoretical resolution. Furthermore, it seems that as societies and the demands of groups continue to develop and change, conceptions of ideas central to normative political theory such as justice and fairness are also likely to evolve. Therefore, while some theorists may have produced responses to these questions that are valid and appropriate in synchronic or context-specific instances, it seems likely that the pluralist dilemma will continue to be a matter of considerable debate and contention within the field of political theory.

# Chapter 4
# Language Policy and Identity Planning in South Africa: A Historical Overview

## 4.1 Introduction

Being an ideological process and a political tool, language policy and planning is inevitably reflective of the political and philosophical agendas of those who formulate and implement it (Blommaert, 1999; 2006; Kroskrity, 2001). Throughout the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa and since apartheid's demise in 1994, language planning has been a central constitutive feature of the attempts of successive South African governments to construct and manipulate group identities. The different identities which have evolved and emerged throughout South Africa's modern history have not done so in isolation, but have instead originated through contact between different groups, often of vastly differing size and political power. Indeed, the construction and consolidation of group identities generally takes place within a framework of unequal power relations and especially so in multiethnic/multilingual post-colonial societies such as South Africa. In the light of this insight, Castells (1997:8) identifies three types of identity that may emerge in such circumstances:

- Legitimizing identity – introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination *vis- à- vis* social actors.
- Resistance identity – generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society.
- Project identity – when social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by doing so, seek the transformation of overall social structure. (Castells, 1997:8)

The various group identities that have emerged and competed for political power throughout the colonial and post-colonial history of South Africa can, at different stages, be seen as broadly conforming to at least one of the types of identity described in Castells' typology. The British colonial policy of anglicisation was

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obviously an attempt to legitimise British identity. The Afrikaner nationalist reaction to, and rejection of, the British policy is a classic example of a resistance identity and post-apartheid nation-building with its emphasis on creating a new, multiracial South African nation clearly fulfils the criteria of a project identity. Identities are not static concepts, however, and their social meaning is subject to change. Identities that initially emerged in resistance to a legitimising identity may themselves in time become legitimising identities if their bearers acquire sufficient political power. The same is true of project identities which, once they have been constructed and internalised by social actors, may also become legitimising identities in order to maintain or extend their bearers' political and cultural influence. This is certainly the case presently in South Africa, as the ANC seeks to legitimise and universalise its own particular vision of South African national identity (see Section 6.3).

This chapter looks at how the ideologies of different political regimes in South Africa have influenced attempts to construct and entrench group identities through the implementation of language policy and planning. Particular focus shall be placed on differing conceptions of nationhood and how they have served (and continue to serve) to influence language policy and planning decisions. An assessment shall also be made of the relative success or failure of the language policies concerned with regard to the achievement of their identity construction goals.

## 4.2 Language Policy in the Initial Period of Dutch Colonisation

Contact between different language groups was an observable phenomenon from the earliest period of the colonisation of the Cape of Good Hope by the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) which began on 6th April 1652 with the arrival of three ships under the command of one Jan Van Riebeeck who was charged with overseeing the setting up of a supply station for VOC ships en route to the Dutch East Indies (Davenport, 1992:19). Although this initial colonisation gave rise to relatively little by way of official policy statements or proclamations on language use, one can note the activation of a number of linguistic ideologies as a result of the language contact that took place. The most conspicuous language contact situation was that between the European settlers, most of whom were Dutch-speaking but who also included groups of German, French and Scandinavian language speakers, and the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape, the Khoikhoi or Khoesan whose languages are particularly noteworthy for their numerous, autochthonous 'click' sounds (Traill, 2002). Steyn (1980:106) notes that the European settlers had extreme difficulty in trying to learn these languages which to them apparently sounded like the 'clucking of turkeys'. However, many Khoikhoi quickly learned to speak some Dutch, which had established itself as the main language of colonial life at the Cape and so also soon became the overwhelmingly dominant medium of communication between the colonists and the indigenous inhabitants.

The arrival of European settlers was to have a catastrophic effect upon Khoikhoi society (Davenport, 1992:6–8). Elphick (1985:xvii) notes that the combined effects of three smallpox epidemics and the new social and political order introduced by the European settlers meant that 'the traditional Khoikhoi economy, social structure, and political order had almost entirely collapsed'. It is estimated that within a century of the arrival of the first Dutch settlers, the variety of the Khoikhoi language spoken in the western Cape had largely disappeared (Nienaber, 1963:97). Although the VOC welcomed and encouraged the linguistic assimilation of the Khoikhoi for their own instrumental reasons, there was never any question of them gaining the social prestige and legal privileges that the European settlers possessed. Resistance to the idea of *gelykstelling* (social levelling) across racial boundaries was always extremely strong amongst the Dutch-speaking (later Afrikaans) population and, indeed, would culminate some 300 years after the initial colonisation of South Africa in the policy of apartheid (Giliomee, 2003:44 and 88–9). Race had been erected as an immovable barrier of identity that no extent of linguistic assimilation could overcome.

Language contact also occurred as a result of the importation of approximately 63,000 slaves into the Cape colony between 1652 and 1808. These slaves were removed from a range of highly divergent geographical and cultural origins. Initially, most slaves came from other locations with Africa such as Angola and Dahomey. The VOC then looked eastwards to its imperial possessions in the Indian subcontinent and the Indonesian archipelago for additional slave labour to be shipped into the colony. From the mid-1780s onwards, Madagascar and East Africa became the most abundant source of slave labour (Shell, 1994:12–13). Although the slaves brought with them a high level of linguistic diversity, social conditions at the Cape did not permit the long-term survival of most of these linguistic varieties. Slaves were often separated from other members of their linguistic and cultural groups meaning that it was impossible for the slaves to reproduce any form of community based on their cultural origins and traditions (Worden, 1985:86). It was obviously necessary for the European masters to be able to communicate with their slaves to a certain degree. For this reason, slaves were compelled by their miserable situation to acquire some competence in Dutch. Consequently, pidgin, L2 and creolised varieties of Dutch were soon widely spoken by the slave population. Some small traces of the linguistic origins of the slave population are still to be found in modern day Afrikaans, albeit mostly just at the lexical level (Roberge, 2002).[1] As with the Khoikhoi, the linguistic assimilation of slaves was encouraged for the instrumental benefit of the white settlers but, again, there was never any possibility of their assimilation into the identity community of the European colonists.

[1] The most commonly encountered linguistic trace of the slave population in present-day Afrikaans is the ubiquitous word *baie*, meaning 'much' 'many' or 'very' and which serves both adjectival and adverbial functions.

As already intimated, another type of language contact that occurred in the early Cape colony was that between the majority of Dutch-speaking settlers and speakers of other European languages. The most numerous non-Dutch-speaking settlers were French-speaking Huguenot refugees fleeing religious persecution in France, as well as smaller numbers of German and Scandinavian language speakers who were also present in the colony. The legacy of some of these immigrants is to be found today in the very many surnames of French origin within the Afrikaner community, such as De Villiers, Terre-Blanche, Du Toit, Joubert and Le Roux. Steyn (1980:111–113) reports that within a half-century of the arrival of these immigrants, an almost total process of linguistic and concomitant identity assimilation had taken place. The VOC encouraged the assimilation of the immigrants into the Dutch-speaking, Christian cultural formation urging that the French-speaking children be taught 'our language and morals, and be integrated with the Dutch nation' (Böesken, 1964:95). However, it would be incorrect to assume that this assimilation occurred solely as the result of coercion and linguistic oppression on the part of the Dutch. The non-Dutch-speaking European settlers were too few in number and resources to establish viable, self-sufficient communities of their own. Consequently, this meant that contact with the dominant Dutch-speaking culture of the colony was both necessary and unavoidable, something which gave rise to irresistible assimilationist pressures. As Scholtz (1939:232–3) notes: 'The French language was not "oppressed" or "annihilated" in the colony. [...] French disappeared through a natural process of assimilation.' This was very much an instance in which prevailing social and demographic conditions complemented and facilitated the widespread acceptance of the linguistic ideology of the dominant ruling class. The fact that the French-speaking settlers shared the same skin colour and religion as the Dutch-speaking colonists also allowed for any potentially politically significant surviving expressions of French identity to disappear from the colony alongside the French language.

## 4.3 British Colonial Language Policy in South Africa

In 1806, the British seized the Cape of Good Hope from the Dutch with the intention of establishing a colony, which, as Kamwangamalu (2004a:201) observes, was 'British in character as well as in name.' In other words, the intention was to ensure a cultural transformation to complement the political transformation that had occurred with the passing of the Cape into British hands. To bring about this cultural transformation, the British administration was to pursue a policy of intense anglicisation (Giliomee, 2003:197; Sturgis, 1982). In practice, this was to be a reductive, assimilationist policy designed to replace the language of the white settlers of Dutch descent (known variously as Cape Dutch or Kaap-Hollands and as Afrikaans from 1925) by English in public life and education, in order to impose British cultural practices upon the Dutch speakers and marginalise those associated with their own cultural heritage. The British attitude towards the Dutch-speaking

settlers was typified by an unshakeable confidence in their own cultural superiority. This belief was confirmed to the British by the fact that '[t]here were no books, paintings or innovations on which Afrikaners could pride themselves. They were a rural, isolated, relatively backward people with only a few who received more than a rudimentary education' (Giliomee, 2003:195). Afrikaans was also frequently derided in the English-speaking community for its supposed paucity of vocabulary and its limited spheres of use. In 1911, *The Star*, an English language newspaper scathingly described Afrikaans as a 'jargon without literature, without scientific basis and without practical value outside local confines' (Steyn, 1980:213). Even some Afrikaans speakers came to view the language in similar terms: 'The Afrikaans language is laughable because it lives in the kitchen, on the street, in the canteens, in the houses of the uneducated' (De Waal, 1939:268). The British on the other hand were affirmed by their illustrious literary and scholarly cultural history and the fact they had the wealth and machinery of the scientifically and technologically pre-eminent British empire behind them. According to the logic of British imperial ideology, then, the assimilation of the Dutch speakers was an almost self-evident necessity. Indeed, the British saw it as their solemn duty to anglicise these Dutch/Afrikaans speakers since

> they were only a little over thirty thousand in number, and it seemed absurd that such a small body of people should be permitted to perpetuate ideas and customs that were not English in a country that had become part of the British Empire. (Malherbe, 1925:57)

In this regard, British policy towards the Afrikaners was characteristic of the cultural and linguistic assimilationist domestic policies and practices pursued by many Western Europe states during this era which had the aim of establishing a single, indivisible national identity amongst their diverse populations. Yet the success of these domestic policies must be called into question (see Section 3.4.3). To take Britain's Celtic periphery as an example, Irish, Welsh and even Cornish identities have survived despite a very great (total, in the case of Cornish) degree of language shift towards English (Agnew, 1981). As was discussed in Section 3.3, transference of identity does not necessarily follow on from linguistic assimilation (Edwards, 1985:96–7). Nevertheless, this same assimilationist intent was to drive British language policy with regard to the Dutch-speaking population. In 1822, English was declared the sole official language of the colony and free English-medium schools were established in which Dutch had no place, either as a subject or medium of instruction. Indeed, it was decided that 'Dutch should only be used to teach English and English to teach everything else' (Zietsman, 1992:23). From 1828, all court proceedings were to take place in English. The British also brought many Scottish Presbyterian ministers to serve in the Dutch Reformed Church in an attempt to promote English at the expense of Dutch (Kamwangamalu, 2004a:216). This punitive imposition of English at the expense of Dutch met with huge resistance amongst the Dutch-speaking population who, quite understandably, resented being governed and having their children educated in a foreign language by a foreign power. Consequently, this *taalstryd* or 'language struggle' was to become the principal site of Boer nationalist expression and resistance to British rule. In an effort

to counter British language policy, the Afrikaners set up private Dutch-medium schools and ultra-conservative Afrikaners known as 'Doppers'[2] fought against the anglicisation and liberalisation of religious life (Giliomee, 2003:177–179). They viewed the preservation of their language as essential for the maintenance of their ethnic/national identity. It was in this *taalstryd* that the absolute link between language and national identity became entrenched in Afrikaner consciousness, a belief that would explicitly direct language policy during the apartheid era. Writing in the *Vriends des Volks* (Friends of the People, 28th October 1910), W. Postma, a Dutch Reformed Church Minister and political columnist, encapsulated the strength of the Afrikaner belief in the indivisible link between language and ethnic/national identity: 'Take away our language and we will become Englishmen' (cited in Kamwangamalu, 2004a:217).

The British policy of anglicisation lasted officially until 1910 when the Boer states of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State joined the British Cape Colony and Natal to form the Union of South Africa. As a consequence of this union, Dutch (later Afrikaans) and English were given equal co-official status. However, in practice, the assimilationist conviction and intent of the British was changed little by this development. The British continued to be convinced of the natural inevitability and desirability of the dominance of English in the new union. One G. Heaton-Nicholls, an English-speaking politician from Natal, later wrote: 'We had gone about talking of a South African nation which would consist of Dutch and English, but at the back of our minds we had supposed that they would talk English. We aimed at Anglicisation' (Heaton-Nicholls, 1961:283). The editor of *Volksstem*, a Dutch/Afrikaans newspaper of the time, remarked of the new bilingual policy that:

> English-speaking South Africa never took the matter seriously. Bilingualism was regarded as nothing more than a polite gesture towards the other section – neither more nor less. The average English-speaking South African was inclined to regard every political recognition of the Dutch language as a menace to the interests of his own race. (Engelenburg, 1929:230)

Agreeing to an officially bilingual union was an act of conciliatory compromise on the part of the British and not an affirmation of a radical departure in linguistic ideology, which remained largely unchanged. The *de facto* language-in-identity policy of the British still held the Afrikaners as a population to be assimilated. Yet, with regard to its identity construction aims, British colonial language policy towards the Afrikaners must be regarded as a severe failure. Not only did the policy fail to assimilate the Dutch-speaking population, it actually laid the foundations for the crystallisation of an ethnic Afrikaner identity, which was to find expression in the formation of a fervently anti-British nationalist movement. Put simply, the consequences of the policy were precisely the opposite of what the British had intended. Their aggressive, absorptive nationalism was countered by an equally belligerent resistant Afrikaner nationalism. Unlike the vast majority of the Celtic population

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[2] The name is a corruption of the Dutch noun 'domper' meaning a device for snuffing out candles. The mission of the Doppers was, figuratively, seen to be one of extinguishing the light of progress and 'Enlightenment' ideas associated with the British Empire.

of the British Isles, the export of the anglicisation policy to South Africa failed to linguistically assimilate its Dutch-speaking target population. However, what is significant is that, in both cases, irrespective of whether any language shift took place, there occurred no identity shift in the direction intended by the policy. Ethnic identities are far more durable and resilient than mere linguistic communities (Smith, 1986). The number of ethnic identities that have survived total language shift is testimony to this. Language shift appears, generally, to be an easier process to initiate than identity shift, insofar as either of these processes can actually be consciously planned and manipulated. However, the example of the Afrikaners suggests that in cases where the language-identity link is so strong and salient as to be perceived as absolute by members of the group in question, efforts directed at coercive linguistic assimilation seem likely to be met with considerably greater resistance. The notion of 'core values', introduced by Smolicz (1979, 1981 and 1995), is of relevance here when considering the relationship between the Afrikaans language and Afrikaner identity. Smolicz (1981) provides the following definition of 'core values'.

> Core values can be regarded as forming one of the most fundamental components of a group's culture. They generally represent the heartland of the ideological system and act as identifying values which are symbolic of the group and its membership. Rejection of core values carries with it the threat of exclusion from the group. [...] Core values are singled out for special attention because they provide the indispensable link between the group's cultural and social systems; in their absence both systems would suffer eventual disintegration. (Smolicz, 1981:75)

Non-core values may often be easily eroded by the assimilationist pressures created by the presence of a politically dominant, foreign cultural formation. However, when core values are threatened they often become the site of a vigorous nationalist resistance movement. Language may or may not, of course, be a core cultural value, depending on the group in question. Some cultures are highly language-centred, others less so. The case of Ireland illustrates this point well. The resistance of the historically Irish-speaking ethnic group to assimilation to the English language has been so weak and ineffective to the extent that everyday use of the Irish language is now almost exclusively restricted to a tiny, geographically quite isolated minority of the population living in the *Gaeltacht* (May, 2001:136; Fishman, 1991:124). Yet, Irish identity has persisted with great force and vitality despite this linguistic assimilation. This is because the everyday use of the Irish language is not a core cultural value without which the maintenance of Irish group identity would be impossible. Instead, it is undoubtedly Catholicism that fills this role. It has been the maintenance of the Catholic religion in opposition to the Protestantism of the British that, historically, has been the central locus of Irish nationalist sentiment.

> Bereft of their ancestral tongue, it was in Catholicism that the Irish found the refuge and shield behind which they could retain their identity and awareness of their distinction from the conquering British Protestants, including the descendants of the Cromwellian settlers of the seventeenth century. (Smolicz, 1981:79)

The extreme, intense preoccupation of Afrikaner nationalist thought and rhetoric with the issue of language demonstrates that the Afrikaans language clearly

constitutes a 'core value' for Afrikaners (Steyn, 1980:428–436 and 1984; Zietsman, 1992:196). Comments such as those of Postma, cited above, suggest that the survival of the Afrikaners as a cohesive ethnic group depended utterly on the maintenance of Afrikaans. This perception of the central importance of Afrikaans to Afrikaner identity remains as strong as ever to this day (Giliomee, 2003:664; see Section 5.2). Retrospectively, one can see that in trying to eradicate a core value of Afrikaner cultural identity, the British policy of total assimilation through anglicisation was almost pre-doomed to failure. Indeed, an education report commissioned by the British colonial government in 1901 admitted as much, declaring contemptuously that it was hopeless to expect the Afrikaners to use any other language amongst themselves since 'their own Dutch idiom [...] is associated with every act and thought of their farm life' (cited in Zietsman, 1992:31). The resilience of Afrikaner ethnic identity resided overwhelmingly within their language, meaning that the initiation of a language shift away from Afrikaans would have required considerably more resources and incentives than were available to the British.

British language policy during the 19th century was not only concerned with the assimilation of the white Afrikaans-speaking population. Sections of the native African population were also targets of the policy of linguistic and cultural assimilation. British missionary schools, their agents fuelled by the belief that they were undertaking a *mission civilisatrice* in addition to furthering British political and economic interests, were the main agents of this anglicisation of (proportionately) small numbers of the black population (Alexander, 1989:17–20). These missionary schools

> trained and educated a Black elite thus providing an authentic cultural context for English [...] The scholarly missionaries educated a group of men and women with high competence in English, a deep insight into the world of English ideas and values, a strong language loyalty to English and a sense of the 'great tradition' of English literature (hence the devotion and attachment to Shakespeare and the poets which continue to the present day). (Lanham, 1978:22–3)

The political consequences of this policy have been far-reaching and continue to shape the contemporary political and social life of South Africa. This anglicised black elite, who have been described, somewhat mischievously, as 'Afro-Saxons' (Mazrui and Alamin, 1998; Rubagumya, 2004), survives to this day and has become the new ruling class in post-apartheid South Africa. Indeed, current elite language practices in South Africa are a direct reflection of a linguistic ideology that can trace its origin directly back to the consequences of this colonial language policy of the British which

> reinforced the tendency among what is known in South African history as the 'mission elite', i.e. the tiny layer of black teachers, preachers, interpreters, clerks and other professionals which the colonial system had necessarily given rise to, to view proficiency in the English language as their passport to upward social and economic mobility. The yawning gulf between the potential political and cultural elite on the one hand and the masses of the oppressed black people, on the other hand, was thereby widened beyond any hope of bridging during the next few generations. (Alexander, 2003:10)

Similarly, Heugh (2003:3) writes that:

> [The] pursuit of anglicisation was probably one of the greatest political errors of South African history because it set in motion a chain of events which continues to haunt education and language policy a hundred years later. (Heugh, 2003a:3)

These 'Black Englishmen', as they were often derogatorily referred to, and most notably by president Hendrik Verwoerd (Maake, 1994:114), were particularly loathed by conservative Afrikaner elements who viewed them as an affront to the ideal of ethnocultural purity and authenticity that the Afrikaners had fought so successfully to preserve in the face of British attempts at anglicisation. A more pragmatic, political rationale can also be discerned in the Afrikaner resentment of this culturally westernised black elite. An anglicised black population would be likely to support and advocate British cultural practices which were seen as a threat to the very existence of the Afrikaner *volk*. Also, if any future conflict with the British were to occur, this black elite would possibly be able to mobilise vast manpower resources to side with the British against the Afrikaners. As Steyn (1980:259) notes: '[t]he British element in South Africa awoke Afrikaner fear in their attempts at making common cause with the blacks against the Afrikaners'. Shaw (1987:294) discusses, for example, the long history of Afrikaner hatred and fear of the English-language press in South Africa, noting that '[e]ven today [1987], many Afrikaner nationalists are convinced that the English-speaking press is purposefully stirring up the blacks to undermine the Afrikaners'. It is in this double-sided combination of philosophical revulsion for, and pragmatic political fear of, a black English-speaking population that one can locate the motivations underpinning much of the apartheid era language policy.

## 4.4 Language Policy During Apartheid

After coming to power in 1948, the Afrikaner-dominated National Party identified a key role for language policy and planning in advancing and implementing its policy of separate development or 'apartheid', literally meaning 'separateness' in Afrikaans. As seen in the previous section, the Afrikaner reaction to the British policy of anglicisation crystallised the belief in the absolute, one-to-one link between language and national identity. The philosophical roots of this belief that was to form the basis of apartheid ideology can, in part, be traced back to the influence of the linguistic nationalism of the late eighteenth-century German Romantic thinkers (see Section 2.5.1; Giliomee, 2003:365; Steyn, 1984). Afrikaner conceptions of nationhood have typically found expression in slogans such as *Die taal is gans die volk* (the language constitutes the entire people) (Zietsman, 1992). According to such thought, the nation or *volk* has an immutably fixed character and identity, expressed through its supposedly unique language, which distinguishes it from all others (May, 2001:57). As Kedourie has noted of this school of thought in general terms:

> [L]anguage was [seen as] an outward sign of a group's particular identity and a significant means of ensuring its continuity. But a nation's language was peculiar to that nation

> only because such a nation constituted a racial stock distinct from that of other nations. (Kedourie, 1966:71–2)

According to the official policy document of Christian National Education 'God [. . . ] willed separate nations and peoples, and He gave to each separate nation and people its special vocation, task and gifts' (Institute for Christian National Education, 1948). In this way then, an organic linguistic nationalism becomes conflated with notions of racial distinctiveness and purity. Accordingly, any mixing of racial or national groups in South Africa would come to be regarded as a violation of authenticity, as going contrary to the natural order of things. The same policy document elsewhere states that 'We will have nothing to do with a mixture of languages, of culture, of religion or of race' (Institute for Christian National Education, 1948). It would be quite misleading, however, to claim that apartheid policies aimed at reinforcing tribal and ethnic divisions among blacks were motivated by concerns for their ethnocultural authenticity. Ensuring the survival of the Afrikaners as a distinct *volk* was always the overriding concern. The Afrikaner interpretation of certain primordialist theories of nationhood must merely been seen as an attempt to bring some philosophical credibility to policies aimed at ensuring their own ethnic survival through the continued subjugation of the non-white population of South Africa.

Language policy and planning was to play a significant role in maintaining a South African society divided along both inter- and intra-racial lines. The cornerstone of apartheid language policy was the belief in *moedertaalonderwys* or 'mother-tongue education'. The origin of this belief can be traced back to the 19th century *taalstryd* in which the Boers fought for the right to receive education in their own language in the face of British attempts to assimilate them through the policy of anglicisation (see Section 4.3). However, the significance of *moedertaalonderwys* was quite different depending on which side of the racial divide one was located (Reagan, 2001). For the privileged white population, it generally meant education in one of the two co-equal official languages of state administration – Afrikaans and English. The emphasis here, however, was still on division, as whites were mainly educated in single medium schools and universities according to their respective mother tongue (Steyn, 1980). Apartheid language policy was not designed to forge a common white South African national identity but to 'assert Afrikaner national identity vis-à-vis the British while subjugating blacks to whites (both British and Afrikaners)' (Sonntag, 2003:82). Reagan (2001:55) points out that language policy and planning sought merely to relieve (the often considerable) tensions between white Afrikaans and English speakers but not to unify them in a single, indivisible identity. As Wilkins and Strydom observe of the 'Broederbond', the secret Afrikaner society that practically ran the apartheid state:

> The Broederbond's attitude to Afrikaans-English co-operation is clearly demonstrated by its fanatic concern with separate 'pure' Afrikaans organisations. Instead of modifying existing South African organisations to make them bilingual, they formed their own. (Wilkins and Strydom, 1978:143)

The linguistic nationalism of the Afrikaners also did not stretch to include speakers of non-native or non-standard mother tongue varieties of Afrikaans, most of whom came under the racial categories of 'Coloured' or 'Black' (Van Rensburg, 1999). Standard Afrikaans, as spoken by the white population, was fervently promoted and other non-white varieties frequently disparaged as *plat,* meaning 'coarse' or 'broad' (see Section 5.2). The notion of a single Afrikaans-speaking identity community then, did not exist and was actively resisted through the validation and privileging of a single (white) variety of Afrikaans over all others. In this way, amongst Afrikaans speakers, language policy was used to promote separate identities based upon a biological/racial hierarchy.

While for the white population mother-tongue education meant having access to a language of political power and prestige, for the Bantu-speaking black population of South Africa it was to have much more sinister connotations. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 introduced compulsory mother-tongue schooling for blacks for the first eight years of primary education, after which secondary education could be in English or Afrikaans, or a combination of the two (Lodge, 1983:116–118; Tabata, 1960). Yet, by far the majority of black schoolchildren never continued into secondary education. Consequently, this legislation was widely regarded by blacks as a 'government trick' (Harnischfeger, 2003:3), preventing them from acquiring a sufficiently competent knowledge of English, and to a lesser extent Afrikaans, and so closing any channels of access to power and social advancement. The National Party's attempts at denying black people an English-language education had, in fact, begun in 1949 with the closure of many English-medium mission schools. These schools were shut down on the recommendation of the Eiselen Commission because they were seen as contributing towards the anglicisation of the black population (Louw, 2004:321). The Bantu Education Act sought to build on the closure of the mission schools by denying English-medium education to the black population in all schools. President Hendrik Verwoerd's remark that English-medium education for blacks constituted an 'unhealthy exception' reveals much of the motivation behind the policy (Brown, 1992:87).

However, the purpose of the Bantu Education Act was not merely to prevent blacks from acquiring competence in any of the two official languages of the South African state. It was also designed to prevent the black population from uniting together in collective action against the system and institutions of their oppression (Giliomee, 2003: 509–510).

> Mother tongue schooling for blacks was employed [...] to support the social and educational goals of Verwoerdian-style apartheid. The apartheid regime used such programs to reinforce ethnic and tribal identity among black schoolchildren, seeking to 'divide and conquer' by encouraging ethnolinguistic divisions within the black community. (Reagan, 2001:55)

The ambition of the social engineering attempted by apartheid language policy is shown by the fact that it did not seek merely to deepen and reinforce existing ethnolinguistic cleavages amongst the Bantu population, but actually to create and insist upon them where they had previously never existed. Often assisted by the 'expertise'

of white linguists, dialect continua were arbitrarily carved up into numerous *Ausbau* languages which supposedly corresponded with distinct ethnic groupings. This is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the North Sotho and Setswana languages. These two languages were distinguished from each other for purely political and administrative purposes.

> The 'North Sotho language is a fiction' (quoting van Warmelo). Governmental creation of ethnic groups and standard languages has been used to justify apartheid policy; for example, Lebowa is designated as a 'homeland' for the Northern Sotho people who themselves came into existence only through the legislative action of apartheid policy. Linguistic autonomy here and elsewhere has more to do with socio-political criteria than linguistic ones. (Herbert, 1992:3)

In the light of the ethnolinguistic classifications imposed upon the black population, the African National Congress (ANC) offered a scathing assessment of apartheid planning for the African languages:

> Ignorant and officious White professors sit[ting] on education committees are arbiters of African languages and books without consultation with the people concerned. The grotesque spectacle is seen of the White government of South African posing as a 'protector' of so-called Bantu culture and traditions of which they know nothing. (cited in Heugh, 1987:269)

At this point, it should also be understood that the notion of a 'mother tongue' is itself highly problematic since it is not always clear what a particular individual's mother tongue may be (Pennycook, 2002). Kamwangamalu notes that 'the concept of a "mother tongue" is essentially vacuous' and illustrates the point by citing the following extract from an interview with a 23-year-old black student from Germiston, near Johannesburg.

> My father's home language was Swazi, and my mother's home language was Tswana. But as I grew up in a Zulu-speaking area we used mainly Zulu and Swazi at home. But from my mother's side I also learnt Tswana well. In my high school I came into contact with lots of Sotho and Tswana students, so I can speak these two languages well. And of course I know English and Afrikaans. With my friends I also use Tsotsitaal. (Kamwangamalu, 2004a:227)

The situation described above is fairly typical of black South Africans, especially in the larger urban areas (Webb, 2002a:63–4). In such situations, the concept of a 'mother tongue' has little resonance or, indeed, relevance. The apartheid division of the black population into discrete mother-tongue groups, which has also been continued by the post-apartheid regime, totally overlooks the very great complexity of the relationship between language and identity that is found amongst black urban South Africans. Classification according to, and subsequent education in, the supposed mother tongue was clearly not a linguistically motivated policy but rather, it was an exercise aimed at the construction and entrenchment of divisive identities to suit the political objectives of the National Party. It is ironic that in attempting to naturalise and retribalise the black population, an initiative styled as a return to authenticity, the apartheid regime did so by using a system of ethnolinguistic ascription based upon the artificial and inappropriate concept of the 'mother tongue'.

The educational needs and desires of black learners were clearly of no importance to those who formulated and enacted the policy, as Barnard observes:

> *Moedertaalonderwys* . . . is not the Afrikaans term for mother-tongue instruction. It is a political concept which has its roots in the dogma of Christian National Education. According to this dogma, each 'race' or '*volk'* has its own identity which sets it apart from all others [. . . ] What is being attempted is certainly not mother-tongue education in the interests of the children but the enforcement of '*moedertaalonderwys*' as an instrument of social control and subjugation. (cited in Heugh, 1987:143–4)

It is one of the sorest ironies of apartheid-era mother-tongue language policy that the manner in which it was implemented broadly conformed to what subsequent research has shown to be a favourable educational and pedagogical situation (Baker and Garcia, 1996; Thomas and Collier, 2001). As Heugh reports, the implementation of mother-tongue education for black children actually coincided with a sharp rise in educational standards:

> In reality, a twenty-year period of providing eight years of mother-tongue education for speakers of African languages and the fairly competent teaching of English, as a subject, resulted in a dramatic improvement in black education. Matriculation (school-leaving examination) pass rates increased from 43.5% in 1955 to 83.7% in 1976. (Heugh, 2003b:9)

However, this remarkable and seemingly unforeseen improvement in black pass rates did little to alter the overwhelmingly negative perception of the policy on the part of the black population, nor did it work counter to the intended political effect of the policy. This would seem to represent a case in which there is a discrepancy or discontinuity between the ideology of the ruling regime and the actual content and educational outcome of its language policy. Nevertheless, it was the intent of the policy which largely determined the reaction to it and thereby sealed the stigmatisation of mother-tongue education for black children for decades to come.

The question of whether apartheid language policy was actually successful in its aim of creating and/or reinforcing divisive ethnolinguistic identities amongst the Bantu population remains highly debatable. What is certain, however, is that by severely restricting access to English-language education, English increasingly became seen by blacks from all ethnolinguistic categories as a unifying symbol of opposition to apartheid (De Klerk and Gough, 2002:357).

> The language policy of the apartheid regime explicitly fomented fragmentation based on parochial ethnolinguistic identity. However, instead of provoking linguistic tribalism, the apartheid policy merely incited Blacks to rally around global English as the language of resistance and protest [. . . ] Blacks saw English as 'the tool to combat divisive Bantu education and the imposition of Afrikaans'. (Sonntag, 2003:82)

Indeed, English was to become the *de facto* preferred language of the ANC and the Black Consciousness movement, both of which refused to validate ethnolinguistic differences amongst the black population, the ANC as a result of its policy of multiracialism, while Black Consciousness emphasised black unity in opposition to white oppression (Gibson, 2004; Lobban, 1996). None of this is to deny, however, the success of apartheid policy in ensuring that levels of competence in English

remained very low amongst the large majority of blacks, a phenomenon which is itself symptomatic of the very great poverty and underdevelopment amongst the black population, something which apartheid policy entrenched even further and which still persists today. The generally low proficiency in English amongst black students is highlighted by research carried out in 1986 in primary schools in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province (Odendaal, 1986). This research showed that many fifth-grade pupils did not understand simple questions in English such as 'Where is your home?' and 'What does your father do?' The research also showed that 21.6% of primary school teachers claimed their fifth-grade pupils did not understand them if English was used as the medium of instruction and 83.5% of teachers said their pupils did not understand their text books which were in English. As a further example, the following passage forms part of an examination answer on the role of memory in language learning written by a university student who was also an English teacher in a rural area of South Africa.

> Memory help us to recall about the previous events which are very important in our lives. If was not of memory we could be able to have good people in subjects like Mathematics and Reporters, Journalists who passed History as a subject which need more of passed events even though some could be of current. Even Lawyers and Advocates they referee to the past events in judging people in courts. (cited in Webb, 2002a:11)

This passage would suggest that the examinee in question is clearly quite incapable of teaching anything through the medium of English, let alone teaching the language itself, to any satisfactory level of competence. Education for black students has suffered from being caught in a vicious circle of improficient language learning. Inadequate teaching produces inadequate standards of linguistic competence amongst students, some of whom go on to become teachers and the whole cycle then repeats itself. Of course, the educational difficulties which arise through the inadequate proficiency in English on the part of many teachers and pupils could be countered effectively through increased use of the African languages as media of instruction (Webb, 2004a) but popular language attitudes do not generally favour this option in spite of numerous supportive academic research findings (see Section 4.5.1). There is considerable irony in the fact that even in spite of their generally poor knowledge of the language, many blacks came to identify far more with English than their own native tongues as both a symbol and tool of political resistance – precisely something that apartheid language policy was designed to prevent. This would seem to be evidence that the effectiveness of even the most coercive attempts at top-down identity construction through language policy are likely to meet with strictly limited success if there exists sufficient popular ideological resistance to them (see Section 3.2). In order to be successful, identity-building policies require acceptance and affirmation of their core ideological components, of their essential desirability in other words, by the social groups and individuals whose loyalty they solicit. Where this acceptance and affirmation is lacking, such policies are likely to generate identities of resistance and lead to a state of societal conflict, as has happened in the case of Afrikaans in the post-apartheid era (see Chapter 5).

## 4.5 Post-Apartheid Language Policy

The post-apartheid era in South Africa began officially in 1994 when the first multiracial all-party elections were held which culminated in the Nelson Mandela-led ANC being voted into power. The new era was to represent a significant break with the rigid policy of Afrikaans-English bilingualism that existed during the apartheid years. The new South African constitution, a document strongly influenced by the values of traditional individualistic liberal human rights discourse and designed to ensure inter-ethnic peace, declared eleven official state languages, including nine Bantu languages (Sepedi, SiSwati, Sesotho, Setswana, isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Xitsonga, Tshivenda) in addition to Afrikaans and English (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Chapter 1, Section 6, Article 1). In May 2007, the South African parliament's Joint Constitutional Review Committee (JCRC) called for an investigation into whether South African Sign Language should be made the country's twelfth official language (JCRC, 2007).

According to the post-apartheid constitution, language policy must recognise 'the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of [the South African] people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages' (Chapter 1, Section 6, Article 2). It also states that 'all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably' (Chapter 1, Section 6, Article 4). The constitution also ensures against unfair discrimination on the basis of language and guarantees the right to receive education in the official language of one's choice, although this does come with the qualifying phrase 'where reasonably practicable'. The post-apartheid era has seen a flurry of language planning activities and governmental bodies set up with the intention of implementing these constitutional directives. For example, the National Language Service (NLS) was set up as the Directorate in the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) in order to promote 'the linguistic empowerment of all South Africa's people' (DACST, 1998:24). In addition, the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) was set up by virtue of the Pan South African Language Board Act (Act 59 of 1995), with the chief purpose of providing for the recognition of multilingualism and the development of the country's official languages (see Section 6.3). For a detailed overview of PANSALB's activities and responsibilities see Marivate (2000).

In theory then, the post-apartheid constitution commits the government to build upon an underlying philosophy of pluralism and linguistic human rights by pursuing a policy of equitable multilingualism (Pretorius, 1999). The constitution, however, is far from being an exercise in pure symbolic idealism, although superficial interpretations of it may lead one to such a conclusion. In fact, the emotive, idealistic language of the document masks a great deal of political pragmatism, particularly in its treatment of Afrikaans. In elevating nine black African languages to the status of official languages, it meant that the previous privileging of Afrikaans under the apartheid system could be countered without Afrikaners being able to argue with any credible conviction that the status of their language had been downgraded. Despite this skilful piece of political manoeuvring concerning the issue of Afrikaans,

the constitution contains certain inconsistencies and omissions which give weight to the widespread perception that the ANC government has tended to attach a fairly low priority to language issues (Heugh, 2003a:4). Firstly, the post-apartheid government has carried over the linguistic categorisation of the African population that was imposed upon it by the apartheid regime. In doing so, they have also implicitly valorised many of the same putative ethnolinguistic identities that were so dubiously and controversially ascribed to the black population by the apartheid government. Yet, as Stroud and Heugh (2003:5) note, the Northern Ndebele language (also known as *SiNdebele*) which was officially recognised under apartheid, has been curiously excluded from the post-apartheid list of official state languages whereas Southern Ndebele (also known as *isiNdebele*) was included on the list (see Section 5.4.1.2).

In addition to the promotion of linguistic pluralism, the South African government has also committed itself to undertake a complementary project of identity construction or 'nation-building'. Unlike the apartheid regime, the current South African government has not adopted a policy of multilingualism with the intention of promoting separate, divisive identities. Instead, it has, in theory, chosen to view linguistic pluralism as a resource for the promotion of a common, non-racial, fully-inclusive South African identity.

> The political philosophy which underlies the South African constitution, and upon which the public life of this country is to be built, is pluralism. The government is therefore directed at establishing 'unity within diversity', at developing national integration, at nation-building. (Webb, 2002a:138)

In the foreword to the government's National Language Policy Framework (2002) document the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, B.S. Ngubane, writes that

> the policy [. . . ] is fundamental to the management of our diverse language resources and the achievement of the government's goal to promote democracy, justice, equity and national unity. It is in this spirit that the promotion of all 11 official languages of our country, as provided for in the Constitution, takes centre stage in the policy.

As a consequence of this policy of pluralism, no single language has been officially designated as the 'national language', unlike in neighbouring states such as Botswana and especially Namibia which, in typical African style, has taken the exoglossic option of declaring English as its national language despite the fact that it is known by less than 5% of the population (Du Plessis, 2000:96; Fourie, 1997). Former colonial languages such as English are often promoted in these circumstances as languages of national unity on the grounds that they are somehow 'ethnically neutral' (see Section 3.4.5). Even if this highly dubious assertion were true, it is seriously stretching credibility to claim that a language which is unknown by the vast majority of the state's citizens can serve as a means of uniting them in a common identity community. Such languages actually just serve as vehicles of elite unity (see Section 4.5.3 below).

In viewing the promotion of linguistic pluralism and national unity as being complementary rather than antagonistic, the South African case would appear to

represent a considerable philosophical departure from classical assimilationist, 'one language, one nation' theories of language and nation. Indeed, this traditional Eurocentric approach has received explicit official rejection.

> This paradigm [i.e. multilingualism] [...] presupposes a more fluid relationship between languages and culture than is generally understood in the Eurocentric model which we have inherited in South Africa. It accepts *a priori* that there is no contradiction in a multicultural society between a core of common cultural traits, beliefs, practices etc., and particular sectional or communal cultures. Indeed, the relationship between the two can and should be mutually reinforcing and, if properly managed, should give rise to and sustain genuine respect for the variability of the communities that constitute our emerging nation. (From the preamble to the Language In Education Policy In Terms Of Section 3(4)(m) Of The National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996)

This paradigmatic shift towards a more pluralistic approach to nation-building has received broad support from those working in the field of language policy in South Africa. Webb, for example, notes that:

> an emphasis on national unity obviously doesn't diminish the need to preserve cultural diversity. The recognition and promotion of cultural identity and diversity can, in fact, facilitate nation-building since it can contribute to spiritual and intellectual decolonization. (Webb, 2002a:163)

Also, Bamgbose observes that:

> those wedded to the 'one language, one nation' 19thcentury concept of nationhood will certainly be appalled by such a policy. But for those who have always advocated a multilingual approach to national development and integration, the policy is a perfectly logical one in the sociolinguistic and political circumstances. (Bamgbose, 2000:108)

Elsewhere, Alexander, in rejecting Eurocentric theories of nationality, writes that:

> it is [...] pertinent to state clearly once again that national unity and national identity are not predicated on the requirement that the people who constitute the nation should all speak one and the same language. [...] The real issue in the matter of promoting national unity is not that people should all speak any one particular language (although this is clearly very helpful!), but that they should be able to communicate with one another. (Alexander, 1999:21)

Alexander goes on to support his position by citing the case of Switzerland. Indeed, as discussed in Section 2.5.2, the Swiss example would seem to suggest that nationhood need not necessarily be predicated on the existence of a common national language or even on the requirement that all members of the nation be able to communicate with each other in any language (see also Section 3.4.4). However, to base hopes for the emergence of a supralinguistic South African national identity on the Swiss experience would appear to be unrealistically optimistic, as it overlooks a number of very significant differences between the two countries. Safran (1999:86) notes that 'a common Swiss nationalism exists because divisive elements are isolated and depoliticized by means of institutional arrangements and because certain political values and economic interests are translinguistic.' The same cannot be said in the South African case. Unlike Switzerland's federal structure, the South African state remains quite highly centralised and its internal political

subdivisions (nine provinces) have rather ethnolinguistically insensitive boundaries. Furthermore, such is the degree of multilingualism and population mixing in urban areas, a territory-based language policy does not seem a particularly viable option. Also, economic interests in South Africa are emphatically not translinguistic. English (and to a much lesser extent Afrikaans) dominates as the language of business and trade and competence in it is a prerequisite for any substantial economic advancement. The value of the African languages within the formal economy remains very low to non-existent. This contributes to the existence of large and, indeed, increasing socio-economic inequalities in South Africa because the majority of the population is unable to function effectively from an economic point of view in the languages of greatest economic value. Although the provisions in the new South African constitution have reduced the potential for inter-ethnic conflict, the potential for inter-personal conflict in South Africa remains high, as illustrated by the extremely high crime rate and, in particular, incidences of mugging, theft and other violent crime (Statistics South Africa, 1998; Louw and Shaw, 1997; Demombynes and Özler, 2002), all of which is likely to seriously inhibit the development of a sense of community and therefore that of a fully-inclusive national identity. This suggests that an effective, fully-inclusive model of nation-building for South Africa will have to pay great attention to a number of deep-ranging social problems that are either much less severe, or not present at all in the Swiss case, a fact which strictly limits the usefulness of any comparison between the two countries.

### *4.5.1 The Language Policy-Practice Gap*

The relatively short post-apartheid period of just over a decade may be too small a time-frame for one to make any meaningful deep-ranging judgements regarding the success of the South African government's efforts at promoting national unity through a policy of multilingualism. However, a number of initial trends and tendencies can be noted which suggest the existence of an unharmonised language policy situation (see Section 3.2), that is to say a significant gap between stated policy objectives and actual language practices. Kamwangamalu (2004a:249) summarises the situation succinctly: 'What is clear [...] is that language practices in most of the country's institutions flout the principle of language equity enshrined in the Constitution.' In contrast to the equitable promotion of all eleven languages envisaged by the country's constitution, there seems to be an increasing tendency towards English monolingualism in all spheres of South African public life (Cuvelier, Du Plessis et al., 2007). Quite a clear language hierarchy has emerged with English at the top, the Bantu languages at the bottom and Afrikaans somewhere in the middle but gradually sinking. A striking example of this hierarchy is to be found in language use in the media. For example, in a typical week in May 1998, English-language programmes took up 91.95% of the airtime of the three television channels of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (Kamwangamalu, 2004a:239–40). Afrikaans-language programmes had 5.66% of airtime while Zulu,

numerically the country's largest language, had just 1.01% of airtime. Four of the smaller Bantu languages – isiNdebele, SiSwati, Tsonga and Venda – had no airtime at all. Moreover, the website of the SABC[3] is almost exclusively in English. In the website's television listings section, even programmes which are broadcast in a language other than English, such as the popular Afrikaans soap opera '7de Laan', are only described or synopsised in English! The section entitled 'SABC Africa' actually contains nothing written in an African language, in spite of its stated mission to 'meaningfully participate in the African Renaissance by bringing quality, pride-instilling family entertainment, news and actuality programming from Africa to Africans all over the world'. It seems a curious type of African Renaissance which almost totally overlooks the most obvious and recognisably authentic expression of African cultures, i.e. African languages (for more on language use in the media, see Cuvelier and Du Plessis, 2006).

Elsewhere, Pandor (1995) has noted that in 1994, 87% of speeches in the South African parliament were in English, 5% in Afrikaans and 8% in one of the remaining nine African languages, something which rather undermines aspirations towards achieving a credibly representative democratic political culture. Several authors have also drawn attention to the increasing dominance of English in the previously Afrikaans dominated military, despite the fact that Afrikaans speakers continue to constitute the single greatest language group in the South African Defence Force (De Klerk and Barkhuizen, 1998; Van Zyl, 2001). This is attributed to the large number of black Africans who have come to occupy posts in the Department of Defence and who overwhelmingly favour the use of English as a *lingua franca* amongst the linguistically diverse members of the defence services (see Section 5.4).

Language use in the educational sphere is also reflective of this linguistic hierarchy. It seems obvious that the country's new constitution commits the government to using all eleven official languages as media of instruction at all levels, although this is qualified somewhat by the addition of phrases such as 'where reasonably practicable'. However, the position of the Bantu languages within education remains very weak, while English continues to become ever more dominant. Afrikaans again occupies something of a middle position although this has weakened considerably in the post-apartheid era (see Section 5.3.1). The South African case (as do many others no doubt) seems to confirm the view outlined by Harlech-Jones (1995) that the declaration of official status for a language is not a necessary indicator of its role in education. A number of factors can account for this initial failure at language policy implementation. First, for many, the promotion of the Bantu languages as media of learning and teaching is all too reminiscent of apartheid *moedertaalonderwys* policies. As Reagan (2001:56) observes, 'the legacy of apartheid includes suspicions about mother-tongue instruction in any form, which has led to on-going tensions with respect to educational language policy in post-apartheid South Africa.' It is clear that the thrust of the constitutional commitments regarding language policy do not reflect the language attitudes of the vast majority of South Africans,

[3] http://www.sabc.co.za

whose thirst for English-medium education, even in the earliest stages of primary education, remains unquenched. Such is the resistance to the idea of mother-tongue education, black parents and students overwhelmingly continue to favour English-medium education from an early age, in spite of the evidence which shows that this option generally results in poor cognitive proficiency in English, high levels of drop-out and educational failure. For example, Heugh (1999:302) notes that in 1994 only 49% of African language speaking school students obtained a pass rate at the matriculation level.

It is an irony not appreciated by advocates of an English-only or English-mainly education for African language speakers that the most competent and effective non-native users of English tend to be white Afrikaans speakers, the great majority of whom have learnt through the medium of their mother tongue throughout all educational levels. If one looks outside of Africa, perhaps the most competent of all non-native speakers of English are the citizens of northern European states such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries who, again, overwhelmingly receive most of their education through the medium of their respective mother tongue from primary to university levels. Webb (2002a:10) utterly deconstructs and shows the fallacy of the argument which advocates the use of English as a medium of instruction for mother-tongue speakers of African languages (for other discussions of the benefits of mother-tongue education see Baker and Garcia, 1996; Cummins, 2000; R. Ellis, 1994; Macnamara, 1967; UNESCO, 1968).

> It is plain common-sense that cognitive development can only occur in and through a language the learner knows very well. Cognitive skills, such as the ability to understand the central purpose of a text or to summarise its main line of argument, the ability to select information and to organise it into a new coherent whole, the ability to discover and formulate generalisations, the ability to understand abstract concepts and to manipulate them in arguments, the ability to recognise relations between events (e.g. cause and effect) and so on, can only develop in and through a language in which learners are highly proficient. Generally, such a language is the learner's first (or primary) language. [...] In spite of this generally accepted view black parents in South Africa overwhelmingly prefer English as the language of learning and teaching for their children, for the simple reason that English is equated with success and opportunity. Parents argue, quite rightly, that their children will only be successful in life in South Africa if they know English, since English is the dominant language of all public domains in the country. They then argue, wrongly, that the only way their children can acquire English effectively is if it is used as language of learning. This is a typical case of putting the cart before the horse: the development of cognitive skills does not take place because the language of development is not known well enough and English is not acquired because learning skills have not been developed adequately. (Webb, 2002a:10)

Research by Desai (2001) undertaken amongst native Xhosa-speaking school children in the Cape Town area provides a highly illuminating demonstration of the difficulties faced by such students when attempting to perform cognitive tasks through the medium of English. The pupils, some from Grade 4 and others from Grade 7, were given six picture cards and asked to arrange them in such an order that they told a story. They were then asked to write two versions of the story, one in Xhosa and one in English. One Grade 4 student produced the following two texts:

*Translation from Xhosa:* There was a father (old man) who put his box down, conversing with his father. Then a certain young man (brother) appeared and took that old man's box and ran away. He was chased by a child and the one blew a whistle, and the other one pointed at him. He ran away with it and got into the car and drove very fast. The others opened the box and a big snake. The other was shocked by the snake and his sunglasses fell down.

*Written in English:*

Once upon a time
Long long ago
Ly Buter uteatsha fourboy late my father
I taket my tyesi
I goiu my father is goiu boeke
Look my boy (cited in Desai, 2001:333–334)

Whilst the Xhosa text constitutes a reasonably coherent piece of storytelling for a child of that age, the sense of the English text is practically unfathomable. It contains several words (Buter, tyesi) that are either in no way identifiable as English or are totally irrelevant to the context. Use of the word 'boeke' is possibly a borrowing from Afrikaans (it means 'books') although this is only a speculative claim since it is not possible to understand the sense in which the term has been employed. The only intelligible pieces of English in the text are the first two lines and the final line. However, even these lines, and particularly the first two, represent a highly clichéd and, in this context, rather inappropriate, manner of beginning a story. This is a clear indication of the inability of the pupil to think spontaneously and innovatively and to construct original sentences in English. Therefore, with regards to the optimisation of the academic performance of the many pupils throughout South Africa who are in a similar language-in-education situation to the student discussed above, it seems shatteringly obvious that to use English instead of these pupils' mother tongues as a medium of instruction at these early stages of education is extremely counter-productive. The above example clearly demonstrates the spectacular disadvantage at which present language-in-education practices place so many students who have an African language as their first language.

The concept of mother tongue, or, preferably, what is perhaps best conceived as 'primary language' (i.e. the language the individual is most competent in) education is in dire need of rehabilitation in order that it may first be accepted as desirable by, and then facilitate the educational empowerment of, black South Africans. Theoretically, the language and education clauses of the new constitution permit moves towards this rehabilitation but because they are not being usefully implemented this does not happen. The most significant factor of all which continues to prevent the effective implementation of official language policy remains the linguistic ideology of the ruling political elite (see Section 4.5.3 below). Elite language attitudes in South Africa have facilitated the continued dominance of English over the African languages in all domains of education, particularly higher education, where the use of African languages as media of instruction is extremely low. Afrikaans has also given away some important ground in higher education. The traditional Afrikaans-speaking universities, such as the University of Pretoria, the University of Stellenbosch and the former Rand Afrikaans University which, after having merged with several other institu-

tions, now forms part of the University of Johannesburg, are increasingly operating as dual-medium (Afrikaans and English) institutions. This is widely attributed to the fact that these historically white universities are now welcoming black students, the large majority of whom are not native Afrikaans speakers and come from communities with extremely negative attitudes towards Afrikaans but highly favourable ones towards English (for an in-depth discussion of this see Section 5.3.1).

### *4.5.2 Language Policy and South African National Identity*

Evidence suggests that the failure of the post-apartheid regime to properly implement its policy of equitable multilingualism has seen a concomitant failure to engender any noticeable supralinguistic sense of national identity. Research by Bekker and Leildé (2003) has shown that government efforts aimed at identity construction 'from above' have had negligible resonance amongst what they call the 'underclass', which they define as follows: 'These are South Africans who speak little or no English and who live in dense informal settlements on the peripheries of South African cities as well as in rural areas (particularly within former homelands)' (Bekker and Leildé, 2003:129). They show how members of this underclass display strongly localised identities, i.e. restricted to the immediate neighbourhood. Amongst this class there does not even seem to be any expression of a sub-state ethnolinguistic identity (the respondents were mainly Xhosa speakers), let alone any identification with a wider South African nation.

> Members of the underclass appear to draw minimal meaning from public participation in the local sphere. Their social exclusion individualises and marginalises them. [...] Their strategy, typically expressed in individual terms, is one of opting out of civil society. (Bekker and Leildé, 2003:130–1)

It seems clear that the present language practices of civil society serve only to further marginalise and exclude this underclass. Consequently, members of this underclass seem likely to remain almost totally immune to government attempts aimed at the construction of a national identity based upon identification with, and recognition of, the legitimacy of the state, when this almost exclusively takes place in a language that they barely, if at all, understand.

Bekker and Leildé also undertook research amongst what they call 'Rank-and-File South Africans'. According to these researchers,

> this section of society comprises the state and a vibrant civil society, economic relations characterised by corporatism, and a dominant cultural ethos we have labelled as international anglophone. (Bekker and Leildé, 2003:129)

Their research, carried out in the Western Cape, again indicates the importance of the local in the construction of identities, although it does also reveal the emergence of a weak national identity, which mainly expresses itself through the stigmatisation of alien Africans, i.e. black non-South African citizens. Reitzes and Crawhall (1997) make similar observations regarding the increased xenophobia towards African immigrants in the post-apartheid era. In particular, they identify

> two processes [...] currently unfolding around language issues in South Africa. The first is the construction of a new national identity in the country. This identity is partially being constructed by growing xenophobia and the 'othering' of foreigners, particularly people of colour. Some South African citizens have begun to portray immigrants as fundamentally 'non-South African', 'foreign' or 'alien'. [...] The second process is the growing displacement of Afrikaans by English as the administrative medium in state departments. This process actually discourages multilingual policy development and practice. [...] This weakens commitment to multilingualism, thereby fostering the notion of an exclusive national identity. (Reitzes and Crawhall, 1997:5–6)

Such instances of xenophobia, while negative and undesirable, are of significance for nation-building. As discussed in chapter two, ethnic/national identities are the property of a relationship between groups, that is to say the product of an in-group/out-group distinction between 'them' and 'us'. For most communities in South Africa, throughout the colonial and apartheid eras the 'Other' has always been defined in terms of another section of the South African population e.g. Afrikaner against the English-speakers, Black against White, Coloured against White etc. The fact that that it is foreign immigrants and, in particular, poor, unskilled ones from even poorer countries such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe that are increasingly seen as the 'Other' may suggest the emergence of some, albeit poorly articulated, latent sense of commonality amongst some South African citizens. As Castells (1997:30) states: 'national identity is always affirmed against the alien'. However, these xenophobic reactions cannot, on their own, be regarded as a sufficient indicator of the current existence or, indeed, necessarily as a portent of the future existence of a genuine, pervasive, fully developed national identity.

Expressions of a (albeit still rather weak) South African national identity seem restricted to those South Africans who participate in civil society and the public sphere, which is becoming ever more monolingual as Afrikaans increasingly gives way to English and the African languages continue to remain highly marginalised. An interesting piece of research carried out by Chick (2002) in six schools in the predominantly Zulu-speaking province of Kwa-Zulu Natal supports the thesis that a linguistically exclusive national identity is emerging in South Africa. Developing the idea of language policies as ideological discourses (Blommaert, 2006; Hornberger, 2000), Chick identifies the dominance of what he terms an 'English-only discourse' in the educational environment being studied. He names the assumptions associated with this discourse as

> those associated with the subtractive approach to bilingualism, namely that learning English should start as soon as possible; that the maintenance of first language is not necessary/desirable; and that the best way to acquire English is immersion [...] English-only discourse also constructs an identity for non-native speakers of English who persist in speaking Zulu as language deficient or rebellious and for the Zulu language as having low social and economic value [...] English-only discourse helps maintain the existing power relationships, providing native speakers of English with a distinct advantage in the educational realm. (Chick, 2002:469–70)

The 'English-only' discourse leads to the promotion and reinforcement of a South African national identity which Chick describes as 'exclusive, hegemonic and conflicted.' While this is certainly a valid conclusion, Chick comes to some curious

conclusions regarding ANC policy. He rejects the view that ANC policy is consistent with the promotion of an English-only discourse by stating that 'the ANC sees the promotion of multilingualism rather than of English proficiency as the instrument through which a broad South African identity is to be achieved'. Either Chick is showing an inordinate, perhaps even naïve, amount of goodwill in taking official ANC policy declarations on language at face value or he is working with an inadequate notion of discourse, whereby it is defined purely in terms of what is said officially or 'on the record' in policy statements. In the previous chapter (see Section 3.2), the distinction was made between overt and covert language policies and it was remarked that when the two are contradictory or in conflict it is covert policies, i.e. language practices, which are generally more revealing and politically influential. In contradiction to its 'official' position, the language practices of the ANC strongly reinforce an 'English-only', certainly an 'English-mainly', discourse. Evidence of this can be found on the ANC website.[4] Apart from a brief overview of the organisation entitled 'What is the ANC?' which is translated into all eleven official languages, the rest of the website appears to be entirely in English. Even policy documents advocating multilingualism and cultural diversity are only available in English. Membership forms to join the organisation are also only available in English thereby rendering them impenetrable to the majority of black South Africans whom the organisation claims to represent. When the president, Thabo Mbeki, speaks in public it is very rare for him to ever to do so in a language other than English. This, despite the findings of a PANSALB (2001b:13) survey which reveals that practically one half of South Africans (excluding native English speakers) either 'often do not understand' or 'seldom understand' speeches and statements made in English. In a discussion document on the 'national question' the ANC mentions the need for a 'critical mass of common culture and cultural practices that all South Africans practice and identify with' (ANC, 2005). It is very difficult to practise or identify with a language of which one has poor or zero knowledge, as is the case for the majority of South Africans with regard to the English language. Consequently, this critical mass of common culture which the ANC seeks to establish must contain space for more than just one language if it is to avoid the effective exclusion of the majority of South African citizens. However, the political culture established by the ANC, which has very much become the 'mainstream' in South African public life, would seem to contain no such space. Therefore, by looking beyond mere 'official' policy we can see that ANC language practices (covert policy) very much advance the perception of South African national identity as something which is exclusive and elitist. Furthermore, the dominance of the ANC's political discourse leads to the widespread acceptance of the notion that the exclusive nature of South African national identity is both natural and incontestable.

The construction of a new, common, inclusive national identity depends greatly on the ability of South African citizens to identify with, and legitimise the existence of, the South African state and its institutions. Those citizens who are linguistically

[4] http://www.anc.org.za

excluded from the public space and governed in a language that they have little or no competence in, i.e. the majority of South Africans, are unlikely to feel represented by the state's institutions. Consequently, it is highly improbable that they will come to possess any profound sentiments of shared identity and solidarity with those who are able to fully participate in the public life of the state. In contradiction to the government's stated policy aims then, early indications from the post-apartheid era would seem to point towards the emergence of a linguistically exclusive, i.e. English-speaking South African national identity. Those who identify with the embryonic, state-associated South African 'nation' are, at this present moment, drawn mainly from a thin layer of the mostly black, English-speaking middle-class elite (Alexander, 1999). Bamgbose's observation that 'the interest of the educated élites who form a minority [...] is equated with the interest of the nation' seems particularly relevant in the South African context (Bamgbose, 1991:18). A competent knowledge of English appears to serve as an important boundary mechanism in determining the parameters of this elite group's identity. Furthermore, given that the elite has an almost exclusive access to resources of political and economic power, i.e. the state, which itself becomes an important constitutive factor of their group identity, it is not surprising that they employ what are frankly authoritarian identity strategies to restrict mass membership in their groups (see Section 6.3 on authoritarianism in post-apartheid South Africa). In this way, the elites' monopoly on these resources of socio-economic power can be maintained, which in turn further fortifies the perceived integrity and putative situational 'naturalness' of their group identity. In this regard, Neocosmos (2004:220) notes correctly that the 'elite constitutes itself as a political unity through its melding with state power'.

### *4.5.3 'Elite Closure' as a Barrier to Inclusive Nation-Building*

A common misconception in the South African (and other post-colonial) context is that the great attachment of many non-native English-speaking South Africans to the English language stems from a purely instrumental motivation, whilst the African languages are retained as home or community languages for reasons of identity. While there is certainly a great deal of truth in such reasoning, such a sharp instrumental/identity distinction, while useful as an analytical construct, ultimately provides an inadequate reflection of the complexity of motivations underlying such language acquisition and usage (Gardner and Lambert, 1959; Ager, 2001). A more appropriate heuristic device would be a type of continuum, as proposed by L.Wright (2004:177), with instrumental motivations at one extreme and affective/identity motivations at the other. To paraphrase Chomsky somewhat, questions of language cannot be divorced from questions of power and therefore, questions relating to motivations surrounding the acquisition and competent use of English (indeed, any language) in South Africa cannot be addressed effectively without recognition of the political and socio-economic significance which that language has for the different sections of the South African population.

It goes almost without saying that for many non-native speakers of English in South Africa, acquiring competence in English represents a means to an economic end. However, to practise this kind of economic reductionism is to overlook the very great emotional significance that the English language has come to acquire and the role that it plays in processes of identity formation within the black population. The failure to undertake the kind of multilingual nation-building envisaged by the South African constitution cannot be explained in purely material terms. The economic and political dominance of the English language at the expense of the ten other official languages is reinforced by a psychological dimension engendered by the colonial history of South Africa and which is most readily observable in the linguistic behaviour of the present ruling elite.

Current elite language practices in South Africa are preventing the type of nation-building envisaged by the South African constitution by continuing to reflect language-identity strategies fostered by an 'elite closure' mentality. 'Elite closure' refers to the means by which that thin stratum of society which has a stake in the allocation and acquisition of power attempts to maintain and reproduce itself as a group. According to Myers-Scotton (1993:148), it occurs when 'the elite successfully employ official language policies and their own non-formalised language usage patterns to limit access of non-elite groups to political position and socio-economic advancement'. Elsewhere, Kamwangamalu describes it as

> 'linguistic divergence' created as a result of using a language which is only known to or preferred by the elite. This divergence may be purposeful, as a measure of control [...] In order to preserve the privileges associated with knowledge of the preferred language, the elite tend to resist any language planning efforts which seek to promote the languages of the masses. (Kamwangamalu, 2004a:253)

Apartheid-era South Africa obviously provides us with an example *par excellence* of 'elite closure.' The ruling Afrikaner elite of the time not only implemented a language policy which prevented mass access to channels and resources of power and influence, they also erected impenetrable barriers of racial categorisation to ensure their continued in-group integrity and political dominance. In theory, anyone can learn the language of an elite group but one cannot alter one's biological ancestry and skin colour to match. In this way, apartheid policy can be seen as an example of almost total elite closure. The end of apartheid in 1994 did not signal the end of tendencies towards elite closure in South African society, however. There has merely been the replacement of one political elite (white, Afrikaans-speaking) with another (mostly black, English-speaking). This phenomenon has been neatly captured in the title of a book by Patrick Bond (2000) – *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neo-Liberalism.* Clearly, the potential for such an extreme level of elite closure is currently less than during the apartheid years because of the constitutional commitments aimed at the deracialisation of South African society. Nevertheless, strong tendencies towards elite closure still exist, chiefly as a result of the linguistic attitudes and practices of the current ruling class and the global economic system with which it is strongly integrated.

Myers-Scotton's definition above may have to be amended slightly in the case of South Africa, since it is not the *official* language policy which perpetuates elite

closure. Indeed, quite the reverse seems to be true since 'the 11-language national policy accords not one iota of privilege to English' (L.Wright, 2002:166). Rather, the position of the English-speaking South African elite is strengthened by the failure to effectively implement the official language policy. Instead, it is *covert* language policy, whether consciously or unconsciously pursued, in combination with prevailing language practices and attitudes, which favours the continued dominance of English and permits elite closure to occur. The tendency towards elite closure in South Africa is an indication of the lack of *active* support for the official policy of equitable multilingualism, despite the existence of a more widespread passive, 'in-principle', non-committal goodwill, which in reality, does very little to change the status quo. Consequently, despite the constitutional provisions to the contrary, a situation of severe linguistic *inequity* persists.

> Linguistic theory and political strategy intersect in a manner that reinforces the democratic aspirations of most of the people who constitute the citizens of post-apartheid South Africa [...] [B]ecause of elite closure, this deep-rooted disposition has not prevented the situation from arising in which English is treated by most South Africans as the first among equals. (Alexander, 2004:117–8)

The South African case may be regarded as quite progressive in one sense, however, since in many post-colonial contexts there is not even the pretence of linguistic equity, nor any explicitly stated aspiration to achieve it. If native languages are accorded any official status it is usually at the sub-state level. Often, however, the only language(s) with any official status is the ex-colonial language(s). Botswana represents one such example in which the language practices that facilitate elite closure are endorsed by constitutional arrangements and official policy. Nyati-Ramahobo observes that although Setswana is spoken as a first language by 80% of the population,

> English is the official language of Botswana. It permeates the social, economic and cultural lives of all educated Batswana and the government prefers the use of English to any other language in the country. [...] English is currently used in the judiciary, in administration, in education, and in the business sector. [...] All government correspondence and records are in English. All meetings in the civil service are conducted and recorded in English. (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004:30–31 and 52–53)

This bias towards English is clearly evident from the following passage from the Botswanan constitution.

> A person shall be qualified to be elected as a member of the National Assembly if, and shall not be qualified to be so elected unless [...] (d) he [sic] is able to speak, and unless incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause, to read English well enough to under take [sic] an active part in the proceedings of the Assembly. (cited in Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004:52)

This effectively prohibits those who do not have a competent command of English from membership of, and representation in, the civil society of the Botswanan state and, as such, represents a classic example of elite closure since English is only 'spoken and read by 40% of the population, mainly by the educated elite living in towns' (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004:53). The fact that Botswana and South Africa display very

similar language practices despite highly divergent constitutional arrangements regarding language usage gives further credence to the view that official language policy is largely decorative and ineffective where there does not exist the sufficient political will to implement it.

However, elite closure should not be regarded purely as a phenomenon associated with colonial or post-colonial societies. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:199) make the point that some degree of elite closure exists in most polities. In pre-nationalist Europe ruling elites frequently spoke linguistic varieties that would have been incomprehensible to the vast majority of the populations that they governed (S.Wright, 2004:25). Mild forms of elite closure are still observable in most Western societies. For example, the use and mastery of a prescriptively defined standardised language continues to be characteristic of most Western elites. However, the crucial point is that, in Western societies, access to the language of the elite is greatly facilitated by the availability of extensive, mass, formal education and the fact that there is often a high degree of mutual intelligibility between demotic and elite linguistic varieties. Consequently, tendencies towards elite closure are significantly countered and mass participation in public/political life becomes more possible. So, although technically elite closure may indeed be observable in most polities, it tends to occur in its strongest and most deleterious form in colonial or post/neo-colonial societies.

> Strong elite closure occurs more frequently in multilingual polities where the official language may not be part of the repertoire of many members of society and where access to the elite language through schooling is limited. In such circumstances, the language used in the educational institutions may have greater power than either the community or official policy. (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997:200)

In post-colonial settings, the ruling elites' near exclusive use of the ex-colonial language(s) coupled with inadequate educational systems is a highly efficient means of preventing mass participation in the political life of the state. The dominance of the ex-colonial language-speaking elite is further enhanced by the extremely negative attitudes that invariably exist towards the indigenous languages spoken by the large majority of the population. Furthermore, it is usually in the interest of these elites to propagate such negative attitudes, which they inevitably do, at least implicitly. As Mansour highlights in the case of Tunisia:

> Why does the Tunisian élite (and other Third World élites) consider their own mother tongue to be inferior? Because it does not provide them with access to power, and since the main goal of an élite is to remain in power and give their children the same chances, such an attitude is not very surprising. Furthermore, they have been brain-washed by western education into believing that this inferiority is inherent and cannot be mended. (Mansour, 1993:102)

The promotion of the African languages in South Africa is greatly hindered by such negative attitudes and internalised inferiority. This is a legacy of the colonial mindset, which, to some extent, continues to be reproduced by the present regime. In some sense, this is unsurprising since the current ruling elite are the descendants of a socio-economic and identity group born out of, and socialised into, the colonial system. The effect of the Bantu Education Act and other apartheid-era legislation in further entrenching this colonial mindset, which taught that African languages

were incapable of being applied to higher order pursuits, should also not be underestimated. President Hendrik Verwoerd, for example, writing a policy statement on Bantu Education, was of the opinion that there was little point in teaching a black child mathematics when it was unlikely to ever use it and that there would be no place for black people 'above the level of certain forms of labour' (Verwoerd, 1954:23). Although the idea that blacks should not receive training or education to allow them to rise above the lowest forms of labour has by now thankfully been comprehensively rejected by all mainstream political actors in South Africa, the concomitant idea that their native languages should also be developed for use beyond their traditional, low-order domains has not taken hold with equal force. For example, in a private conversation with a professor of sociology at a leading South African university I was asked rhetorically 'What's the bloody point of teaching mathematics in Zulu?' It would seem that genuine sociolinguistic enlightenment is still an elusive, sporadic occurrence even amongst many of those most committed to the genuine democratisation of the country.

The economic exploitation of the black population by the capitalist colonial system also inevitably served to validate the language(s) of the colonial powers as the languages of economic prestige and advancement to the detriment of the African languages. The South African situation can be seen as slightly exceptional in that there were two colonial languages – standard white Afrikaans[5] and English – competing with each other, as well as with the native African languages. However, this did not really affect the dynamics of the coloniser-colonised relationship, as the majority of blacks had little or no knowledge of either standard Afrikaans or English. Yet Afrikaans, because of its direct and blatant association with apartheid, its inauspicious origins as a *Kombuistaal* or 'kitchen vernacular' of Dutch and also because of its negligible economic value outside of South Africa, did not acquire any great prestige amongst the black population. Indeed, Afrikaans was the subject of extreme hostility and loathing which culminated in the Soweto riots of June 1976 (see Section 5.2). This further increased the prestige of English, which became widely viewed as the 'language of liberation' as it was the only language that could seriously challenge the dominant position that Afrikaans had come to acquire (Reagan, 2004:108) However, the black elite's preference for English over Afrikaans and the African languages dates as far back as the beginning of the 20th century and is itself evidence of that elite's internalisation of the validity of a colonial linguistic hierarchy. For example, in 1902 Abdullah Abdurahman, president of the African People's Organisation, exhorted the black and coloured population to

> endeavour to perfect themselves in English – the language which inspires the noblest thoughts of freedom and liberty, the language that has the finest literature on earth and is the most universally useful of all languages. Let everyone [...] drop the habit as far as possible, of expressing themselves in the barbarous Cape Dutch that is too often heard. (cited in Adhikari, 1996:8)

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[5] Known as *Algemeen Beskaafde Afrikaans* which translates as 'General Civilised Afrikaans'.

Current language practices in South Africa suggest that the language attitudes of the black elite have changed very little in the century or so since Abdurahman wrote these words. In this regard then, they must be seen as acquiescing to the stigmatisation of the African languages and to the perpetuation of what Alexander refers to as 'Static Maintenance Syndrome' which

> debilitates and paralyses most African language speakers. [Static Maintenance Syndrome] refers to an attitude of mind, which is prevalent throughout the African continent, and which manifests itself as a sense of resignation about the perceived and imputed powerlessness of the local or indigenous languages of Africa. Most of the people are willing to maintain their primary language in family, community and religious contexts but they do not believe that these languages have the capacity to develop into languages of power. (Alexander, 2003: 10–11)

If the South African government is serious about constructing a fully inclusive, supralinguistic national identity, it is incumbent upon it to address this cognitive paralysis associated with the African languages and the language attitudes that sustain it. Otherwise, the South African nation-building project faces the prospect of going further down the path of Western-style assimilationism.

> The ANC elite deploys English as its language of state administration, and has effectively promoted Atlantic Charter modernisation and nation-building. The ANC's nation-building programme is now grounded in the logic of neoliberal globalisation. This nation-building programme promotes both the use of English as lingua franca, and *de facto* assimilationism into an Anglo-American cultural and socioeconomic formation. (Louw, 2004:322)

Currently there are strong tendencies towards linguistic and cultural homogenisation at the elite level of South African society and one can see the emergence of a linguistically exclusive civic culture. Not only is English becoming ever more dominant as the language of public and political life, research has shown that it is also beginning to replace African languages as the *home* language in some black urban families (see De Klerk, 2000; Kamwangamalu, 2003 and 2004b). In addition, language shift towards English has also long been recognised as taking place within traditionally Afrikaans-speaking so-called 'coloured' communities (Webb, Dirven and Kock, 1992:42–43; see Section 5.2). These tendencies towards a reduction in linguistic diversity in the public sphere and in some (mostly middle-class) private domains resemble the way in which certain state-bounded national identities emerged in Western Europe. Rokkan identifies the first phase of European state-building as being 'typically a period of political, economic and cultural unification at the elite level' (Rokkan, 1975:572). Indications are that South Africa is going through just such a period despite its constitutional commitments to maintain and promote linguistic and cultural diversity. Whether the South African government will be able or, indeed, willing to take effective measures to combat these trends towards cultural and linguistic homogeneity at the state level or will just continue to reproduce Eurocentric, assimilationist patterns of national integration remains to be seen. However, present indications and historical precedents are not overly encouraging. The history of attempts to construct identities through language planning in South Africa has largely been one of failure. Language policies have sometimes had

an effect on identity but generally not in the manner intended. Instead, they have mostly generated identities of resistance.

The success of a state-led nation-building project which adheres to the principles expressed in the constitution requires the generation of an inclusive, negotiable, project identity of consensus. For such a change to begin to take place, the paralysing effects of elite closure need to be addressed. This requires that language cease being a barrier to participation in the education system and other areas of public life. This implores the use of the African languages in all higher domains. Yet, this is a task which is faced by numerous daunting obstacles. Not only is one faced with a lack of will and incentive on the part of the ruling elite to usher in a system of genuine inclusive linguistic democracy – the 'narcissism of the African middle classes' (Maphalala, 2000:150), one also encounters the external pressures of the Western-style neo-liberal global capitalist economy which influence most significant economic and development policies and which are generally unfavourable to the promotion of multilingualism (Heugh, 2002a:449). The implicit policy of the ANC government which largely obeys the demands of prevailing global economic conditions does not support the kind of interventionist language planning necessary for the emergence of a genuinely multilingual political dispensation. Even the widely promoted policy of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) is hostile to multilingualism as it is essentially a market driven initiative of recruitment to the (mostly English-speaking) middle-class (L. Wright, 2002:166; Alexander, 2004:120; Neocosmos, 2004:225). One might equally call it a policy of 'Black Economic Embourgeoisment.'

It seems increasingly clear that a policy of nation-building that will pay more than mere lip-service to the idea of multilingualism requires an alternative model of social and economic development to the one presently being pursued in South Africa. Nation-building is not a uniform process as it may be attempted by adhering to any one of a number of different models and conceptions of nationhood. The normative motivations and tendencies behind the current *de facto* patterns of national integration in South Africa are strongly capitalist and elitist and therefore do little to address the socio-economic retardation of the vast majority of South African citizens. Unless this problem is effectively addressed, and language policy and planning potentially has an important role to play in this regard, a situation of rising inequality will continue and the socio-economic and collective psychological rehabilitation of the non-white population of South Africa will remain an increasingly distant prospect.

# Chapter 5
# Language Policy, Identity Conflict and Nation-Building: The Case of Afrikaans

## 5.1 Introduction

The most high profile and certainly the most passionate linguistic debate to have taken place in post-apartheid South Africa has been that concerning the functions and status of Afrikaans. Although Afrikaans has retained its *de jure* status as an official state language in the post-apartheid era, it is widely perceived as being the 'great loser', in linguistic terms at least, in the transition from separatist white rule to universal suffrage and an officially non-racial dispensation in South Africa. The position of English, on the other hand, has been greatly strengthened as a consequence of these political changes. The elevation of nine indigenous African languages to the status of official language alongside Afrikaans and English has meant that Afrikaans is no longer privileged as was formerly the case and this has therefore contributed to the undermining of the previously stable, strictly adhered to bilingualism that characterised the apartheid years (Van Rensburg, 1999:92). However, the linguistic equilibrium between English and Afrikaans that was maintained during the apartheid regime has not been undermined through the ushering in of a truly multilingual dispensation as is putatively envisaged by the new South African constitution. Instead, it has been replaced by an increasingly monolingual situation in which English alone fulfils ever more of the functions that were previously performed bilingually.

It was discussed in the previous chapter how the tacit political ideology and linguistic behaviour of the current ruling elite in South Africa endorses the dominance of English and the marginalisation of Afrikaans and the other official languages from the public life of the state, in spite of constitutional and other policy commitments to the contrary. The most vociferous and organised opposition to this anglicisation of political life in South Africa has come from the white Afrikaans-speaking or Afrikaner population[1] which fears for the future of the Afrikaans language the more

[1] It should be noted that by no means all white speakers of Afrikaans necessarily regard themselves as Afrikaners. Interestingly, research by Bornman (1994) has shown that identification with an ethnic Afrikaner identity becomes stronger the more Afrikaans speakers are perceived as being unfairly treated.

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it becomes removed from public life. Although there does exist a degree of language activism within some African language communities, this tends to be on a much smaller scale and hence has a much lower political profile than the language activism which takes place within the Afrikaner community. The purpose of this chapter is to characterise the debate surrounding the present and future position of Afrikaans by analysing the various political and linguistic ideologies and strategies which are locatable on all sides of the discussion. The Afrikaans issue will then be situated and discussed in the context of post-apartheid nation-building. In particular, it will be shown how Afrikaans is presented as a problem and an obstacle to national unity by the model of national integration presently being pursued by the current ruling regime in South Africa. The discussion will focus on how the declining position of Afrikaans in certain key linguistic domains such as tertiary education and place names is facilitated by the ideology of the ruling ANC government. Finally, the question of how a language policy might be conceived with the aim of allowing all Afrikaans speakers to make a positive contribution towards nation-building through the medium of Afrikaans shall be examined.

## 5.2 Characterising the Debate Surrounding Afrikaans

The attitudes of most sections of the South African population towards the Afrikaans language have historically been characterised by a strong emotional content, both positive and negative. Indeed, the strength of emotional feeling towards Afrikaans is such that questions and opinions regarding the practical or instrumental values of the language have tended to be greatly overshadowed or even ignored, particularly at the level of popular, non-academic linguistic and political debate. The depth of the *taalliefde* ('love of the language') felt by Afrikaners towards Afrikaans and which was born in resistance to the assimilationist policies of the British (see Section 4.3) is well known and has been the subject of much Afrikaner nationalist introspection and veneration (Swanepoel, 1992:123). The titles (and subsequent contents) of two of the most notable books written on the relationship between the Afrikaners and Afrikaans are illustrative of the deep emotional nature of this bond – *Die taal is gans die volk* – 'The language is the entire people' (Zietsman, 1992) and *Tuiste in eie taal* – 'At home in one's own language' (Steyn, 1980). The following words, spoken by a character in a novel by Hennie Aucamp, a renowned Afrikaner writer, also sum up the strength of feeling many Afrikaners have towards Afrikaans: 'My existence, my identity, my core, my everything is locked up in Afrikaans. An existence in another language will be second-hand for me' (cited in Steyn, 1980:460). For the Afrikaners, Afrikaans has been, and continues to be, the ultimate, non-negotiable symbol and defining content of their national identity. The struggle to maintain their language has frequently been depicted as a battle for the very survival of the Afrikaners as a distinct people. Indeed, the relation between the Afrikaners and Afrikaans has often been portrayed by nationalists as one of critical symbiosis despite the fact that the numerical majority of mother-tongue Afrikaans speakers

are not Afrikaners but the so-called 'coloureds' or *kleurlinge* or *bruin mense* (literally 'brown people') as they are variously labelled in Afrikaans. As one writer has noted, '[w]ithout Afrikaans no Afrikaner people and without the Afrikaner people no Afrikaans (Zietsman, 1992:1). Statements such as this are clearly not of a scientific nature or of dispassionate sociological analysis but must instead be seen as part of the affective rhetoric of a nationalist discourse which often tends to accompany discussions of the Afrikaans issue.

In contrast to the fiercely positive sentiments felt by Afrikaners towards their language, Afrikaans has historically aroused (often extremely) negative emotions amongst other sections of the South African population. Amongst the black population Afrikaans became highly stigmatised as a tool of their oppression and as the 'language of apartheid' (Senekal, 1984:217). Following the introduction of a policy requiring black students to study through the medium of Afrikaans, black loathing of Afrikaans and the political culture that it symbolised famously erupted in the Soweto uprising of 1976 in which banners bearing such slogans as 'Kill Afrikaans', 'We are not Boers' and 'If we must do Afrikaans Vorster[2] must do Zulu' were carried by protesters (Hartshorne, 1992:195–205; Zietsman, 1992:200–201; Giliomee, 2003:578–580). Another memorable slogan associated with the uprising was 'liberation before education' indicating that the rejection of Afrikaans was not so much concerned with the (potential) educational value of the language *per se.* Instead, resistance to the learning of Afrikaans was an act of ideological, symbolic resistance to the whole policy of apartheid. Apartheid policy became inseparable and almost conceptually indistinct in the popular psyche from Afrikaans, the language through which it was largely formulated and administered. In so far as the popular perception of the relationship between Afrikaans and apartheid is concerned, Van Rensburg's (1999:87) observation that 'there is a close connection between a language and the government that accords it official status' is a model of understatement.

The privileging of the white standard variety of Afrikaans (*Algemeen Beskaafde Afrikaans*) by the apartheid system has also succeeded in creating highly uneasy, ambivalent attitudes towards the language amongst the mixed-race or so-called 'coloured' community, around 90% of whom speak Afrikaans as their first language. For the coloured population, it was their own mother tongue (or, at least, the externally determined standardised variety of it) that became the linguistic vehicle of their oppression under apartheid. It undoubtedly inculcated a sense of linguistic inferiority and alienation amongst the non-white speakers of non-standard varieties of Afrikaans. Van den Heever writes of the coloured Afrikaans-speaking youth that they

> still don't see the *eie*[3], the *I* in Afrikaans. In Standard Afrikaans they still see the Boer language of the apartheid order which they must learn against their will in order to gain their matriculation qualification. (Van den Heever, 1988:1)

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[2] B.J. Vorster, former National Party leader and Prime Minister from 1966 to 1978.

[3] An Afrikaans word, literally meaning 'owness', i.e. 'the peculiar character of one's own self.'

Esterhuyse (1986:36–40) shows how apartheid-era Afrikaans dictionaries reflected Afrikaner dominance and the racist apartheid ideology through an overtly negative representation of the coloured population and a generally sympathetic, favourable representation of the Afrikaners. Esterhuyse makes a comparison of the entries under *Kleurling* and *Boer/boer* in the *Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (Explanatory Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language).

> *Coloured* is used as a determiner together with some sixteen core words, of which the overwhelming majority are pejorative, or with created terms which give linguistic stature to the political manoeuvres of the dominant Afrikaner group in the speech community. In contrast, the extensive number of entries under *Boer/boer* offers the image of a group which has elevated its own culture and language to normative status. [...] With regard to the entries under these two words, it is clear that the dictionary makers are working completely within the apartheid paradigm. (Esterhuyse, 1986:39–40)

Perhaps the most revealing entry is that of *Boeretaal* (Boer language) which is defined by the dictionary makers simply as 'Afrikaans'. This is most definitely not a politically unbiased definition since it creates the impression that Afrikaans is only the language of the Boers. It represents an attempt to systematically exclude coloured speakers from membership in the Afrikaans speech community by claiming, in effect, that the Afrikaans spoken by the Boers is the only normatively valid variety of the language. A more accurate, objective definition of *Boeretaal* would be something along the lines of 'the variety of Afrikaans spoken by the white, Afrikaner population of South Africa, commonly known as *Algemeen Beskaafd Afrikaans*'.

Language standardisation may be instrumentally motivated (Ager, 2001; Gellner, 1983) but it also serves an important ideological symbolic function. The standardisation of Afrikaans served the Afrikaner ideology (or myth) of in-group homogeneity, frequently styled in terms of racial purity, by excluding and denigrating the varieties spoken by coloured speakers of Afrikaans.

> Coloured Afrikaans is crude of tone [...] To be sure, there are individual differences and degrees of coarseness but we can nevertheless not escape from the verdict that Coloured Afrikaans seems to come from another sphere of life and is the mouthpiece of a very primitive and emotional sense of life [...] It seems that, in comparison with Boer-Afrikaans, a value of ill-mannerliness and crudeness attaches itself to Coloured Afrikaans. (Nienaber, 1942:xxx)

Afrikaner prejudice towards coloured speakers of Afrikaans and the coloured population's reciprocal feelings of suspicion towards, and alienation from, the Afrikaners has a long pre-apartheid history (Steyn, 1980:264–283). However, it was undoubtedly the apartheid division of Afrikaans speakers into a formalised, state-sanctioned racial hierarchy that had the greatest influence in preventing the language from serving as a positive symbol and expression of ethnolinguistic consciousness for the coloured population in the way that it did for the Afrikaners. A consequence of the coloured community's difficult relationship with Afrikaans, combined with the socio-economic allure of the English language, has been a widely remarked upon, long-term language shift away from Afrikaans towards English, particularly in urban areas of the Western Cape.

> Among so-called Coloureds, especially, there is a marked language shift taking place out of Afrikaans into English so that whereas older middle-class Coloured people speak Afrikaans to one another, they tend increasingly to rear their children in English. (Alexander, 1989:57)

The course of the modern history of South Africa has resulted in a situation whereby often antagonistic affective attitudes towards Afrikaans have come to represent politically significant elements of the group identities of the different ethnic and racial groups that make up the South African population. Jordaan highlights what she describes as

> the two most important and largely opposing myths surrounding Afrikaans, namely: 'Afrikaans, language of the Afrikaner' as embodied within the context of Afrikaner nationalism, above all during the first fifty years of the last century; and 'Afrikaans, language of the oppressor', above all as manifested during the period of institutionalised Apartheid (1948–1994). (Jordaan, 2004:23)

Given the deep emotive nature of the Afrikaans issue, it is not surprising that any attempt to promote, restrict or marginalise the language through the (non) implementation of language policy and planning measures is often experienced as a threat to the identity of one group or another. It is quite obviously inconceivable that the Afrikaners could ever regain the political power that they possessed during the apartheid years. However, on an irrational, emotional level Afrikaner attempts to promote and maintain their language and attendant culture may dredge up painful reminiscences and insecurities in the collective psyche of the non-white population in South Africa related to the oppression they suffered during apartheid. Equally, policies (both explicit and implicit) inspired by attitudes of indifference or hostility towards the fate of Afrikaans on the part of the mostly black, present ruling elite in South Africa are interpreted by many Afrikaners as a grave attack upon the core element of their ethnocultural identity. Swanepoel (1992:125) notes that emotionally instigated action on language questions frequently leads to a state of language conflict. The sociolinguistic histories of countries such as Belgium, Canada or India are testament to the often highly emotionally charged nature of language conflicts (Baetens Beardsmore, 1980; Nelde, 1997; Schiffman, 1996). Given the contrasting emotions towards the language, it is clear that there is also high potential for language conflict over the issue of Afrikaans in South Africa. Language conflict may not just be about symbolic or identity issues of course. Economic and other instrumental factors may also be causes of conflict. However, language conflicts which arise, or are concentrated, around the emotional, symbolic dimension of identity and in which some element of symbolic prestige is at stake are often the most intractable since actors in such disputes may be less likely to entertain or adopt rational, dispassionate, fact-influenced modes of thought and behaviour. Senekal (1984:217), writing on the Afrikaans issue, makes the pertinent observation that 'uncontrolled emotions, fire and stone-throwing [. . . ] offer no solution to language questions'.

In this regard, Swanepoel (1992:129) goes on to mention the 'ABC' theory of emotional disturbance advanced by cognitive therapist and pioneer of 'Rational Behaviour Therapy' Albert Ellis (Ellis, 2004) and he then shows how it may be of

relevance to instances of language conflict. Swanepoel summarises the ABC theory as follows:

> It is rarely the stimulus, A, which gives rise to a human emotional reaction, C. Rather, it is almost always B – the individual's beliefs regarding, attitudes toward, or interpretations of A – which actually lead to his reaction, C. (Swanepoel, 1992:129)

Indeed, this theory can provide us with some useful insight into both the nature and extent of the actions taken, and the opinions formed, on the basis of emotional reactions to questions of language. Applied to the matter of language conflict, this theory would seem to suggest that the emotional, irrational behaviour of actors in a language conflict situation leads them to adopt a distorted interpretation of the objective empirical reality of the situation which proceeds to manifest itself in the form of an emotional disturbance at the group level. One would presumably imagine this distorted interpretation takes the form of an amplification of the negative or sinister characteristics of the opposing side and an overestimation of the positive virtues and motivations of one's own side – a form of binary 'othering' so common to many nationalist discourses (Eriksen, 2002:19; Göl, 2005; I. Young, 1993). Consequently, this renders the persistence and intensification of language conflict more probable because appropriately measured, mutually acceptable solutions are less likely to be formulated and then implemented. The current debate surrounding Afrikaans suffers greatly from this problem. For example, Vic Webb, a prominent South African sociolinguist, notes that:

> In general the language debate, including the debate over Afrikaans is at a relatively low level. Opinions are either over-emotional or uninformed and you hear the same prescriptions over and over. (Webb, 2004b)

The following discussion aims to show how emotionally governed responses on all sides of the debate regarding the status and role of Afrikaans exacerbate the potential for language conflict by promoting exclusive, oppositional ideological discourses and prevent the debate from focusing upon discussion of the potential instrumental values of the language. This leads to a situation in which effective remedial prescriptions are either not made or go unheeded because available factual evidence is routinely undervalued or even ignored. As a result of this, the prospects of Afrikaans speakers making a substantial and meaningful contribution to the creation of a fully-inclusive, multilingual South African national identity through the medium of Afrikaans remain greatly diminished.

## 5.3 The Problematisation of Afrikaans

As seen in Section 4.5, the South African constitution theoretically allows for any one of the eleven official languages to be a medium through which a South African national identity may be expressed. However, due to the great mainstream dominance of the political culture shaped and maintained by the ANC, a consequence of which is the ANC's *de facto* monopolisation with regard to the determining of

which cultural symbols and practices may be termed 'national', languages other than English are prevented from making their proportional contributions towards nation-building. Because of the overwhelmingly monolingual ideology of the ANC, the use and promotion of languages other than English at the national or state level is experienced by the ANC as a threat to its *de facto* preferred assimilationist model of national integration. Consequently, languages other than English are, in reality, presented as problematic and as obstacles to the realisation of the type of national identity the ANC is trying to promote. This is most extreme and most readily observable in the case of Afrikaans. The extremity of the problematisation of Afrikaans can be largely attributed to the fact that the current political order in South Africa arose out of a long struggle for liberation from the oppressive rule of the mostly Afrikaans-speaking white population. The feeling still lingers amongst many that the linguistic interests of the Afrikaners are at odds with the interests of those wishing to build a new, united South Africa. As one writer has noted: 'It has been stated openly [presumably by individuals loyal to the ANC] that Afrikaans is the price that Afrikaners will have to pay for Apartheid' (Krog, 1998:99).

The linguistic interests of the Afrikaans-speaking coloured population are rarely countenanced in the mainstream debate over the issue of Afrikaans. The impression that the Afrikaans issue is purely an Afrikaner issue very much persists (Kriel, 2002). The reason for this is simply that it is white Afrikaans speakers who have challenged and disputed the linguistic ideology of the ANC most insistently and with the greatest degree of political organisation and media coverage and debate. This can be seen from some of the statistics regarding language activism and media coverage of language rights issues within different linguistic communities in South Africa. For example, T. Du Plessis (2004:180) reports that between April 1994 and March 2002, 60.5% of the complaints made against public and state organisations regarding issues of language rights were in relation to Afrikaans. Du Plessis also notes that of the 207 newspaper articles concerning language rights which appeared in the same period, 85% appeared in Afrikaans papers and just 15% in English papers. Another pertinent statistic is that concerning instances of litigation over language rights. In the period April 1994–March 2002, 60.9% of all cases of language rights litigations were made in connection with Afrikaans. No complaints or litigations by aggrieved English speakers were recorded during this period. Although no figures are given regarding the race of those making complaints and litigations, one can reasonably assume that the large majority of those made in connection with Afrikaans were made by white Afrikaans speakers. These figures serve to illustrate the disproportionately high rate of language activism amongst the white Afrikaans-speaking community in comparison with other, even more marginalised, linguistic groups in South Africa. This phenomenon is highlighted by L. Wright when he notes:

> The admirable dedication of many Afrikaans-speakers – intellectuals and ordinary people – to the development of and care for their language finds no substantial equivalent in African language communities today. Where, for example, is the intellectual counterpart of a Eugene Marais? (L. Wright, 2004:189)

Some Afrikaans-language organisations and activists have, though, sought to combat the perception that they are simply just Afrikaner organisations by promoting the idea of a single, inclusive Afrikaans community (Kriel, 2002). This may be seen as part of an on-going attempt to 'de-ethnicise' language (see Section 2.2.2), a phenomenon which has been witnessed in other contexts around the globe, such as Quebec (Oakes and Warren, 2007). The suspicion remains, though, that attempts to de-ethnicise a particular language merely seek to legitimise otherwise politically incorrect or unpopular nationalisms through the diverting appropriation of a universalist civic discourse. Whether a language such as Afrikaans can be stripped of all ethnic bias and association in the South African context is highly doubtful. For example, the influential *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge* (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Bodies)[4] claims to promote 'Afrikaans' culture (*Afrikaanse kultuur*) and to work in the interests of a single 'Afrikaans' community (*Afrikaanse gemeenskap*), as if such a thing existed, in order to avoid accusations of racial exclusivity. Since the organisation officially opened its membership to all Afrikaans speakers, regardless of race, in 1990 (Zietsman, 1992:204), references to the racially exclusive term Afrikaner, whether as a noun or adjective, are noticeably rarer in contemporary FAK literature and press releases. However, the notion that the FAK is a purely Afrikaans language body rather than an Afrikaner organisation defies credibility. Firstly, the organisation's headquarters are located within the grounds of that great shrine of Afrikaner nationalism – the Voortrekker Monument, located just outside of Pretoria – surely no coincidence. Secondly, if one looks at the pictures of the FAK directors on the organisation's website, one does not see a single non-white face amongst them. The aura of racial exclusivity that organisations such as the FAK fostered during the apartheid years is not something that will be easily shed. As Brand notes:

> [T]raditional Afrikaans organisations such as the FAK and the AKTV[5] cannot act as network organisations to unite the whole Afrikaans community because, rightly or wrongly, these organisations are still associated with the old Afrikaner establishment. (Brand, 2004)

All of this has helped towards the creation of the widespread perception that dissatisfaction with ANC language policy resides if not solely, then to quite a considerable extent, within the Afrikaner community and, indeed, there would seem to be some supporting evidence for this view. For instance, a survey carried out by PANSALB (2001b) amongst 2160 South Africans drawn from all social categories reveals that 14% of all respondents were dissatisfied with the official treatment of their language. Amongst the Afrikaans speakers questioned, this figure rose to 32%. This in turn feeds the perception that demands for the implementation of language rights for Afrikaans speakers constitute the continuation of ethnic-based politics, traditionally anathema to the ANC, on the part of the Afrikaners. The ANC is then able to exploit this by styling Afrikaner language activism as a threat to the

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[4] http://www.fak.org.za

[5] Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (Afrikaans language and culture union), http://www.aktv.org.za

otherwise supposedly universal consensus regarding the linguistic identity of the South African nation that it seeks to fashion. As Pillay (2005:71) notes: 'The Mbeki government [. . . ] has tended to treat all Afrikaner recognition claims, whether about language or a Volkstaat, as threatening to the sovereignty of its nation-building project'. The widespread popular suspicion that white Afrikaans speakers who express dissatisfaction with the increasing marginalisation of Afrikaans serve, albeit perhaps covertly, an anti-statist Afrikaner nationalist agenda, while perhaps understandable given the historical sensitivity of the issue, is nevertheless difficult to prove or disprove in individual cases. Certainly, there is still a vocal nationalist element within the Afrikaner community opposed to the current political dispensation in South Africa. Yet, many Afrikaans language activists, such as the *Groep van 63* (an organisation consisting mainly of white Afrikaans-speaking academics), have denied pursuing ethnonationalist interests and have affirmed their commitment to the political principles expressed in the post-apartheid constitution (Laurence, 2003). It appears, however, that not all are prepared to take such assurances at face value and it is likely that while the vast majority of language activism on behalf of Afrikaans continues to be conducted by white Afrikaans speakers, and particularly by academics from institutions that were formerly pillars of the apartheid system, the suspicion that the language of minority rights and linguistic pluralism is merely being appropriated in order to mask more sinister political intentions is likely to persist (Kriel, 2006).

The perception that all language activism on behalf of Afrikaans serves a racially divisive Afrikaner nationalist agenda has actually also meant that the potential of non-white Afrikaans speakers to contribute towards nation-building through the medium of Afrikaans has also been seriously compromised. This is most evident when one considers the policy of the ANC regarding the medium of instruction in the historically Afrikaans-medium universities – a clear example of an emotionally charged policy with an overtly symbolic and defensive identity-related agenda rather than a policy which pays due heed to sociolinguistic and socio-political fact.

### *5.3.1 Afrikaans as a Barrier? The Anglicisation of the Historically Afrikaans-Medium Universities*

During the apartheid regime there were five single-medium Afrikaans, white-only, indisputably Afrikaner, universities in South Africa – the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Pretoria, the University of the Free State (formerly Orange Free State), the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, while the University of Port Elizabeth operated as a bilingual English-Afrikaans institution. However, in the post-apartheid era the linguistic and racial character of these universities has undergone quite a drastic transition. Obviously, none of these universities could have reasonably hoped to remain white-only institutions following the demise of apartheid nor, to be fair, did they express any overt wish to do so. Indeed, it was an immovable demand of

the ANC that all previously white-only educational establishments be opened up to students of all races and that they take into account the linguistic preferences of their students when deciding on the language(s) of instruction (Giliomee, 2003:644). And, indeed, many former Afrikaner universities appear to have fallen into line with such requirements. For example, the University of Pretoria, according to its official language policy, now recognises, amongst other things, 'the right of every individual to receive tuition at a tertiary institution via the medium of the official language or languages or his or her choice' and also affirms 'the principle that a language policy may not cause any persons to be denied reasonable access to higher education' (University of Pretoria, 2002).

In reality, this has meant that by welcoming growing numbers of black students and because of acute political pressure from above, formerly single-medium Afrikaans institutions are increasingly having to operate as dual or parallel-medium institutions, offering classes in English in addition to, or alongside, those in Afrikaans since English is overwhelmingly the language of instruction favoured by black students. The extent to which English has entered into the historically Afrikaans universities is illustrated by the following figures from the University of Pretoria. In 1995, 70.8% of students at the university chose Afrikaans as their medium of instruction, while just 29.2% chose English. By 2001, these figures had changed to 53% and 47% respectively (Webb, 2002b:50).

This anglicisation of the historically Afrikaans universities has led to a situation which has generated widespread discontent amongst many Afrikaans-speaking students and academics who claim and fear that the increased use of English in these institutions will increasingly diminish and marginalise the role of Afrikaans to the extent that its status as a language of higher education will be seriously threatened which, in turn, will signal the end of Afrikaans as a public language. One commentator has remarked that '[t]he greatest danger for education in Afrikaans lies at the university level' (*Beeld,* 21/09/2006) Indeed, it is quite realistic to expect that the impact of choices concerning the issue of medium of instruction at the university level will reverberate throughout the whole educational system. Alexander (2001b:6), for instance, warns of a 'backwash effect', highlighting the fact that the social prestige of universities is such that lower-stage educational institutions are liable to imitate many of their practices. One could imagine some of the possible arguments that might surface as a result of this backwash effect. For example, something along the lines of 'if the use of language X is not deemed suitable or desirable for use in universities, why should it be used in schools and if it is not suitable for use in schools, why should it be used for any important public functions at all?' If one gets trapped in a spiral of pursuing such damaging logic, it is easy to see how certain languages can become highly stigmatised. This insight underlines the potential significance of the medium of instruction issue for the whole linguistic landscape of public life in South Africa.

There are also fears that the increasing anglicisation of the historically Afrikaans universities will lessen the quality of the education service that they provide. For example, Webb (2002b:50) reports that a 'sizeable number' of Afrikaans-speaking staff members at the University of Pretoria are not sufficiently proficient in English

to teach effectively through it. Giliomee and Schlemmer (2001:2) summarise the dilemma facing the historically Afrikaans universities as follows:

> For the historically Afrikaans universities the core of the problem is how they adapt their medium of instruction policy without losing their power to attract promising students that pay regularly and want to study in Afrikaans. The universities want to continue using Afrikaans as a medium of instruction as well as maintaining their Afrikaans character and to join in with new commitments to accessibility, non-racialism and service to the whole society. (Giliomee and Schlemmer, 2001:2)

Once again, it is interesting to note how Gilomme and Schlemmer refer to the maintenance of the 'Afrikaans' and not 'Afrikaner' character of the universities in a politically correct attempt to emphasise the multiracial background of Afrikaans speakers despite the fact that these universities very much had an Afrikaner character in the past and are still widely perceived as having so today. The ANC's oft-repeated argument for forcing this change in language practices in these universities and other formerly monolingual Afrikaans educational establishments is that language requirements may not be used to exclude students from formerly disadvantaged groups (i.e. non-white) from any higher education institution in the way that racial categorisation had excluded them from so many educational establishments during apartheid. The government's National Plan for Higher Education of February 2001 contained the following statement:

> [A]lthough the historically white Afrikaans-medium institutions are gradually moving towards the adoption of a combination of dual and parallel-medium language strategies, language continues to act as a barrier to access at some of these institutions. This is especially the case at the undergraduate level within some of the universities. [. . . ] This is unacceptable and cannot continue. (Government of South Africa, 2001)

The implication here is of course that Afrikaans excludes non-white students whereas English includes them. But just how far does this idea stand up to factual scrutiny? In truth, the answer is not very far at all. Firstly, it completely overlooks the fact that Afrikaans is the mother tongue of over 90% of the three million or so 'coloured' citizens of South Africa who, as Giliomee and Schlemmer (2001:121) point out, comprise the most educationally backward and disadvantaged group in the land. They note that between 1991 and 1997 the proportion of coloured students amongst all students graduating from a South African university fell from 6.7 to 5.3% despite the fact coloured people make up 8.9% of the total South African population. It is quite apparent, then, that accessibility to higher education has not been facilitated for the coloured population as a whole through the increasing presence of English in the former Afrikaans universities. Admittedly, though, it is also difficult to ascertain to what degree these statistics can be explained as the result of the muscling in of English into former Afrikaans-only institutions. A wide range of other, non-linguistic social and economic factors must also be taken into consideration. However, the argument that the maintenance of Afrikaans-only educational institutions acts as a barrier to accessibility is patently absurd when applied to the coloured population. If anything, the increasing anglicisation of these institutions is far more likely to block access since English is a language that the coloured

population as a whole is considerably less familiar with, and less competent in, than Afrikaans – according to Gough (1996:ix), in the 1991 census, only 51% of the coloured population indicated a 'speaking knowledge' of English.[6] Indeed, it is the case that coloured speakers of Afrikaans stand to lose most from the increasing marginalisation of Afrikaans in higher education since Afrikaners are, on the whole, able to function quite effectively in English. English is generally not the great barrier to accessibility for most Afrikaners in the way that it is for the more disadvantaged non-white population.

> If Afrikaans is forced out at the university level, the young white middle-class Afrikaners will be able to move into English language institutions, here [i.e South Africa] or abroad, comparatively easily. The case for the maintenance of Afrikaans is much more about the needs of the academically undeveloped brown (and white, as well as some black) Afrikaans-speaking communities. (Schlemmer and Giliomee, 2001:132)

It is fairly certain that the ANC does not have the coloured population wholly in mind when it invokes the 'barrier to accessibility' argument to attack the medium of instruction policies of Afrikaans-only, or even Afrikaans-mainly, institutions. After all, the coloured community has not traditionally been particularly supportive of the ANC. In the first post-apartheid general election in 1994, only 27% of the coloured electorate voted for the ANC, a level of support which has remained fairly constant in the decade or so since (Giliomee, 2003:647). Political parties inevitably pursue policies which please and find support amongst their most significant power base(s). In the ANC's case, this power base is overwhelmingly the black African population, 81% of whom voted for it in 1994, compared with just 3% of white voters. Therefore, when the ANC talks of improving accessibility to higher education through combating linguistically exclusive practices, it is obviously primarily the black population on whose behalf it is implicitly speaking. The belief that Afrikaans is an exclusive, white man's language, whereas English is the language of universal inclusion is undoubtedly a strong one amongst sections of the black population. However, again, empirical analysis of the sociolinguistic facts at hand soon uncovers the falsity of this belief. For example, the 2001 Census shows that Afrikaans is the home language (and therefore one can reasonably assume in most cases the first language or language best understood) of over 250,000 black Africans while English is only the home language of around 180,000. Furthermore, Afrikaans is spoken as a second, third or even fourth language by approximately nine million black people, often to a far higher level of competence than English (Van Rensburg, 1999:85). This is particularly true in some of the northern and more rural regions of the country such as the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga where native speakers of English comprise only a tiny fraction of the population (according to the 2001 Census, English is the home language of 0.5% of the population in Limpopo and of 1.7% in Mpumalanga) and the presence of English is considerably less than in the large urban areas and coastal regions. These areas also contain some of the most isolated and deprived communities in the country.

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[6] Unfortunately, subsequent censuses have not included data on speaking competence.

In a press conference in 2002, the chairman of the Pan South African Language Board – the body created to promote the linguistic principles expressed in the South African constitution – made the remark that 'we need to promote the spread of lingua francas' (Kumalo, 2002:3). Indeed, it has been shown that the development of a common national identity depends greatly on the ability of citizens to be able to speak to each other through the creation of a 'community of communication' (S. Wright, 2000a). Many languages presently already serve important communicative functions between the different linguistic communities in South Africa. White South Africans normally communicate with each other through English or Afrikaans, many being functionally bilingual, particularly native Afrikaans speakers who are more likely to switch to English than English speakers are to Afrikaans. Afrikaans, and to a lesser extent English, also serve as the communicative bridge between the coloured and white communities, being not so much lingua francas as shared mother tongues. English is overwhelmingly the most common means of communication between the Asian, white and coloured communities. Amongst the black population, which is by far the most linguistically diverse section of the population, numerous languages serve as communicative bridges. Some languages, such as Fanakolo which is a Zulu-based pidgin variety used mainly in the mining industry (Adendorff, 2002), occupy highly specific niches. The high level of multilingualism within the black population and the fact that many of the African languages are mutually intelligible to a reasonably high degree has entailed a situation whereby it is rare for any two black South Africans to be unable to communicate effectively with each other. Which particular language is used as the communicative bridge depends both on the linguistic origin of the respective speakers and their geographical location. Zulu is probably the widest known of the African languages followed by Xhosa, although in Pretoria, for example, it is Northern Sotho which serves as the most common medium of linguistic exchange between blacks. The greatest communicative gaps in South African society are between the black population and the rest of the population, i.e. white, coloured and Asian. Knowledge of the African languages outside of the black population is miniscule and knowledge of English and Afrikaans within the black population, while much greater and more widespread, is often poor and insufficient for anything more than the most basic of communicative requirements. Therefore, it is between these communities that a lingua franca or bridge language is in most urgent need of promotion. It is obvious that the only language currently being promoted as a lingua franca and *de facto* national language by ANC policy is English which is (falsely) styled as an ethnically neutral means of nationwide communication. The communicative value of Afrikaans is either generally ignored or denied. However, Conradie (2004) shows that within South Africa, Afrikaans would seem to have great potential to serve as a linguistic bridge between the various population groups, particularly in the workplace and in other lower level social domains.

> Afrikaans [has] a strong local mother-tongue base, its vocabulary and associated culture is strongly South Africa orientated, the language itself the result of grammatical simplification and speakers are accommodating in the use of their language in contact situations [...] [B]etween Afrikaans and other-language speakers Afrikaans has a strong position as

> a contact language at basic levels of communication. Afrikaans can therefore empower speakers at higher as well as lower levels and can be used across a wide social spectrum from being a language of science, education and administration to everyday communication, for example in work situations. (Conradie, 2004:154)

In this respect then, Afrikaans could potentially be seen, by those concerned with maximising levels and efficiency of linguistic exchange, as suitable for playing a complementary role to English in the form of a diglossic relationship with it (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1967), since English is the most common, indeed increasingly exclusive, lingua franca for 'higher' functions and at the elite level of South African society in general. Moreover, advocacy of Afrikaans as a language of inter-ethnic and inter-racial communication may allow for the language to become uncoupled from its association with Afrikaner nationalism which would then provide far more favourable circumstances for it to make a positive contribution towards nation-building. However, this is prevented from happening because of the ANC's continued ideological infatuation with the English language, something which has the effect of utterly stifling the potential of Afrikaans and the African languages to be used as resources for the promotion of social development and national integration.

Inherent in the 'Afrikaans excludes, English includes' argument is an overestimation of the ability of much of the black population to function effectively in English (see Section 4.5.1). The comparatively extremely high drop-out and failure rate of black students, many of whom study solely through the medium of English, particularly at the tertiary level, highlights this fact although, of course, this phenomenon cannot be attributed solely to linguistic factors. Judging purely in terms of the linguistic competence of students from previously disadvantaged communities (i.e. non-white communities), the 'Afrikaans excludes, English includes' argument is difficult to sustain with any conviction or credibility. In terms of the linguistic competence of such students, Afrikaans would seem to be no more exclusive than English. Indeed, Afrikaans may even have credible claims to be potentially more inclusive of previously disadvantaged communities than English since it is the mother tongue of the great majority of the coloured population and of significantly more black people than English. The real exclusionary and failure-inducing factor in South African education, of course, is the extreme absence of the African languages as media of instruction at most levels of post-primary education. Yet, this rather obvious fact remains largely unacknowledged at the governmental level, the ostensible reason for which being that, in a spirit of individual liberty and human rights, the government is anxious not be seen to be prescribing citizens' linguistic behaviour.

Liberal capitalist economies, of which South Africa is undoubtedly one, supposedly thrive upon the maximisation of operational efficiency. In so far as language policy and planning impacts upon economic activity and vice-versa (Grin, 1999; 2006), such economies would seem to require that language policies operate as efficiently as possible. That is to say that the money and time involved in educating citizens should ideally see a profitable return by maximising their potential to contribute to the vitality and prosperity of the economy, notwithstanding the implementation of certain other necessary or desirable, although possibly cost-inducing,

language planning measures. A policy of English-only or English-mainly education for black students which sidelines their mother tongues, implicitly rejects Afrikaans and which is very often conducted by unqualified teachers, many of whom have an unsatisfactory competence in English and have insufficient teaching resources available to them, is clearly highly inefficient (Y. Young, 1995:107–8). Consequently, the South African educational system generates a large amount of waste in the form of high levels of un- or underqualified students. As Alexander has observed:

> [U]nless we tackle the issue aggressively, we are dooming countless generations of South Africans, especially black South African youth, to a destiny of mediocrity and failure. For, we cannot repeat often enough the paradoxical fact that the only children in South Africa who are the beneficiaries of mother-tongue education from the cradle to the university are first language speakers of English and many first language speakers of Afrikaans. And every single year the results show up in the Matriculation examination results as well as in the disastrous drop-out rates which render most of our learners functionally illiterate. If nothing else, the economic costs of the system manifest in the billions of Rands wasted annually in paying teachers to produce a 50% failure rate (using criteria which are pathetically low by any standard) should give us pause to reconsider the issue. (Alexander, 2001b:7)

No educational system can realistically hope to be perfectly efficient in this sense, of course, but the medium of instruction issue is plainly an area in which there is great potential for the efficiency of the system to be improved. However, this potential remains unrealised because the medium of instruction issue is still seen largely as being about choosing between Afrikaans and English, as the notion of using the African languages as languages of teaching and learning beyond primary education is still not seriously countenanced by the governing elite of South Africa despite some well-sounding, but frankly hollow, policy statements. Setting aside the issue of the African languages, the inefficiency of the education system is heightened further by the increasing pressures being placed upon Afrikaans-medium educational institutions resulting from the demand for the increased use of English as a medium of instruction, pressures which partly stem from, and are given ideological credibility by, the ANC.

Given the empirical, factual unsustainability of the 'Afrikaans excludes, English includes' argument, one is forced to reflect upon what forces are actually sustaining the strong persistence of this belief within ANC circles. While deep ignorance of the sociolinguistic realities of South African society is certainly a contributory factor, this alone represents an inadequate explanation. Instead, one needs to go further and also consider the emotional ideological content and significance of this belief for the ANC and its adherents. Landman (2002:7) describes the ANC's attitude towards the medium of instruction issue in the Afrikaans universities as representing a 'camouflaged ethnic phobia', by which is presumably meant an irrational fear of ethnic mobilisation around the issue of language by white Afrikaners. Now, it may very well be a harsh judgement to characterise ANC fear of Afrikaner ethnic mobilisation as 'phobic' or 'irrational' given the events of modern South African history. But what this observation does highlight is that the debate and the situation of language conflict around the issue of Afrikaans is being experienced by the protagonists themselves primarily as an identity conflict – the anglophone ANC versus Afrikaans

speakers. Since it has become unacceptable to cite racial differences as motivating causes of political action in the post-apartheid era, at least in the mainstream, it seems as if language is increasingly becoming the new 'politically correct' issue around which the old identity conflicts are being played out. The employment of dubious accessibility and opportunity arguments etc. merely cloaks (albeit not that well) the identity agenda of the ANC. Equally, the sincerity behind the promotion of the idea of a single, multiracial 'Afrikaans' community originating from many white Afrikaans speakers and Afrikaner organisations, such as the FAK, remains highly questionable.

Given the highly emotional nature of identity conflicts, each side in the debate is often able to recruit large political support from its respective grass-roots constituency without necessary recourse to a coherent, dispassionate, fact-based argument. When ignorance supports a popular, strongly emotive ideology, political actors often have little incentive or willingness to combat that ignorance through advocacy of rigorously determined fact. Such unreason is extremely difficult to combat since rational arguments that challenge the prejudices held by the actors in the conflict tend to fall on deaf ears. It is easy to see how an identity conflict could degenerate into a vicious circle of intensification. Consider the following scenario, in which A is the dominant ruling group and B is the minority ethnolinguistic group: A seeks to deny linguistic rights to B because it fears that to do so is to serve B's nationalist interest. As a result, B feels that A is anti-B which arouses heightened nationalist sentiment and dissatisfaction towards A within B's community. This increase in B's nationalist sentiment leads A to feel vindicated in its initial belief and A becomes ever more resistant to the granting of linguistic rights to B and the cycle then repeats itself at an increasingly heightened state of tension and conflict. Such a scenario is clearly possible, even probable, in South Africa if the medium of instruction issue continues to be experienced as an identity conflict between the ANC and the Afrikaners.

In some sense, the persistence of this identity conflict acts as a psychological reinforcement of the historical identities of both the ANC and the Afrikaners but, in doing so, it acts as a barrier to the development of a fully inclusive South African national identity. ANC identity, which basically poses as *the* new, post-apartheid South African identity, has largely developed in contradistinction to the traditional enemy or 'other', which is (principally) the white Afrikaans-speaking community. For the Afrikaners, the current threat posed to their language reinforces the traditional nationalist interpretation of Afrikaner history which emphasises the recurring theme of a struggle for cultural survival in the face of out-group persecution, the core element of which is the *taalstryd* or 'language struggle' (see Section 4.3). One Afrikaner linguist has described the present linguistic situation as a 'crisis of despair' for the Afrikaners (Steyn, 2006). The use of such dramatic language plainly clearly panders to the emotional side of Afrikaner nationalist feeling. The current state of language conflict around Afrikaans is characterised by mutual mistrust and, as such, the group actors in the conflict find themselves in familiar psychological territory, something which has the effect of strengthening or, at least not weakening, the oppositional nature of their identities. This is particularly observable in connection with the issue of place names

and the proposed and, in many cases, instigated changes to many of them, an issue which has been the cause of considerable controversy and identity conflict.

### *5.3.2 The Place Name Issue as a Source of Identity Conflict*

Place names, which Nahir (1984:318) refers to as one of 'the marginal, auxiliary aspects of language', have an inescapably symbolic and emotive nature in that their use may trigger any number of emotional behavioural responses and mental associations, at the individual or group level and either positively or negatively orientated, amongst those who have some form of sentimental attachment to the places that such names refer to. Place names, then, may be of considerable significance for identity insofar as they provide a referential psychological link between an individual or group and a particular place and, as such, may be the bearers of important historical memory. Lock (1981), for example, notes that: '[p]lace-names appear to be among the universally occurring categories of deitic markers'. Place names are a semiotic expression of the ideology of the groups with which they are associated and, therefore, they may acquire ideological force in themselves. As Volosinov observes:

> The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs. They equate with one another. Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too. *Everything ideological possesses semiotic value.* (Volosinov, 1973:11; emphasis in original)

When one group actively seeks to change and, in doing so, delegitimise the name of a place which is of emotional significance to another group, the seeds of an identity conflict around the issue of place names are sown. Just such a conflict is being acted out in South Africa at present in connection with the ANC's policy of changing the official appellation of many settlements with Afrikaner or Afrikaans names. The most high-profile instance of this has been the official renaming of Pretoria, named after the 19th century Voortrekker leader and military commander Andries Pretorius (Liebenberg, 1977), as Tshwane. There are also apparently plans on the part of the government to change the name of Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State, to Thabure which was the name of a local Basotho chief's horse. According to a spokesman for the Sotho Culture Organisation, such a move would apparently 'recapture the history of the nation' (*Die Volksblad,* 08/11/2005). Quite which particular nation is being referred to here is not explicitly obvious. The Sotho nation? The South African nation? What does seem to be clear is that the Afrikaans name *Bloemfontein,* meaning simply a 'fountain of flowers', is being consciously delegitimised and therefore placed outside of the state determined consensus of what is deemed to be rightly national or South African.

Other examples of place-name changes have included the renaming of Pietersburg as Polokwane, Potgietersrus as Mokopane, Naboomspruit as Mookopong and Nylstroom as Modimolle.[7] Indeed, as of June 2005, all but two towns (Burgersfort

[7] http://africanlanguages.com/south_africa/place_names.html

and Groblersdal) with Afrikaans names in the Limpopo province (itself renamed, as it was formerly known as Northern Province) have been renamed supposedly as part of an initiative to 'get rid of colonial, offensive and meaningless names' (*African Eye News Service,* 28/06/2005). Several municipalities in the Limpopo province have also changed many street names which reflect Afrikaner history to those which reflect black African history. For example, the former Church Street in Nylstroom/Modimolle is now known as Chief Albert Luthuli Street (*Beeld,* 20/01/2005). Elsewhere, in Mpumalanga, the province's Geographical Names Committee has targeted more than forty settlements for renaming. For example, Buffelspruit is to be renamed as Mhlambanyatsi, Haartebeespruit as Moloto and Treur River as Sefogane (*African Eye News Service,* 26/04/2005).

Unsurprisingly, these name changes have been the cause of considerable protest and conflict. For example, on 21st May 2005 thousands of (almost exclusively white) demonstrators marched through Pretoria/Tshwane in protest at the renaming of the city. The issue has also been the subject of great media attention, particularly in the Afrikaans press. A search of the archive of an Afrikaans newspaper such as *Beeld* will reveal, almost on a weekly basis, articles concerned with the issue of *pleknaamverandering* (changing of place names). The ANC's principal argument in defence of this policy of place-name change is that many of these place names are evocative of the injustices and oppression suffered by the indigenous populations during the colonial and apartheid eras. The ANC mayor of Tshwane described changing the name of Pretoria as a chance to make 'a brave and positive break with the past' (*Beeld,* 18/02/2006). However, the suspicion that the ANC is chiefly motivated by attacking Afrikaner sensitivities is strengthened by the fact that place names which are the legacy of British colonial rule seem to have been largely left unchanged. For example, the settlement of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, named after a notoriously vicious British army colonel, John Graham, who masterminded the slaughter of numerous Xhosa, has not been the subject of any name change. Other similar examples include King Williams Town, named after King William IV of Britain and the city of Port Elizabeth, named in honour of the wife of a 19th-century acting governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Rufane Donkin. Unsurprisingly, this has spawned the belief amongst many Afrikaners that they are being unfairly victimised by the ANC government. Even Afrikaans place names that make no reference to any potentially politically divisive historical Afrikaner figure, such as Naboomspruit, *naboom* being the Afrikaans name for the euphorbia tree and *spruit* meaning a small stream, have had their name rendered unofficial and hence illegitimate in the eyes of the state purely, it seems, for being Afrikaans.

One often hears Afrikaners complain that they do not feel safe in the new South Africa. Partly, one may interpret this as a reference to physical safety given the extremely high levels of violent crime throughout the country. However, one should also interpret this as a reference to a collective psychological insecurity on the part of the Afrikaners which stems from the fact that they are being ideologically excluded from the ANC nation-building project. The controversy over place names and the fact that there has seemingly been little willingness to compromise on this issue on the part of the ANC, which behaves as if a settlement could only ever

possibly have one official name, further fuels such anxiety. Instead of some bi- or multilingual/cultural approach to the place-name issue, designed to serve as a measure of conflict prevention, the ANC's approach is typically and predictably subtractive. While there are many practical advantages to having single standardised place names, for example in the production of maps and for general bureaucratic efficiency, the subtractive approach may be unwise in multicultural, multilingual societies since it will be unavoidably ethnocentric unless an acceptable supra-group compromise name can be adopted. Consequently, a subtractive place-name policy is highly likely to foment inter-group conflict. In Belgium, for example, the authorities have realised that the only way to get round this problem of conflict potential is to adopt a bilingual place name policy (McRae, 1986). Most Belgian cities and large town, even those in monolingual areas, have two official names, one Flemish/Dutch and one French, e.g. Brussel/Bruxelles, Antwerpen/Anvers, Bergen/Mons, Luik/Liège. Sometimes a measure of efficiency needs to be sacrificed in order to prevent such conflict. In fact, arguing for single, standardised place names in the name of clarity or bureaucratic efficiency may often just be a covert way of promoting an ethnocentric agenda since the conflicts that arise in such instances are actually likely to reduce efficiency in other areas as some human endeavour will inevitably be diverted to participating in, or attempting to resolve, such conflicts. For discussions of place names issues in other sociolinguistic contexts see, for example, Gorter (1997) on Hicks (2002) on Scotland.

Obviously, it would be equally unhelpful and undesirable for Afrikaners to contest the right of other groups to use alternative place names if they so wish. This too would promote identity conflict. Admittedly, some Afrikaans place names are inexcusably offensive and it is difficult to make a credible argument for their retention. Examples include settlements such as *Kaffirspruit* and *Kaffirskraal*, 'kaffir' being a popular term of abuse for non-white people in South Africa, roughly equivalent in strength to 'nigger' in Britain or the USA. Also, it should not be forgotten that the apartheid government was also guilty of pursuing a policy of subtractive settlement renaming. The most famous instance being the highly cruel, gloating renaming of Sophiatown, a suburb of Johannesburg, as *Triomf* (Triumph) following the forced removal of the black population from the settlement in 1954 (Giliomee, 2003:507). Inclusive nation-building cannot take place in an atmosphere of highly salient inter-ethnic conflict. It requires co-operation and compromise. Given that the use of place names by the authorities and other public organisations is, just like their use of particular linguistic varieties, unavoidable (Kymlicka, 1995:111; Walker, 1999:153; Rubio-Marin, 2003:53; see Section 3.7), an inclusive model of nation-building clearly requires a multilingual policy in this regard. Such a policy would also be in line with constitutional commitments to promote inter-cultural tolerance and linguistic diversity. Given the predominantly symbolic significance of place names at the level of inter-group relations, place names may provide the most realistic short-term domain for the achievement of something approaching the constitutional aspiration of 'equitable multilingualism' (see Section 4.5). It would not seem to require much more than the production and installation of multilingual signs. Clearly, such a policy does not require that each settlement in the country

should have 11 different official names. Some settlements in more ethnolinguistically homogenous areas may still only require one name. What the policy does require is that in those cases where there is some conflict potential and group sensitivities are aroused over the issue of a particular settlement's name, some attention is given to appeasing these sensitivities and resolving the conflict in the form of a multilingual solution. A correspondent to *Die Volksblad* newspaper recently asked 'Can we trust that the present government, in the spirit of constitutional loyalty, will make a contribution towards positive nation-building through inclusive place name *additions* instead of replacements?' (*Die Volksblad,* 26/11/2005. my emphasis). Current indications are that any such trust in the implementation of such a policy would be quite misplaced.

Admittedly, there may be some potential problems with such a policy. Firstly, there is the cost, both financial and in terms of time, involved in the production of new signs, paperwork etc. when a settlement is renamed. This may divert resources from arguably more pressing concerns such as the atrocious state of education, housing and healthcare for most of the black population. One may reasonably question why the ANC government is expending so much energy and money on the rather banal, in both the general sense and in that of Billig's (1995:6) usage of the term ('banal nationalism') which refers to 'the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced', matter of the renaming of settlements given the huge social problems which exist in South Africa. Secondly, there is always the danger of overindulging demands for particular groups' rights to symbolic representation in public life, as this may provoke jealousy and accusations of 'special treatment' from other groups in society. Also, bowing to excessive group demands may facilitate the rise of 'ethnic entrepreneurs', by which is meant those 'whose sole interest [...] is ethnic mobilisation in order to get parliamentary votes and by this means get a little closer to the gravy train' (Alexander, 1999:25). The spectacle of numerous such 'entrepreneurs' each demanding that places names which were previously uncontested all be given additional names which reflect their supposed constituents' identities is clearly undesirable and, indeed, would be harmful to the nation-building project. The tensions, so evident in media coverage of the issue, that have arisen around the matter of place name changes in South Africa are open to potential exploitation and prone to escalation either as a result of a lack of indulgence or overindulgence of group demands. Constant vigilance is therefore required in order to ensure that possibilities for language conflict are minimised, notwithstanding the irreducible amount of conflict potential that inevitably exists in unequal, multilingual societies. However, ANC ideology is continuing to prevent effective moves towards any form of satisfactory resolution of this conflict.

The ANC's provocation of a conflict around the place-name issue by refusing to countenance a mutually satisfactory compromise solution, which would involve the adoption of a multilingual place-name policy, must be seen as an attempt to further legitimise and extend its ideological hegemony in South Africa. Consequently, it has the effect of promoting an exclusive sense of South African national identity. This is certainly how many in the Afrikaner community experience the conflict. For example, Gert Opperman, head of the Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site,

has remarked that 'the question of place-names generates a lot of emotion and it seems as if the Afrikaners sense of history and cultural identity is being purposely upset' (*Die Volksblad*, 01/05/2005). Elsewhere, Pieter Mulder, leader of the mainly Afrikaner supported *Vryheid Front Plus* party, has remarked that 'the one-sided changing of historic names remains an affront. The message is that South Africa only belongs to one group' (*Beeld,* 18/02/2005). Indeed, the ANC's attitude towards the question of national identity is, in many ways, strongly Jacobinist. For example, former chairman of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, once remarked that the ANC 'demands to determine the form of our nationhood' (Giliomee, 1991:71: Geldenhuys, 2000). In addition, an ANC discussion document from 1997 entitled *Nation-Formation and Nation-Building* described the nation-building process as a 'continuing battle to assert African [widely perceived as a euphemism for "black"] hegemony in the context of a multi-cultural and non-racial society' (ANC, 1997). Such remarks would seem to leave in little doubt the fact that there appears no ideological space for Afrikaans (indeed any language other than English) in the ANC's chosen model of nation-building. Because of its monolithic, hegemonic nature, the ANC's nation-building ideology must be recognised as having an innate conflict potential. For Afrikaans (and other languages) to contribute positively towards nation-building, this conflict potential around the issue of language has to be eradicated or, failing that, at least rendered dormant. For this to happen, a paradigmatic ideological shift away from the notion of Afrikaans as a 'problem' or 'barrier' to a view of Afrikaans as a resource for nation-building is necessary, something which necessarily entails that the present weakening position of Afrikaans in many areas of national importance be resisted and reversed.

## 5.4 ANC Ideology and the Decline of Afrikaans in Other Areas of National Importance

Although higher education and the place name issue are the two Afrikaans related matters upon which most attention has focused and which have been the subject of greatest media coverage and debate, the post-apartheid period has also witnessed a decline in the use of Afrikaans within numerous other domains of national importance. Observation of the emerging linguistic trends in some of these domains gives one a greater appreciation of the very great extent to which the ANC's anti-Afrikaans, or indeed 'anti-any language other than English' ideology has become dominant in South Africa. The following discussion considers a number of these domains in turn.

### *5.4.1 The Postal Service*

The South African Post Office represents a clear case in which ANC linguistic ideology has penetrated into an institution of national importance. The postal system may

be of great national importance on two main counts. Firstly, it facilitates state-wide (and beyond) exchanges of communication, which are a necessary condition for the emergence and consolidation of a common national identity (S. Wright, 2000a). Secondly, the ancillary equipment of the post system (pillar boxes, stamps, post-women/men etc.) may serve as significant symbolic daily reinforcements, or 'banal' (Billig, 1995) representations, of national identity. Consequently, the decision of the South African Post Office to abandon Afrikaans and use only English on its stamps, to have an English-only website and its decision that many place names which contain Afrikaans words are no longer acceptable and are only to be used in an anglicised form (e.g. Melkrivier becomes Milk River and Pelgrimsrust becomes Pilgrim's Rest) (*Die Volksblad*, 26/11/1999) even though such settlements are predominantly Afrikaans-speaking, must be seen as part of an ideological process supporting the emergence of a purely anglophone South African national identity.

### *5.4.2 Airline Industry*

South African Airlines, another institution of symbolic and practical national importance, has also adopted language practices similar to those of the South African Post Office (Mkhulisi, 2000:126). The company has dropped the formerly used Afrikaans version of its name – the *Suid-Afrikaanse Lugdiens* – from its official literature and plane livery and now uses only the English version. Its website is available in two languages (English and German), only one of which is an official language of South Africa. As a result of the adoption of these new language practices, the airline has been the subject of a number of complaints made by passengers unable to follow instructions and safety announcements made only in English or other non-South African languages (*The Star,* 13/03/2006). The major South African airports have also seen a decline in the use of Afrikaans. At Johannesburg International Airport, the country's largest and busiest airport, the present author's own observations have indicated that signage is totally in English and that the number of announcements made in Afrikaans or, indeed, any of the African languages, is roughly zero.

### *5.4.3 Sport*

The language practices of many of South Africa's sporting governing bodies are strongly compliant with the linguistic ideology of the country's present governing regime, the consequence of which being the increasing marginalisation of Afrikaans and the continuing total marginalisation of the African languages from the public sporting domain. The most popular sports in South Africa are undoubtedly football, cricket and rugby union. The popularity of each of these sports varies significantly amongst different sections of the South African population (Webb et al., 1992:56), a fact reflected in the make up of the national teams in each sport. Football is widely seen as the major black sport in South Africa. A majority of players in

the South African domestic league and national team are black and the national team is widely known as *Bafana Bafana*, meaning 'The Boys, The Boys' in isiZulu. Cricket, although predominantly still a white sport, is perhaps the most multiracial and multiethnic sport. The South African national cricket team regularly includes several black and/or so-called 'coloured' players, as well as white players from both English and Afrikaans-speaking communities. Indeed, in 2006, Ashwell Prince, a coloured player, was named as the first non-white captain (albeit temporarily) of the national cricket team. Rugby union has long been regarded as the most exclusively white sport in South Africa. In particular, it is especially popular amongst white Afrikaans speakers and, indeed, it is seen as the Afrikaner national sport. The national team remains predominantly white and Afrikaans-speaking, although some non-white players now regularly play for the Springboks.

Despite the popularity of these three major sports across different linguistic and racial communities, the South African governing body of each sport has followed the ANC lead and now conducts its official business almost exclusively through the medium of English. Evidence of this is to be found on the websites of each organisation and the press releases contained therein which are solely in English.[8] Although Afrikaans is the language most commonly heard on and around the cricket and rugby field, the games' administrators at the national level in no way reflect this through their public linguistic behaviour. To the great dissatisfaction of many members of its predominantly Afrikaner fanbase, even the Blue Bulls (*Blou Bulle* in Afrikaans) rugby union club from Pretoria have fallen in line with ANC linguistic ideology and taken the decision to conduct all external correspondence exclusively in English (BBC Sport, 2001).

The ANC has often attempted to associate itself with South Africa's sporting teams in order to promote its particular vision of the South African nation. One thinks of Nelson Mandela wearing the Springbok rugby jersey at the 1995 World Cup final in Johannesburg in which the South African team was victorious, widely seen as a symbolic gesture of reconciliation between the ANC and the Afrikaner community. However, from a linguistic point of view at least, it has become clear that any such inter-community reconciliation is strictly on the ANC's terms. In 2006, President Mbeki saw fit to criticise the South African football team for their poor performance at the African Cup of Nations, saying that the team did not understand what the youth of 1976 (a reference to the Soweto riots in reaction to the forced imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools; see Section 5.2) had set out to accomplish and that it was necessary to ensure that 'our country and the nation becomes a winning nation. We cannot be a losing nation in the way that Bafana Bafana lost in Egypt' (*South African Press Association*,[9] 29/01/2006). This frankly authoritarian outburst from the president is illustrative of the way in which the ANC has sought to extend its ideological power into the domain of national sport, a domain which seems to be becoming increasingly hostile to the public use of Afrikaans.

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[8] http://www.cricket.co.za, http://www.sarfu.org.za, http://www.safagoal.net

[9] http://www.sapa.org.za

### *5.4.4 Media and Advertising*

In the previous chapter, it was discussed how the South African Broadcasting Corporation has increasingly favoured the use of English at the expense of the other official languages in the post-apartheid era (see Section 4.5.1). Afrikaans language programmes have seen both a decline in airtime and, many believe, in quality. In the words of one writer 'the SABC [. . . ] restricts Afrikaans mainly to *7de laan*, feeble sitcoms and the news which has never been as parochial as it is nowadays. Good quality dramas and documentaries belong to the past' (Steyn, 2006). It has also been noticed that the SABC frequently adopts a policy of non-reciprocal subtitling. Afrikaans programmes such as *7de laan* frequently run with English subtitles but it is extremely rare for English-language programmes to contain subtitles in any other languages. The absence of reciprocal subtitles on English programmes has been described as 'a clear attempt to promote English because the perception exists that "all South Africans (including children) understand (American!) English"' (Du Toit, 2004:46–7). Van der Walt (2004) makes the observation that Afrikaans television programmes (indeed, this is true of all non-English programmes on the SABC) are also frequently interrupted by English-language advertisements, despite the fact that Afrikaans speakers constitute the largest group in the middle and higher sectors of the consumer market. Also noticeable is the increasing frequency with which English-language advertisements appear in the daily Afrikaans press. According to a senior advertising manager of the *Media24* organisation, the reason that many companies now advertise in English in Afrikaans newspapers is that 'we've just had to face that fact that the advertising industry is English' (cited in *Financial Mail,* 24/05/2002). This sort of resigned, docile acceptance of the 'inevitable' dominance of English is widespread, particularly in capitalist enterprises, and has the effect of strengthening the *status quo* ideological hegemony of ANC discourse. Language usage in these domains cannot be viewed as neutral or insignificant. Martins, for example, underlines the importance of language in the field of advertising:

> Language is a significant factor in marketing and market communication. Understanding and acceptance of and preferences for the language of an advertisement undoubtedly influence the impact and effectiveness of an advertisement. (Martins, 2000:31)

In so far as many South African companies are concerned, with regards to advertising the commonly heard business adage 'you can buy in your own language but you must sell in the language of your customer' often does not seem to apply in the case of Afrikaans-speaking consumers. While the ideological thrust of such a marketing strategy is obvious, the actual commercial merit of advertising in English in Afrikaans publications must be questioned on a number of counts. Firstly, this strategy again unquestioningly assumes that all Afrikaans speakers understand English. While many Afrikaans do indeed understand English to a very high level, a considerable number understand it less well to varying degrees. Therefore, it seems inarguable that English-language advertisements will, on the whole, inevitably be understood less well by readers of these publications than if they were produced in Afrikaans. Secondly, given the highly defensive sense of linguistic pride felt by

many Afrikaans speakers, particularly in relation to the English language, one is entitled to ask whether placing English advertisements in Afrikaans publications may not be more likely to generate hostile reactions towards both the advertisers and the publications in question on the part of many readers. P. du Plessis notes that

> Advertising is used as an instrument for building relationships with the target market with the aim of improving loyalty towards the commercial brand. Improved brand-loyalty will ensure a profitable long-term relationship with the target market. (P. du Plessis, 2004:128).

With this in mind, it is very difficult to envisage how some companies can hope to build significant brand-loyalty amongst Afrikaans speakers by utterly and blatantly rejecting the Afrikaans language in favour of English. It seems that many advertisers have been blinded to this insight by the wider, hegemonic, ideological forces at play in South African society and which stem, to a great degree, from the current governing regime and the dominant global economic system which it has so enthusiastically embraced.

### *5.4.5 Police Force*

In January 2007, the Western Cape (a province in which Afrikaans is the first language of around 60% of the population) police force introduced a policy requiring that only English be used for internal communication within the service (*Mail and Guardian*, 25/01/2007). According to Ganief Daniels, a deputy commissioner of the Western Cape police service, this decision was made to 'reflect the country's demographics' (*SABCnews.com*, 25/01/2007). The decision was met with the threat of legal action by the FW de Klerk Foundation who argued that it breached the constitutional rights of Afrikaans-speaking officers. The director of the Foundation's Centre for Constitutional Rights, Paul Hoffman, ridiculed the decision, saying:

> If you have a Constable Fortyn and an Inspector Van der Merwe chasing an Afrikaans-speaking suspect on behalf of an Afrikaans complainant and they're expected to have radio communication in English, you can, see that the situation is quite laughable. (cited in *Mail and Guardian*, 25/01/2007)

The decision would also seem to explicitly contradict the Western Cape's official language policy which promises, amongst other things, 'to ensure that the Western Cape is a caring home for all by promoting multilingualism' and 'to ensure social cohesion and improve relationships by promoting language diversity' (Western Cape Language Committee, 2004).[10] Such was the degree of opposition to this policy decision, the Western Cape police soon issued a memo announcing the revocation of the interim policy (*SABCnews.com*, 26/02/2007). This situation represents a rare victory

[10] The Western Cape is currently the only South African province with its own official language policy. The three official languages of the province are Afrikaans, Xhosa and English.

for Afrikaans speakers in their struggle to resist the growing tide of English monolingualism that is being implemented at the ideological behest of the ANC government.

### *5.4.6 The Judicial System*

The post-apartheid era has also seen a decline in the use of Afrikaans in judicial and legal circles as English has become increasingly dominant (Barker, 1998). Indeed, no national legislation has been published in Afrikaans since 1998. For example, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 was only published in English and Xitsonga, a curious combination considering Xitsonga is the third smallest of the eleven official languages and not mutually intelligible with any of the other official African languages (Loubser, 2001:88). Also, in 1999, the South African Minister of Justice, Penuell Meduna, announced, despite much opposition from the Afrikaans-speaking community and contrary to the obligations to promote multilingualism contained in the South African constitution, the government's intention to abandon Afrikaans and introduce English as the sole language of record in courts of law on the grounds that such a move would be more 'cost-effective' (*Die Volksblad*, 19/10/99). T. Du Plessis highlights the covert intentions behind this change in linguistic practice.

> The repeated attempts to introduce English as the only language of record clearly confirm a lack of response on the part of an important arm of government to the institutionalisation of societal multilingualism. One receives the impression that in spite of constitutional obligations the official downgrading of Afrikaans outweighs the enhancement of the status of African languages. (T. Du Plessis, 2001:102).

On occasions, anti-Afrikaans attitudes in legal circles have been rather more overtly and forcefully expressed. For example, in January 2006, a military judge, Lieutenant Colonel Mbulelo Mandela caused great controversy during a trial in Cape Town with the following remark: 'I must say it on record that to me it is disgusting that at this time and age we still find official correspondence or official communication in Afrikaans' (*South African Press Association,* 30/01/2006). This led to accusations of impartiality from the Vryheid Front Plus, a spokesman of the organisation saying of the judge that '[h]e not only insults Afrikaans, but also infringes upon the Constitutional rights of the accused'. Complaints were also submitted against the judge to the Pan South African Language Board by the Democratic Alliance political party. However, at the time of writing, no sanction or further action of any sort appears to have been taken against Colonel Mandela.

Although Afrikaans was, together with English, the language in which modern South African law was developed and despite the fact that it has a fully-developed legal terminology and literature, its use in academic legal publications has also declined since 1994. For example, Loubser (2001:87) notes that the Afrikaans-orientated *Tydskrif vir Hedendaagse Romeins-Hollandse Reg* (Journal for Contemporary Roman-Dutch Law) contains increasingly more articles in English whilst the English-orientated *South African Law Journal* no longer publishes contributions in Afrikaans. This tendency can be linked to the decision of some legal departments at

historically Afrikaans universities to introduce courses taught in English instead of, or alongside, courses taught in Afrikaans.

The legal system is one of the most important foundations of a nation's civic culture. As far as the national community is concerned, the legal system has the dual function of both prescribing and protecting the particular rights and duties of citizens, thus helping to define the civic character of the nation. The rejection of certain languages as languages of legal culture implicitly contributes to the delegitimisation of their potential civic character. The South African legal system and some aspects of its associated culture are currently contributing to the undermining of the civic character of the Afrikaans language and therefore also towards the linguistic and cultural homogenisation of public life in South Africa.

## 5.5 Conclusion: Afrikaans – A Language for Nation-Building?

The main theme of this chapter has been that ethnically based language conflict greatly inhibits efforts to foster the development of an inclusive, overarching national identity. Such conflicts are frequently characterised by a highly emotional content and are often fought as a symbolic battle of group identities. Such identity conflicts around the issue of language are generally the most difficult to resolve as actors in the conflict are often unreceptive to rational, reason-based solutions. The current identity conflict in South Africa which is being played out around the issue of Afrikaans is typical of such a situation. The maintenance or marginalisation of Afrikaans as a public language is widely experienced as being a battle between Afrikaner identity and an ANC-led, Anglophone, *soi disant* 'genuine' South African national identity. Current language use patterns in various domains of public life indicate that the ANC is winning this identity conflict. For the ANC elite, language activism on behalf of Afrikaans works against its implicit ideology of assimilation into an English-speaking national community. For the Afrikaners, no longer able to rely on political institutions to protect their ideology of racial separateness and facing the increasing marginalisation of their languages, the present situation is being experienced as a crisis. Zietsman (1992:203) neatly summarises the choice facing the Afrikaner community in post-apartheid South Africa: 'Afrikaners must choose whether they want to be exclusively white or Afrikaans because the two are mutually exclusive'. This observation underlines the fact that it is no longer acceptable or possible for Afrikaners to maintain themselves through adherence to an ideology of racial superiority and distinctiveness and that co-operation with non-white Afrikaans speakers is necessary for the maintenance of their language.

This chapter has not just been concerned with the maintenance of Afrikaans *per se* but, rather, how the maintenance of Afrikaans may be secured so as to contribute towards nation-building in South Africa. Advocacy of inclusive nation-building must emphatically reject the idea that Afrikaner nationalism is the only guarantee for the long-term prosperity and survival of the Afrikaans language. Certainly, a vigorous political mobilisation of the Afrikaners at the group level may very well

secure the continued use of Afrikaans amongst themselves but it is unlikely that such a movement could have anything but harmful effects upon the promotion of an inclusive South African national identity. Steyn (1980:437), writing some quarter of a century or so ago, was of the opinion that an Afrikaans 'language nationalism', including both white and coloured speakers of the language, would be necessary in order to guarantee the prosperous survival of Afrikaans in the post-apartheid era. As far as nation-building is concerned, the attractiveness of Steyn's opinion rather depends on what the character of such a 'language nationalism' would likely be. If such a nationalism was strongly political insofar as it sought to weaken Afrikaans speakers' ties to the South African state and demanded special representation rights at the group level then it would most likely work as counterforce to nation-building. However, an Afrikaans 'cultural nationalism' (Hutchinson, 1994; May, 2001:78) which restricts its concerns to the maintenance, strengthening and broadening of grass roots cultural networks can perhaps act as an important counterweight to the dominance of the elitist Anglophone culture and, in doing so, contribute towards the creation of favourable conditions for the strengthening of all marginalised cultural networks in South Africa. Whether ethnocentric political movements can be avoided or not in practice remains to be seen. The point here though is that the dissatisfaction with the present model of national integration being pursued by the ANC government, which is so fervent amongst many Afrikaans speakers, does not necessarily require that those committed to the maintenance of the vitality of Afrikaans advocate total rejection of the notion of national integration altogether. Indeed, one (admittedly Afrikaner) writer has suggested that Afrikaans, and not English, has the greatest potential of any language to become a genuine vehicle and expression of South African identity.

> English can never truly become the most important marker of South African cultural identity. English is the world language, the language of wider communication and of 'great learning.' This is all part of the myth-creation around English, and above all by the so-called 'agtergeblewenes'[11] of the country who can acquire upward social mobility through English. Afrikaans, on the other hand, is unique to South Africa – just like Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Tswana, the two Sotho languages, Tsonga, Swazi and the two Ndebele languages. Afrikaans, as we know it with all of its varieties [...] took root in South Africa and therefore deserves its special place in the country. At the same time, Afrikaans is sufficiently developed terminologically to send people to the moon – or Mars. Few other languages which have had to compete side-by-side with English have ever achieved what Afrikaans has achieved. Afrikaans is therefore one of the most distinctive national languages of South Africa and in my opinion has a much greater claim to the role of marker of South African national identity than English, the 'faceless' world language. (Jordaan, 2004:343–344)

There is undoubtedly a strong aspirational element to Jordaan's comments above. However, it would be a mistake to write off English as a potential marker of South African national identity on account of the fact that it is a language spoken by many

[11] This term has been left untranslated. It is the Afrikaans term for the underdeveloped population, and comes from the verb *agterbly*, meaning 'to stay or remain behind'. The term carries with it suggestions of backwardness.

different communities throughout the world. It was discussed in Section 2.5.2 how language still had an important link to ethnic identity in many English-speaking countries because of the many localised varieties of the language which exist and which act as distinctive expressions and markers of the national identities of the communities that speak them. South Africa is just one such country. Indeed, linguists claim the existence of several varieties or ethnolects of English peculiar to South Africa, namely white South African English, often just referred to as South African English (SAE) in a clear demonstration of the socio-historical pre-eminence of this particular variety (Lass, 2002), Indian South African English (Mesthrie, 2002) and Black South African English (De Klerk and Gough, 2002). It does not follow, then, that because of its worldwide distribution, the English language is some kind of 'faceless' monolithic entity. The distinctive varieties of English spoken around the world, which are very often linked to the expression of particular ethnic or national identities, may be seen as giving many different faces to the English language (see Section 2.5.2). While it is true that there currently does not appear to be a recognisable single variety of South African English which cuts across ethnic, racial and class boundaries and so is able to act as a fully inclusive marker of national identity, one should not necessarily rule out possible tendencies towards the future emergence of such a variety should the requisite socio-economic conditions prevail. As an additional point, Jordaan's assertion that Afrikaans is unique to South Africa might come as a shock to many Namibians, a sizeable number of whom (over 130,000 according to *Ethnologue* and 25% of the population of the capital city, Windhoek) speak Afrikaans either as a first, second or even third language (Combrink, 1984). Equally, Tswana is the most widely spoken language in Botswana, as is Swazi in Swaziland and Ndebele is also spoken as a first language by many Zimbabweans.

To return back to the main point of this section, rejection of the exclusivist model of national integration being promoted and pursued by the ANC regime need not amount to an outright rejection of the notion of integration into the national system. It simply requires the formulation of a viable alternative and inclusive model of national integration. Admittedly, such a model is likely to reject a whole tradition of (mainly European) thought on the relationship between language and national identity and its formulation is also to be done largely 'blind' insofar as there are very few, if any, examples of successful pluralistic, multilingual, inclusive nation-building from other post-colonial contexts around the world. It is the formulation of just such an alternative model of national integration that will be considered in the following chapter.

# Chapter 6
# Towards an Alternative, Inclusive Approach to Language Policy and National Integration for Post-Apartheid South Africa

## 6.1 Introduction

A key point that must be taken into consideration when attempting to develop a strategy for something as avowedly future-orientated as a language policy for nation-building is that there is likely to be an irreducible degree of tension between what is ideally desirable and what is realistically possible. Obviously, no coherent approach can be without some form of directional motivation or ideological conviction. However, in the inevitable absence of absolute harmony between ideology and feasibility, the question becomes one of deciding to what degree ideological ambition is to supersede potentially anti-ideological practical considerations. For a country such as South Africa, which is characterised by such high levels of socio-economic equality and marginalisation, a strategy which promotes a rigid, highly abstracted conception of an ideal-type egalitarian society which is far removed from prevailing contemporary conditions is unlikely to provide an especially useful basis for making short-term, practical progress in addressing sociolinguistic problems. The advocacy of language policy and planning measures which, in reality, have little or no hope of ever being accepted or implemented, while perhaps an engaging theoretical and intellectual exercise, does not really meet the demands of those anxious to bring about meaningful sociolinguistic change. The problem which then presents itself is that given the extreme dominance of the current political formation in South Africa plus the very real difficulties, not to say impossibilities in many cases, of initiating genuine sociolinguistic change through language policy and planning (see Section 3.2), one is entitled to ask oneself if indeed any language planning activities which challenge the prevailing *status quo* might be regarded as realistic or feasible options. The theoretical perspectives on language policy and planning developed earlier in this book (notably Chapters 3 and 4) serve as a severe brake on ambition in language planning. Nevertheless, it seems incumbent upon one to at least attempt to make some positive contribution, however limited, towards the development of an improved linguistic strategy for South Africa.

This chapter seeks to identify some of the key principles and practices of a language policy that might facilitate the creation of a common South African national identity by contributing to a programme of social development aimed at reducing

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social inequality and ensuring the integration of all South African citizens into the national system. This approach makes no claim to any moral status and should not be interpreted as normative but, rather, as an expression of a preference for an alternative model of language and society to the elitist, exclusionary one currently being pursued by the present ruling ANC government in South Africa. No normative argument is made for the desirability of social equality and development *per se.* It is assumed that some people will inevitably share these preferences and that some will not. For those who do not share these preferences, this chapter makes no attempt to persuade them otherwise. For those that do broadly share these preferences, it is hoped that the ideas expressed here will prove informative and enlightening, at least in some small measure, with regards to how one might go about working towards the realisation of such preferences.

The discussion begins by addressing some of the central ideological and structural factors preventing the incorporation of the most marginalised members of South African society into the national system. One of the greatest causes of the continuing high levels of marginalisation is recognised as being the liberal, capitalist nature of the post-apartheid political dispensation which has unavoidably given rise to authoritarian governing practices. The linguistic dimension of this authoritarianism is to be located in the ruling elite's near-universal use of the English language which ensures the continued banishment of the African languages (and increasingly Afrikaans) from use in public life. It will be argued that the South African state and its constitution institutionalises a culture of competitive ethnocentric language activism which heightens the potential for inter-ethnic conflict and which is also incapable of addressing, both theoretically and practically, issues of socio-economic equality and development and is therefore unable to resolve the 'national question' in favour of the majority of South African citizens. The issue of language activism is also considered at some length. While some scholars avidly promote language activism as a means of making meaningful strides towards linguistic democratisation, it is argued that the potential of such activism to initiate counter-evolutionary social change is strictly limited. Finally, two further related issues are discussed in depth. The first of these is the proposal to create overarching standardised varieties of the Nguni and Sotho language clusters. This is an issue which has been mooted for some time as an alternative solution to the linguistic dimension of South Africa's 'national question' but without ever gaining mainstream approval. The proposal is examined from a national integration perspective with the conclusion that although it may have some theoretical attractiveness, any language policy which promoted such a proposal would likely face serious impediments to its implementation. The most potent obstacle concerns the issue of acceptance, that is to say that the proposal appears to be either at odds with the wishes and beliefs of much of the South African population or finds very little positive affirmation amongst it. The second issue to be discussed is that of individual multilingualism and its relevance to the issue of national integration. It is argued that while a form of reciprocal individual multilingualism is ideally desirable for the realisation of linguistic equality, it cannot hope to occur unless the African languages are imbued with some instrumental, economic value which would motivate English and Afrikaans speakers to learn them.

Finally, a brief word on terminology in this chapter. It shall become apparent that, for the purposes of the approach being developed in this chapter, the term 'national integration' is preferred to the term 'nation-building'. Although the two terms are often used fairly synonymously, there is some good reason for retaining a conceptual distinction between the two. While 'nation-building' is certainly an appropriate term to describe the attempts of top-down, non-consultative governmental planning measures to engender a sense of common national identity, the term does not necessarily carry with it any suggestion of a commitment to consensual material social development. On the other hand, with the use of the term 'national integration', the emphasis is placed less on matters of pure identity and more on matters of incorporation and inclusion into a material system. The term also avoids any suggestion of top-down, possibly coercive, attempts to manipulate social identities to the advantage of certain vested, elitist ideological interests.

## 6.2 Democracy, Marginalisation and Political Legitimacy in Post-apartheid South Africa

In the fourteen or so years since the formal end of apartheid to the time of writing, it is clear that constitutional aspirations regarding the establishment of a 'democratic and open society' and the commitment to 'improve the quality of life of all citizens' (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, preamble) remain largely unrealised. However, because of the new progressive, liberal constitution with its emphasis on human rights and the introduction of universal suffrage in the post-apartheid era, the contemporary political consensus, moulded and led by the ANC, has enthusiastically and uncritically hailed the arrival of democracy in South Africa. Yet, as Holden notes, there is often

> a tendency to call a system 'democratic' simply because we approve of it. When we do this, however, we convey information only about our views, not about the system itself. When this happens, it has been said that 'democracy' becomes merely a 'hurrah! word' (meaning 'hurrah! for this political system'), emptied of all descriptive meaning. (Holden, 1993:2)

The current political system in South Africa obviously constitutes an enormous 'hurrah!' for the ANC (and those organisations which benefit from a symbiotic relationship with it) since it has assured it a position of almost untouchable political dominance. However, for those not wedded to the ANC and its political and economic ideology, claims lauding the arrival of democracy in South Africa must be met with a considerable dose of sober scepticism. The precise determination of what constitutes 'democracy' is, of course, a notoriously contested matter (Connolly, 1983; Graham, 1986; Hoffman, 1988). However, most would be in agreement that democracy denotes something resembling 'rule by the people'. The question then becomes, of course: how do we arrive at a satisfactory definition of 'people rule'? This intricate question will not be dealt with in depth in this study but it suffices here to say that the elitist nature of contemporary South African politics promotes a highly inadequate conception of democracy for those committed to reducing social

inequality and bringing about the integration of the whole of South African society into the national system. One of the most noticeable characteristics of post-apartheid society is not a trans-societal atmosphere of elated liberation but the continuation of high (in many cases increasing) levels of socio-economic marginalisation from the national system. Thus far, for most South Africans liberation has only come in the form of certain basic, 'first generation' human rights (Robins, 2005b:2) which protect against discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual preference etc. Socio-economic liberation and the freedom to effectively participate in public political life which requires, amongst other things, an adequate level of education, continue to remain unknown for most South African citizens. As one commentator notes:

> In contemporary South Africa the introduction of democratic political arrangements has gone hand in hand with the unmasking of widespread marginalisation. While the majority of people's legal status is assured, their experience of citizenship remains ambiguous. They continue to be excluded from economic equality and empowerment and effective, democratic participation in the public sphere. If the South African case is emblematic of anything, it is the intertwining of democracy and marginalisation in contemporary life. (Von Lieres, 2005:23)

Marginalisation from the public life of the state and, by consequence, the state's associated national identity, may take several forms and operate both at the individual and group level. In cases where a state methodically marginalises sections of its citizenry from material participation in, and ideological acceptance into, the national system, a problem of political legitimacy is created. According to Kelman:

> Two ultimate sources of legitimacy for the national system can be distinguished: (1) the extent to which it reflects the ethnic-cultural identity of the national population and (2) the extent to which it meets the needs and interests of that population. In the long run, a political system cannot maintain its legitimacy unless, at least, a significant proportion of the population perceives it as meeting their needs and interests (although it can, of course, retain power by relying on coercive means, even if only a small elite are adequately integrated into the system). (Kelman, 1972:188)

Kelman notes that these two sources of legitimacy give rise respectively to what may be termed *sentimental* or *instrumental* attachments to the national system. If we consider the South African population as a whole, it is apparent that the ANC-led national system has a problem of legitimacy on both of these counts. Furthermore, returning to the main emphasis of this study, language can be identified as an important factor in the creation and maintenance of these two sources of political *illegitimacy*. As far as the first source of illegitimacy is concerned, the linguistic practices of the ruling government and other agencies of the state manifestly do not reflect the ethnolinguistic identities of the whole South African population. In fact, they do not, on the whole, even reflect the ethnolinguistic identities of the majority of South Africans. Most South Africans can therefore be said not to enjoy a sentimental linguistic attachment to the current state, most notably and vocally the white Afrikaans-speaking population (see Chapter 5). Indeed, such is the centrality of language to their identity, the declining use of Afrikaans in public life arguably prevents many Afrikaans speakers from enjoying any significant form of sentimental

attachment to the South African state. For many Afrikaners, the fact that the new rulers of South Africa are mostly black creates an additional source of sentimental alienation while conversely being a novel source of sentimental attachment to the state for the black population, a fact which reflects the historical centrality of racial categories in the formation and politicisation of social identities in South Africa. The fact that many white Afrikaans speakers are highly competent in English has, on the whole, meant that the socio-economic effects of the anglicisation of public life have been less severe on them than on speakers of African languages and so-called coloured speakers of Afrikaans.

In addition to the fact that most black South Africans are symbolically alienated by the state's linguistic practices which promote an English-speaking, self-styled universalist, pan-South African identity, they are also instrumentally and materially marginalised by the increasing dominance of the English language in public life. For example, a survey by PANSALB[1] (MarkData and PANSALB, 2000) revealed that 47% of all South Africans were unable to access services in their own first languages. For African language speakers, this figure was even greater. For example, for speakers of isiNdebele, in terms of speakers the smallest official language, the figure rose to 75%. A government which rules in a language poorly understood by the majority of its population is, by any measure, clearly not meeting their (linguistic) needs and interests. State-endorsed language practices and ideologies alone are not, of course, the sole reason for the failure to adequately address the problem of severe levels of marginalisation from the national system in South Africa. They are merely symptomatic of a wider political and economic system which cements the institutionalisation of an elitist ruling structure which, by the innate logic of the conditions that nourish and sustain it, is incapable of satisfactorily addressing the problem of social inequality (and hence, social justice) and political marginalisation. A model of national integration for South Africa which seeks to include all of the country's citizens as equal and active members of the national community must address, above all else, the problems of socio-economic marginalisation described above.

## 6.3 Authoritarianism, Liberalism and Language Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa

It has been argued that the ultimate root of the present crisis of political and social marginalisation in South Africa (and, indeed, African states more generally) does not originate in the ideological tendencies of the ruling ANC elite, which themselves are largely symptomatic, but from the fundamentally authoritarian nature of the state that was inherited from the colonial period.

> [The] colonial experience [...] enables us to speak of an African state as a general type, for despite many differences in form, such states have been founded on a common colonial

[1] Pan South African Language Board.

> inheritance which has stamped contemporary state forms with fundamentally similar structural continuities. From the proliferation of petty authoritarianism by state officials in search of a fast buck to the genocidal practices of the central state, from the systematic control of women [...] from the regular oppression of ethnic minorities and state xenophobia to the plunder of treasuries by greedy and corrupt politicians, the African state is at the core of the crisis which the continent's people have had to endure since the historical period when its populations were enslaved en masse by merchant capitalists both domestic and foreign bent on 'primitive accumulation'. It is also at the core of the failure of the 'top down' nation-building project which dominated the immediate post-colonial 'developmentalist' period and of the alienation of ethnic and religious minorities from that project. (Neocosmos, 2004:209–10)

Although many post-colonial states such as South Africa have appropriated the rhetoric and many of the symbols and tokens of liberal democracy, the systematic failure to effectively address the marginalisation of the majority of their populations and thereby legitimise their rule has necessarily meant the entrenchment of authoritarian forms of government (Mamdani, 1996; Von Lieres, 2005:22). Authoritarianism may occur by degrees and be more or less overt. The new, liberal South African state obviously represents a progression of sorts towards popular, democratic rule. However, at the same time, it is also not making meaningful strides towards the full, or even marginally satisfactory, realisation of emancipatory democracy in South Africa. Wamba-dia-Wamba's (1994:250) observation that in Africa 'politics is the state and the state is politics' highlights the restricted way in which the state determines, to its own advantage, the consensually legitimate terrain of political debate and activity. Of central relevance here is the way in which liberalism conceptualises and attempts to naturalise the legitimacy of that conception of the political character of society or, as it is commonly known, civil society (Gibbon, 1996). Neocosmos (2004:215) draws attention to the way in which, for liberalism, civil society only exists 'under conditions of mutual recognition between it and the state'. That is to say it is the state which recognises the legitimacy of particular political groupings or organisations within society. Civil society therefore becomes officialised and ideologically moulded through its formal recognition by the state. In order to be recognised and legitimised in state discourse, political organisations are forced to compete for inclusion into the state domain of politics, something which necessarily requires their broad conformity to the state's fundamental ideological tendencies. The state is consequently left free to implicitly legitimise itself by, firstly, selecting which organisations to recognise and, secondly, forcing them to conform to the ideological and operational requirements of the 'liberal democratic' system. The effect of this is to depoliticise civil society since any dissenting voices which contest the basic character of the liberal state are placed outside of the realm of legitimate debate. Organisations within the state-delimited civil society are incapable of opposing the underlying nature of the state. The state is therefore in a position to style itself as apolitical, as some kind of objective guardian of the supposed 'liberal democratic' consensus. The consequence of these prevailing political conditions is that meaningful emancipatory political and social measures are not effectively implemented since

> frankly political questions regarding the social entitlements and needs of various groups which may touch on the transformation of this order, become subsumed and hidden under issues of technical expertise, claims for greater access to state resources, and the deployment of state largesse within a discourse of state 'delivery'. In neo-liberal thinking in Africa, even power is to be apparently 'delivered' through so-called empowerment projects funded by (Western or state) donors and enacted by NGOs, in which people are taught about rights they can rarely access and which therefore remain meaningless to them. (Neocosmos, 2004:217)

The manner in which the post-apartheid state has had a paralysing effect upon civil society, insofar as the promotion of social development and transformation is concerned, can be illustrated by the case of the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB). Part of the reason why PANSALB has had so little success in institutionalising genuinely transformative multilingual practices can be explained by the highly limited mandate it was given by the 1996 South African constitution and by subsequent amendments to it in 1999 (Marivate, 2000:131). Section 6(5) of the 1996 South African constitution defined the mission of PANSALB thus:

> A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must: (a) promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of (i) all official languages; (ii) the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and (iii) Sign language; and (b) promote and ensure respect for (i) all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and (ii) Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

There is clearly no mandate here, implicit or explicit, for PANSALB to pursue policies that would effectively contribute to the realisation of genuine social transformation through the introduction of societal multilingualism. The use of nebulous terms such as 'promote' and 'create conditions for the development and use' effectively serve as escape clauses, allowing the state to avoid implementing policies which would promote meaningful and lasting social improvement. It is useless decrying PANSALB for being toothless and failing to successfully implement or 'deliver', to use the governmental buzz word, multilingual practices since its hands are tied by the state. The level of government funding received by PANSALB is, comparatively, wholly inadequate given the sociolinguistic problems that exist in South Africa. For example, in 2004, language planning bodies received only 6.84% of the Department of Arts and Culture's total budget, of which PANSALB itself received only around one third (Ad Hoc Committee on Arts and Culture, 2004). In comparison, a programme to promote 'Arts and Culture in Society' received over 19% of the budget and the department's 'Heritage Programme' designed to 'ensure transformation of the heritage landscape as a vehicle for nation-building and social cohesion, through the implementation of heritage policies and legislation' received an enormous 52% of the departmental budget. Since 2004, there still seems to have been no significant increase in expenditure on PANSALB. For example, it has been stated that 'the R39 million that PANSALB has been allocated for the 2006/2007 financial year is simply spread too thin [...] to institute meaningful change' (*Mail and Guardian,* 22/11/2006). The same article goes on to note that this inadequate funding has meant that PANSALB has had difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled staff despite the fact that 'language experts abound in the country'. Other consequent

problems include a long-malfunctioning website and the 'fizzling out' of a campaign to promote awareness of language rights. Budgetary expenditure is usually a good guide to the priorities of a governing regime. The figures cited above constitute incontestable evidence that state-facilitated social transformation through linguistic transformation is not an urgent priority of the present South African government. For more on the inadequate financing of PANSALB, see Heugh (2003b:131–132).

Aside from funding issues, PANSALB's powers are further restricted by the fact that the government is not obliged to act upon its findings, advice or reports. Instead, it is merely required to 'consider' them (Marivate, 2000:137). As far as contributing to emancipatory nation-building is concerned, the rather non-committal nature of its mandate and the restrictions placed upon it by the state render PANSALB effectively impotent. Instead of making a significant contribution to the linguistic democratisation of the country, PANSALB's resources are frequently taken up dealing with ethnocentric claims to inclusion into, and recognition by, the liberal state (Alexander, 2000:173; Perry, 2003:160; see Section 6.5 below) or by lexicography units whose activities consist mainly of translating specialist books into the various official languages and publishing dictionaries in indigenous languages, something which is no doubt commendable but which in reality does very little to bring about meaningful emancipatory sociolinguistic transformation. PANSALB has also devoted valuable time and resources to what are, from a societal development point of view at least, rather less pressing exercises, such as the study commissioned to determine whether Sepedi was a dialect of Sesotho sa Leboa, or not (Brand, 2006:72).

My own impression of PANSALB, after visiting their headquarters in downtown Pretoria on several occasions, including a meeting with the head of the Status Language Planning Division, was that of an organisation whose morale was bordering on the despondent, such was the frustration at not being given the adequate means with which to carry out any genuinely effective initiatives and the lack of commitment to multilingualism from the higher echelons of government. Of course, lack of adequate government funding alone does not explain the failure of PANSALB to realise its stated aims of language policy development – these include ensuring the use of at least two official languages in official domains, supporting the elimination of the 'lack of equity' with respect to indigenous languages, supporting the 'progressive elimination of language barriers to participation in political cultural, social and economic life and ensuring 'access to services, resources, programmes, information and knowledge for all South Africans' (PANSALB, 2001:4). Any level of funding cannot get round the more fundamental theoretical problem that faces language planning bodies, namely that initiating counter-evolutionary sociolinguistic change through language planning activities is generally a highly unlikely prospect. While the figures on government expenditure on language planning bodies are strongly indicative of the ANC's low prioritisation and rather unconcerned attitude towards its official policy of multilingualism, this alone is an inadequate explanation of the failure to effectively implement that policy.

Although the ANC government, even in the absence of genuine ideological commitment, promotes the dubious notion that the 'delivery' of multilingualism is something achievable simply through competent, state-led management practices

and the employment of expert knowledge, the transformative political implications of the wholesale linguistic democratisation/emancipation of South African society preclude the actual realisation of that delivery. The elitist state is therefore logically compelled to resist challenges to the hegemonic domination of English. From this, it is apparent that a model of societal development which aims for the equal incorporation of the whole of the South African population into the national system must be one not just of opposition to the ideology and practices of the ruling ANC government but also one of opposition to the fundamental character of the present state which, in a society as deeply unequal as South Africa, cannot resist maintaining its rule without resource to authoritarian and exclusionary measures.

## 6.4 Symbolic vs. Instrumental Attachments to the National System

It is manifest that the South African state with its present liberal, capitalist orientation predominantly serves the political and socio-economic interests of a relatively small, though expanding, domestic middle-class elite. Given that material and financial resources are finite, one can see that the interests of the dominant elite and the society at large are clearly in conflict with each other. For some to have more, others must have less. The elite who run the state have no motivation in spending resources on improving socio-economic conditions and building instrumental attachments to the state for the majority of the population beyond a level which ensures the stability of the contemporary political environment which sustains its rule. In order to compensate for this disinclination or inability to increase popular, i.e. beyond the middle-class, levels of instrumental attachment to the national system, what one might call the 'material stuff' of nation-building, the South African state has eagerly embarked upon a ploy of symbolic promotion of South African nationhood. The state has sought to generate much fervour around elements such as the new, ubiquitous, post-apartheid national flag, national sporting teams (see Section 5.4) and the new national anthem, a hybrid medley of the black African hymn *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (God Bless Africa) and the white apartheid-era national anthem *Die Stem van Suid Afrika/The Call of South Africa*, which is frequently played on SABC television channels with an accompanying film of it being sung by multiracial groups of attractive, apparently joyful young people against the backdrop of famous South African scenery and landmarks. While the importance of fostering the symbolic dimension of national identity should not be denied or underestimated (see Section 2.4), to divert attention and resources away from efforts aimed at the more urgent need to create and consolidate the material foundations of the national community is to neglect one of the duties that the government has committed itself to, namely social development and regeneration. As Kelman notes:

> I am afraid that a concentration by central authorities on the direct manipulation of sentimental attachments may serve as a substitute for the work they should be doing at the

> instrumental level and as a cover for failures to create adequate socioeconomic institutions and to provide meaningful roles for all segments of society. (Kelman, 1972:201)

Such an approach may be seen as a kind of attempted quick-fix approach to nation-building, as it seeks to skirt the highly complex, resource- and time-consuming issues of societal regeneration, development and material integration which require long-term commitment and engagement. Furthermore, it is also highly doubtful that such excessive preoccupation with the manipulation of national symbols is actually an effective method of promoting a national identity. It is no coincidence that, in South Africa and more generally in Africa, symbols of national identity are most enthusiastically embraced by the ideologically conditioned middle-classes who also have a strong instrumental attachment to the liberal capitalist state. The state's manipulation of sentimental attachments amongst the most marginalised sections of society does not bring about their positive emancipation from poverty and social alienation by ensuring their integration into the national system. If effective, such manipulation only ensures their continued docile acquiescence to the maintenance of present authoritarian political and socio-economic forms. A genuinely emancipatory model of national integration needs to take inspiration from sentiments such as those of Wamba-dia-Wamba (1994:257) when he writes that 'instead of society serving the state, the empowered society should make the state serve it'. These sentiments echo those of Marx (1973:326) who argued that real democratisation requires 'converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it'. The central concern of democratic nation-building, then, must be the creation of instrumental attachments to the state through the provision of meaningful and rewarding roles in society and its economic system for all South Africans regardless of origin.

The view taken here is that a common, sentimental sense of national identity should ideally be regarded as a desirable by-product of initiatives which actively promote social equality and allow for all citizens to participate in the national system. The case of the Afrikaners (see Chapter 5) would seem to confirm Kelman's (1972:202) suspicion that 'direct efforts to create national identity may bring [...] ethnic subgroup identities to the fore and lead to a structuring of the situation in competitive terms, in which the more primordial attachments are more likely to prevail'. Connor (1994b:208) expresses a similar view when highlighting the tendency of state nationalisms to underestimate the 'emotional power' of older, sub-state nationalisms. It is of great importance that a state identity is not promoted directly and thereby perceived as being in competition with other sub-state identities. The social development strategy proposed in this chapter should therefore only be interpreted as a nation-building strategy in an indirect, almost incidental, sense (Weinstock, 2004:53). The fundamental goal of the policy is not the identity itself but the realisation of desirable social and economic conditions, which may, incidentally, facilitate the development of a common national identity. Geldenhuys' (2000:2) remark that 'new political loyalties cannot be easily forced upon people from above' is particularly relevant here. Elsewhere, Neocosmos (2004:226) notes that: 'Only society can democratise the state, not the other way round, at most all the state can do is

to provide some of the conditions for society to democratise itself'. This would seem to suggest that emancipatory, democratic nation-building must therefore find its motivational impetus in a political movement emanating from popular society although this does not deny that such a movement will, though, inevitably require the input of ideologically sympathetic technical expertise, particularly in connection with complex, often counter-intuitive matters such as language policy and planning. The essential problem here, as far as language policy and planning is concerned, is whether any national language policy, given that it will inevitably be formulated and implemented by language experts and/or organs/agents of the state, can avoid being top-down in character. It is all very well advocating a bottom-up approach to the formulation of a language policy for national integration but, at the present time, the fact is that co-ordinated agitation for a change in national language policy almost exclusively takes place outside of the lower levels of society. Until an ideology consistent with the linguistic empowerment of all South African citizens actually penetrates into the lowest socio-economic levels of society, it is difficult to conceive of how authoritative language planning measures at the national level can be experienced as anything other than top-down efforts at social engineering. How might this situation be changed so that the impetus for empowering, inclusive language planning measures comes from popular society? This is undoubtedly a highly complex question. The next section considers one possible approach to this problem which has been widely advocated as a means to linguistic democratisation and empowerment, namely language activism.

## 6.5 Language Activism: A Route to Linguistic Democratisation?

The importance of language activism for the achievement and maintenance of democracy in competitive multilingual contexts is something which has been widely asserted (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Kontra et al., 1999). For example, Tollefson (1991:211) notes that 'a commitment to democracy requires a commitment to the struggle for language rights.' The belief that language activism represents a means of initiating democratic linguistic change also appears to be prevalent in the South African context. T. Du Plessis (2004:169), for instance, argues that 'Language activism [...] forms an important element in the process of democratising a multilingual society.'

For the sake of conceptual clarity and understanding, it is important first of all to reflect upon what is meant by language activism and the various forms that it may take. Following Martel (1999:47–48), T. Du Plessis (2004:169–70) defines activism as a 'rights-orientated process whereby influence can be exercised so that socio-political practices and structures can change'. This definition seems a reasonable one, although one could argue that language activism need not necessarily be explicitly concerned with, or couched in the language of, rights. For example, some language activism may simply be concerned with providing information and promoting arguments with the aim of persuading people to come to a certain viewpoint

regarding a particular linguistic matter – what may be termed 'language attitude planning' (Verhoef, 1998).

A number of different elements or, rather, instruments of language activism can be identified. The first of these may be termed *research.* This refers to academics and other educators working in the field of language policy and planning whose role it supposedly is to develop a scientifically rigorous understanding of linguistic trends and processes in society. This is not to say that researchers are often not also politically engaged or motivated. Indeed, the findings of their research may support the advocacy of a particular political position. Obviously, though, it is desirable that political positions are adopted on the basis of honest research findings rather than dishonest research being pursued to fit with pre-determined political values. An important function of academic research, as far as language activism is concerned, can be to provide a theoretically and factually rigorous, coherent supporting structure which can enable the other elements of language activism to function more successfully. Another important facet of academics' work can also be to undertake research which combats popular and politically influential myths or false preconceptions about language which contribute towards the perpetuation of undesirable sociolinguistic conditions. In the South African case, for example, such research has shown the fallacy of the widespread belief that first-language (or 'mother-tongue' as it often problematically referred to) education for black students is unsuitable and that academic and socio-economic advancement can only be made by studying through the medium of English (Heugh, 2003a; Webb, 2004a). This research also implicitly lends support to the argument for maintaining Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at all levels of education. Very little academic sociolinguistic research undertaken recently in South Africa would seem to support or advocate an ANC-style, top-down, reductionist, English-mainly model of language-in-nation-building (for an exception see Harnischfeger, 2003).

A second instrument of language activism may take the form of *lobby* or *pressure groups*. These bodies can provide a forum and an outlet for the articulation of opinions, complaints or demands surrounding linguistic matters through which political pressure can then, theoretically at least, be applied to the relevant governmental organisations. These pressure groups may take the form of opposition political parties or they may be just so-called 'cultural organisations', such as the FAK in South Africa (see Section 5.3), which do not necessarily seek active participation in the representative political system but nevertheless implicitly promote a particular cultural group and, therefore, also an often unavoidably political vision of society. As for lobby groups, these can play an important role in raising public awareness of linguistic matters. Also significant in this regard is a closely-related third instrument of language activism, namely the *media*, particularly the broadcast, electronic and printed varieties. These media have an unrivalled capacity to reach vast, nationwide or even global audiences. The great potential for such media to highlight and inform about linguistic matters and, in doing so, influence opinion, is obvious.

These first three instruments of language activism briefly discussed here – *research, lobby/pressure groups* and the *media* – can be viewed as elements aimed at *opinion-forming* and *imparting knowledge* around questions of language. The

fourth and probably most powerful form of language activism involves recourse to legal action, namely *litigation.* The bringing of lawsuits against public or private organisations which flout constitutional and other legal stipulations on language use can be an effective way of challenging and potentially changing undesirable linguistic practices. The fifth and most extreme form of language activism is *violence.* In cases where individuals or groups do not have recourse to legal means in order to effectively challenge the legality of certain linguistic practices and where other forms of language activism prove unsuccessful, desperation may lead them to resort to violence as a means of inducing political change. Many countries, including South Africa, have a history of violence over linguistic matters. Other examples include Sri Lanka, Belgium and Spain. However, as far as national integration and the fostering of a sense of solidarity and community are concerned, it would seem preferable that this final form of language activism be avoided.

The first comment to make about the state of language activism in South Africa is that it is at a relatively undeveloped stage. T.Du Plessis (2004:170), for example, notes that language activism in South Africa is still in its infancy. This is certainly a valid observation when one compares South Africa as a whole with a country such as Canada which has a long tradition of language rights activism. For example, in the period 1994–2001, only eight lawsuits were brought in South Africa concerning language rights. In Canada, fifteen such litigations were made in the single year 1999–2000 (T. Du Plessis, 2004:171). However, the most important observation to make about language activism in South Africa is that it is unevenly pursued and generally ethnocentrically orientated. It was discussed earlier (see Section 5.3) how language activism in South Africa is disproportionately prevalent amongst white Afrikaans speakers and how their language activism has a strongly ethnocentric or Afrikaner-centric flavour to it. Although there have been commendable attempts by Afrikaans speakers, but mainly in academic works with limited readership, to link the Afrikaans issue to the wider issue of the 'national language question' (Giliomee and Schlemmer, 2001), coverage of language issues from within the Afrikaans press, for example, is often characterised by a parochial Afrikaner-centrism.

Currently in South Africa, litigations, complaints and petitions regarding language are usually made on behalf of a particular ethnolinguistic community and are aimed at ensuring rights solely for that group. These tendencies towards ethnocentric language activism are also strongly apparent in much of the non-Afrikaans activism in South Africa. A good example is that of the Northern Ndebele or SiNdebele language. Under the new South African constitution SiNdebele was not accorded official status, unlike Southern Ndebele or isiNdebele as it is officially known, which was included as one of the eleven official languages. A consequence of this has been that the Northern *Ama*Ndebele National Organisation has persistently lobbied (so far unsuccessfully) parliament and PANSALB with the aim of achieving official status for the SiNdebele language (Heugh, 2003b:16; Stroud and Heugh, 2003:5). Other examples include the Northern Sotho National Language Body which has been agitating to have the name of the official language known as Sepedi changed to Northern Sotho in the English version of the South African constitution on the grounds that the term Sepedi includes

only speakers of a particular variety of Northern Sotho.[2] To a large extent, the ethnocentric nature of such language activism can be seen as a consequence of the nature of the South African constitution which has largely maintained the ethnolinguistic classifications of the apartheid era. In naming, somewhat arbitrarily, nine African languages as official languages alongside English and Afrikaans, the constitution has the effect of implicitly ascribing and valorising nine concomitant African ethnolinguistic identities that do not necessarily resonate with African language speakers' subjective experience and perception of their own identities. However, in order to claim and lobby on behalf of their linguistic rights, individuals and groups are forced to adopt one of these ascribed identities. Speakers of varieties excluded by the constitution are therefore left to feel excluded and the main effort of their language activism becomes focused upon agitating for the official recognition of their particular variety. Herein lies the potential for divisive identities to be generated and become polarised around different named linguistic varieties, as was previously *not* the case for much of the black African population. Pillay's (2005:72) observation that 'liberalism, despite claims to the contrary, cannot entertain claims to difference which are outside the differences authorised' is particularly relevant in connection with this issue. The linguistic human rights paradigm (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000), which may be viewed as part of a broader human rights paradigm and whose influence can be clearly seen in the language provisions of the post-apartheid South African constitution, enshrines a one-to-one relationship between identities and named standardised linguistic varieties. This is fundamentally at odds with inclusive national integration since it again places the emphasis on difference rather than commonality and, in doing so, heightens the potential for language conflict.

> Arbitrary and limiting conceptions of language are [...] leading to an enforcement of cultural identities that do not reflect the perceptions of local speakers, and a delimitation of linguistic identities that jar with constructs of language entertained by the community. [...] One consequence of this is the production of division and conflict both within and between the designated linguistic groups. This situation brings to mind Alexandra Jaffe's claim that "forms of language activism that reproduce a dominant language ideology also reproduce the structures of domination" (1999:28). [...] The notion of language rights endorses an ethno-linguistic stereotyping in the form of monolingual and uniform identities. It forces groups of speakers to work actively to differentiate themselves from others, by claiming unique linkages of language and identity so as to gain political leverage in the competition for scarce resources. (Stroud and Heugh, 2003:7)

As long as language activism remains ethnocentric in its motivation it is almost inevitable that language questions will continue to be experienced as issues of interethnic competition and conflict. The fracturing of language activism activities along ethnic lines actually has the effect of strengthening the prevailing linguistic ideology of the ruling elite. Instead of concentrating their resources into a harmonious, ideologically unified, mutually beneficial endeavour, language activists are forced into competition with each other in an effort to claim a slice of the political cake for their respective, constitutionally-ascribed ethnolinguistic groups. Consequently,

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[2] http://www.sabcnews.com/south_africa/general/0,2172,123485,00.html

their potential collective strength to challenge the undesirable linguistic *status quo* remains unrealised. The current political system also has the effect of trapping language activism into an invidious state of ineffectiveness. It encourages or, rather, forces language activism to become fractured along ethnic lines but as soon as any demands are actually made on behalf of a particular group they are frequently dismissed by mainstream (i.e. ANC) discourse as being particularistic, divisive and against the 'national interest' or, to be more precise, against the ANC's own hegemonic interpretation of what constitutes the national interest.

In a society as diverse and unequal as South Africa, it is difficult to conceive of how ethnocentric language activism might contribute towards a reduction in ethnolinguistic conflict, which is a condition *sine qua non* for inclusive national integration. For language activism to even hope to challenge the dominance of the elitist, exclusive model of nation-building presently being pursued by the ANC government, it must seek to serve an alternatively conceptualised, viable 'national interest'. At the ideological level, this would seem to require that the interests of the wider South African nation 'to be' are made the focus of concern and are placed above those of individual ethnolinguistic groups. However, this highly idealistic approach would seem to be undermined by significant practical constraints. One is forced to ask the question of just how realistic a proposition this reconceptualisation of, for example, Afrikaans, Xhosa or Zulu language activism as 'South African' language activism is at the level of popular acceptance. It would seem entirely fanciful to expect the average person (or social groups in general) to show equal concern for the status and use of all linguistic varieties as she/he would for her/his native language(s). To the extent that this is true, a certain degree of ethnocentric motivation in language activism is probably unavoidable.

A model of national integration which seeks to counter the hegemonic dominance of the English language in South Africa obviously ideally requires that speakers of all marginalised languages work together in mutually reinforcing, collective self-interest. It has been argued that an alliance of marginalised language speakers is imperative in this regard and that Afrikaans speakers, with their historical experience of fighting (largely successfully) against English language hegemony, have the opportunity to play a leading role in a collective movement which seeks to redress the linguistic inequity which characterises present-day South African society. As Alexander notes:

> Afrikaans can play a key role in establishing democracy in South Africa if it shares its assets and privileges with the other native languages [...] Afrikaans speakers must step into partnership with other African language speakers. Not because the speakers of Afrikaans, or the language itself, are too weak, but because this is the only way to avoid a new ethnic-based language struggle. The new South Africa cannot afford to consciously promote division. Language policy can divide or it can reconcile and integrate. Paradoxically, history offers Afrikaans speakers the opportunity [...] to strengthen and support unity in the diversity of South African society. (Alexander, 2001a:9–11)

One writer sees in the history of the Afrikaners the great motivating reason for speakers of African languages to drop their infatuation with English and make their own native tongues the main medium of their public, as well as private, life.

> If the Afrikaners [...] needed a new language that could make the Western influence on the one hand and their African experience, on the other, intelligible, why would Africans think that they could contain the same experience in the languages of Europe alone, without domesticating that thought in African languages? (Omotoso, 1994:114)

It has also been suggested that the development of Afrikaans from a highly stigmatised, lowly 'kitchen vernacular' to that of a standardised language of science, technology and government may serve as an exemplar for the development of, and acquisition of higher domains by, the currently marginalised African languages (Schlemmer and Giliomee, 2001:5). To be sure, there is some value in this assertion. The development of Afrikaans shows clearly that any stigmatised language can, in theory, potentially serve as the basis for a fully developed, literate standard language and be equipped with an appropriate terminology for use in all linguistic domains. However, as far as nation-building is concerned, the question that remains to be answered is whether any such development of the African languages could be achieved without a vigorous accompanying ethnonationalist movement similar to that which drove the development of Afrikaans. Some degree of caution and historical situatedness would therefore seem to be advisable when seeking to draw inspiration for the post-apartheid national integration project from the social processes which facilitated the development of Afrikaans. One would do well to consider whether a highly emotional, virulently xenophobic movement such as that which accompanied the rise of Afrikaans does not fall some way short of serving as the ideal model of linguistic development for the marginalised languages of South Africa.

The overriding concern of liberal theory, which has had such influence on much contemporary thinking on language policy issues, with, yet simultaneous failure to satisfactorily resolve, situations of inter-ethnic conflict and competition has the effect of deflecting attention from the deep problems of class-based social inequalities. As seen in Section 3.7, theories advanced by liberal culturalist authors justify the distribution of rights to minority ethnic and national groups on the basis that they can counter the cultural deprivation experienced by those who do not have full access to the range of cultural options enjoyed by members of majority groups (Carens, 2000; Kymlicka, 1995; May, 2001). Access to a full societal culture is held to provide a meaningful context of choice from which to pursue the 'good life' (see Section 3.7). However, the existence of inter-ethnic equality, typically expressed in the language of rights, does not remove all sources of social inequality since questions of socio-economic deprivation and marginalisation remain unaddressed. By prioritising ethnic groups ahead of socio-economic groups, liberal culturalist theory is disinclined and, in fact, unable to theorise adequately upon questions concerning the promotion of socio-economic justice and equality. While the issue of cultural deprivation is rightly taken seriously, to focus on *ethno*cultural life as the sole context of such deprivation is to utterly overlook the cultural deprivations suffered by the poorest members of society, irrespective of their ethnic loyalties.

> [T]he groups that are most systematically vulnerable to problems of cultural deprivation are not those characterized by their position in an interethnic struggle, but rather those who are set apart by the terms of the relation to an advanced capitalist economy. Those who are most vulnerable to the ills of cultural deprivation are the persistently poor. [...] The

> poor of every nationality lead lives of great social estrangement. The poor are cut off from the main social institutions of their cultures – not just political parties and trade unions, but even such everyday institutions as banks, hospitals, department stores and museums. Class subordination brings with it a sense of low self-worth and diminished self-esteem that hampers the life-chances of the poor, even in situations where their material situation improves. (Walker, 1999:157)

It should not be forgotten that some of the most vocal advocates of ethnically-based minority rights tend to be drawn from the middle-class elites of ethnic groups. These elites are often well integrated into mainstream society and do not tend to suffer greatly from a lack of access to resources and cultural goods, often having far greater access than the poorer members of the majority ethnic group (Blommaert, 2001:137) In South Africa, for example, the current ability of middle-class Afrikaners to gain access to cultural goods does not differ hugely from that of middle-class English speakers, despite the *de facto* government policy which greatly favours English. Are the middle classes of ethnolinguistic minorities really to be deemed more deserving of governmental concern and supportive legislation than the poor and marginalised members of majority ethnolinguistic groups? The liberal concern with ensuring ethnic harmony over genuine social equality would seem to suggest so. However, such a position is incompatible with a model of national integration which has the emancipation, on equal terms, of the whole of South African society as its motivating value-assumption. After all, it is the poor of all language communities who suffer cultural deprivation most severely. None of this is to deny that patterns of socio-economic inequality may well coincide, to a greater or lesser degree, with ethnolinguistic boundaries. Of course, certain ethnic groups inevitably fair better than others. However, in a society as unequal as South Africa an excessive concentration on ethnic politics cannot hope to resolve the national question to the benefit of the majority of the country's citizens. A system that encourages the prioritisation of the ethnic group as the unit of greatest socio-political concern will necessarily lend a bourgeois quality to language activism since it will be mainly conducted by middle-class ethnolinguistic elites who, being already comparatively well-integrated into the wider political system at an instrumental level, fight a mainly symbolic battle for recognition which does not address the cultural deprivation experienced by the poor of any ethnolinguistic group. It is increasingly evident that a rights-orientated (in a liberal understanding of the term) language activism is not especially useful or productive in underdeveloped and highly unequal societies such as South Africa. Empirical observation would suggest that the existence of a vibrant language rights culture presupposes a reasonably high level of socio-economic development. It is no coincidence that countries such as Canada, Belgium, Spain and certain other member states of the EU, all of which have a relatively high level of socio-economic development and large middle classes, are amongst the countries with the most highly developed and institutionalised language rights cultures. Language rights are only of any use when citizens have the resources at their disposal to claim them and insist upon their implementation. When citizens do not have such resources available to them, any rights that they may possess become merely decorative and so remain essentially meaningless. For a country like South Africa, then, the contemporary

concentration on what are essentially immaterial language rights is really a case of getting ahead of oneself. Before an effective language rights culture can even hope to become institutionalised the requisite socio-economic conditions for its existence must be realised and guaranteed.

## 6.6 Language Planning as a Tool of Societal Development?

It should be clear by now that linguistic democratisation is a necessary condition for wider societal democratisation. In the South African case, the African languages spoken in the country continue to remain a largely untapped resource as far as contributing to societal development is concerned. How, though, is the increasing use of the African languages in public life linked to the creation of greater instrumental attachments (from which can develop additional symbolic attachments) to the South African state amongst the oppressed and marginalised majority of its citizens? Quite simply, an individual is far more likely to be able to integrate into a system which operates in a language she or he understands well. This is most obvious with regards to the issue of education. The educational advantages of mother-tongue or first-language instruction are well documented and do not need to be re-stated here (Cummins, 2002; Heugh, 2002b; J. Lewis, 2004; see Section 4.5.1). First-language education has been described as South Africa's 'missing link' (*Beeld,* 23/05/2001) and, indeed, its importance for the reduction of inequality through the economic and social development of the majority of South African citizens cannot be underestimated.

> It is clearly important from the point of view of redistributing wealth and facilitating access to occupational opportunities that the use of African languages in all areas of work and life (training and skills development, work communication, contracts, public notification, and work related documentation such as conditions of employment) should be seriously considered. [...] Unless African languages are used far more comprehensively in the economic life of South Africa, and Africa in general, the majority of citizens will remain outside of the mainstream of economic life. (Webb and Sure, 2002:8)

The assertion that language planning has a central, transformative role to play in the revitalisation of the African languages, including Afrikaans, would seem to be more of an aspiration rather than a judgement formed on the basis of historical precedent. While socio-economic equality cannot hope to be achieved as long as economic life is left to the mercy of capitalist market forces, the same is true of linguistic equality, so the argument goes, the implication being that countering the elitist tendencies of the 'free-market' language regime must be a vital component of a wider initiative aimed at bringing about social transformation to the benefit of the majority. And certainly, if the hegemony of the English language regime is to be challenged effectively in South Africa, it is essential that the African languages acquire market value which will empower their speakers and allow them to gain 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1991). The Afrikaner poet and essayist, N.P. Van Wyk Louw, writing in the 1950s, famously remarked that the successful development of Afrikaans into a fully-fledged state language represented the 'socialism of the poor Afrikaner' (Van

Wyk Louw, 1986:350). In a similar way, the African languages need to become a vehicle of the 'socialism of the poor South African' and Afrikaans must also be harnessed to empower the very many non-white speakers of the language. African languages need to provide access to jobs, educational opportunities and other avenues facilitative of social advancement. The need to endow the African languages with market value also emphatically does not mean that English be rejected and its national and global importance somehow artificially underplayed. It would be futile and counter-productive to attempt to do so. It ought to be emphasised that English is a resource which can be more efficiently and effectively exploited in the context of a complementary, not competitive, relationship with the other languages of South Africa. Again though, theoretical considerations place a considerable restraint on the credible advocacy of this line of thought as the basis for a genuinely effective language policy for national integration. For those committed to the cause of societal transformation and the reduction of socio-economic equality, the belief in the power of human agency to effect change in the social order is both attractive and potent. However, when applied to the matter of sociolinguistic change, attributions of agency must be made with great care (see Section 3.2). An approach which says that the African languages must be endowed with market value through language planning activities must also answer the much more pressing question of *how* this might happen.

In matters as complex as the South African national question, seeing the problems is far easier than seeing the solutions. The basic principles behind an alternative language policy for emancipatory national integration which have been set out so far in this chapter have assisted in identifying the problems and many of the causes of the problems which face those engaged in the field of language policy and planning. However, serious attention must also be given to the practical implementation of concrete measures in line with these principles. It is not evident *a priori* precisely what form such measures will take as they will necessarily be dependent on the particularity of the local South African context. Numerous measures have been, and doubtless will continue to be proposed as solutions, or part-solutions, to the national question. Perhaps the most notable and certainly one of the most controversial suggested solutions to have originated from within South Africa with regard to the difficult issue of how many languages should be used in public life has been the proposal to harmonise the Nguni and Sotho language clusters.

## 6.7 Harmonisation of the Nguni and Sotho Language Clusters: A Viable Alternative Approach to Nation-Building?

The Nguni and Sotho language clusters are both sub-groups belonging to the Bantu language family. Of the official languages of South Africa, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and SiSwati are Nguni varieties and Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho belong to the Sotho cluster. The idea of creating overarching Nguni and Sotho written standard varieties was first proposed as far back as the 1940s by Jacob Nhlapo (Nhlapo,

1944). More recently, the most notable advocate of this idea has been the prominent South African sociolinguist and language activist, Neville Alexander (Alexander, 1989; 1992; 2000). The idea has been advocated as an additive measure and not one designed to supplant the numerous standard African languages.

> The development of a written Standard Nguni and a Standard Sotho, as an initial phase of a very long-term process of 'uniformation', need not and will not lead to the disappearance of Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, SiSwati, Sepedi, Tswana and their dialects [...] Indeed, subject to the availability of resources, they will be encouraged in print in literature of all kinds. The main difference will be that in all formal situations, including the crucial area of education, the Standard Nguni or Standard Sotho forms will be promoted. It is to be expected that, over time, the spoken standard – used in formal or relatively formal situations – will begin to approximate the written standard. (Alexander, 1989:64)

The technical plausibility of this harmonisation proposal supposedly rests upon the fact that the different linguistic varieties spoken within each cluster are generally highly mutually intelligible. For example, with a little will and effort, speakers of isiXhosa and isiZulu are generally able to understand each other effectively, as are speakers of Sesotho and Setswana etc. (Heugh, 2000:25). There are consequently no obvious insurmountable linguistic barriers to the realisation of the proposal to create individual standard Nguni and Sotho languages. However, mainly for political reasons, reaction to this proposal has tended to range from the unenthusiastic to the downright hostile (Brown, 1992; Brand, 2006:72). Much of the negative reaction to the proposal has come from those who have falsely interpreted it as a subtractive measure. The fervent, but poorly conceptualised, preoccupation with linguistic diversity so evident in the 'human rights' and ecolinguistic approaches to language policy issues (see Section 3.6.4) reveal themselves as inherently hostile to any suggestion of planned future linguistic convergence. The irony here, of course, is that such advocates of diversity do not generally question the historical contingency and constructedness of the numerous standard languages already in existence whose maintenance they passionately defend, despite the fact that these languages were (and still are) themselves also sites of linguistic convergence. In South Africa, the desirability of harmonising the Nguni and Sotho language clusters has been questioned and rejected most vigorously by those with a vested interest in promoting or defending individual Nguni or Sotho languages and their associated identity communities. The fact that the *Ausbau* character of most of the present standardised Bantu languages in South Africa stems from the pernicious policies of the apartheid regime which were deliberately designed to prevent the emergence of a single, united identity-community is often curiously forgotten (see Section 4.4).

> The passion with which many scholars and some politicians defend the inherited standard written forms of the Bantu languages that were very deliberately *not* provided with the armies and the navies which, according to Weinreich's famous definition, mark the difference between a language and a dialect, remains one of the great paradoxes of the post-apartheid dispensation. (Alexander, 2004:118)

A lack of appreciation for the historical constructedness and contingency of social identities often pervades discussions of the South African situation. A good example of this comes from Kymlicka (1989:248), when he asks '[w]hy should the blacks be

viewed as a single people, when they in fact are members of different "nations", each with its own language and political traditions?' In opposition to this view, Pillay (2005:60) notes that the 'characterisation of Black South Africans as being made up of many "nations" will prompt queries from those who have shown that cultural, ethnic and linguistic communities were consciously fashioned by colonial powers into political identities'. Kymlicka's remark is symptomatic of the difficulty faced by proponents of liberal theories of group rights in trying to accommodate conceptions of social identities which depart from those which are formally legitimised in official state discourse. Capturing the subjective, dynamic nature of inhabited social identities is not possible within a liberal theory of group rights. However, by rejecting the identity-stereotyping inherent in the liberal approach, one can appreciate that social identities may become subject to contestation and negotiation. The harmonisation proposal recognises that there is nothing natural or immutable about the inherited, ascribed identities from the apartheid and colonial eras.

Harmonisation of the Nguni and Sotho clusters is clearly at odds with the interests of those ethnic entrepreneurs (see Section 5.3.2) seeking to profit from the ethnocentric, 'competition for inclusion' type of language (and other forms of culture) activism that is generated by the liberal nature of the current political dispensation in South Africa. What, though, can explain the widespread scholarly tendency to cling to the inherited standard languages of the apartheid era? A cynical interpretation might point to a defence of vested interests on the part of some academics. After all, many university departments and academic positions have been established to facilitate the study of, and the research into, individual Nguni and Sotho standard languages. On the other hand, one might also possibly interpret it as a deeply pragmatic position, as simply a decision to do one's best with the constitutional and other political cards one is dealt. To an extent, this position is understandable given the genuinely passionate desire of many to see some clear short-term progress with regards to the resolution of the profound language-related social problems that blight South African society. However, the increasingly frustrating experiences of so many working in the field of language policy and planning with regard to the lack of progress made since 1994 suggests that such as strategy has been, at best, minimally effective. To attempt to solve the national question in favour of the majority of citizens while uncritically obeying the prescriptions of the liberal, capitalist political order is a largely futile endeavour. There is a reluctance on the part of many to be seen to be overly critical of the ANC and the political system which nourishes its rule. Such criticism is frequently depicted as unpatriotic and bordering on the heretical given the central role the ANC played in the anti-apartheid liberation movement (Neocosmos, 2004:226).

At a purely theoretical level and assuming widespread acceptance of its desirability, the harmonisation proposal would, after all, seem to have some potentially attractive features in so far as advancing national integration is concerned. The role of standardised languages and the media that promote them (newspapers, books, television etc.) in creating impersonal identity communities has been well documented, most notably by Anderson (1983) with his notion of 'imagined communities' (see Section 2.5.1). Indeed, Alexander (1999:25) has explicitly acknowledged

the influence of Anderson's work on the development of his ideas concerning the harmonisation of the Nguni and Sotho language clusters. The development and use of two overarching standard African languages which together would be understood by the majority of South African citizens would clearly provide scope for greatly increased communicative effectiveness and efficiency throughout society. This, in turn, would be a significant step towards facilitating increased participation in the national economic and political system. One should bear in mind Kloss's (1967:42) remark that 'complete equality of status seems possible only in countries that have two or at most three languages. No country could conduct its affairs in four or more languages without becoming hopelessly muddled'. If standardised forms of Nguni and Sotho were to be adopted by the state and its related institutions alongside English and Afrikaans, a four-language regime could be founded. The other official languages, Xitsonga and Tshivenda, both Bantu languages but not mutually intelligible with each other or any of the Nguni or Sotho varieties, could be handled at the regional level since they are comparatively smaller and spoken mainly in quite localised areas in the north of South Africa. Now, for someone such as Kloss, even four languages is too high a number for effective government. However, compared to the present situation in which there are eleven official languages, having just four would be a considerable improvement in the prospects for effective and representative government. A reduction from eleven to four languages would also make economic sense as translation costs would be reduced and fewer versions of documents would need to be produced. This need not be read as an endorsement of the notion 'the fewer languages the better'. As the current trend towards English monolingualism at the state level demonstrates, a single-language regime in South Africa would also be ineffective and inefficient as far as the promotion of equal incorporation into the national system is concerned. The apartheid regime also demonstrated the undesirability and inequity of a two-language regime. Instead, one should preferably think in terms of what constitutes the *optimal* number of languages that a state should use in order to establish effective and accessible government. The necessity of establishing an optimal-language regime from a conflict-avoidance, integrative perspective stems from the fact that, as Pool (1996:160) notes:

> Apparently incompatible purposes are invoked as criteria for the choice of official languages, such as efficiency, fairness, diversity and liberty. Efficiency seems to require a single widely known official language, but this treats the native speakers of other languages unfairly. It also induces minorities to transmit (perhaps only) the official language to their children, eroding diversity. Protecting diversity apparently requires coercion (e.g. obligatory minority-language schooling), impeding liberty. New solutions, such as automatic translation, artificial languages or linguistic decentralization, involve costs, complications, and divergent interests, rendering them difficult to adopt or of doubtful efficacy. Governments tend to choose languages for their own and constituents' use incrementally and to consider these choices seriously, if ever, only after the problem of official languages has become a 'crisis'. (Pool, 1996:160)

Democratic aspirations are clearly at odds with any suggestion of standardised forms of Nguni and Sotho being foisted upon an unsuspecting and unwelcoming population by state decree. Alexander (2000) has argued that harmonisation should

ideally be seen as a slow, organic process which leads to the gradual emergence of separate Nguni and Sotho standardised varieties. A credible counter argument to this point is that the creation of additional standard languages will either simply relocate existing linguistically mediated inequalities or become a source of new ones. After all, some citizens will undoubtedly come to have a better, more empowering knowledge of these languages than others and it is inevitable that these differences will broadly correlate with socio-economic inequalities. Certainly, this accusation is difficult to refute since access to resources of linguistic empowerment is dependent on a wide range of other non-linguistic social factors. There would seem to be some irreducible degree of tension between the very clear need to have standardised languages and the desire to eradicate linguistically mediated social inequality. This fact is highlighted by Brand who notes that

> a unified standard – a single language – is the only way in which language forms within the same family can be treated as a unit for certain purposes. This 'received view' runs into problems in the educational domain. In initiatives to promote 'mother tongue education', it is often discovered that, say, 'isiXhosa speakers' have difficulty understanding 'standard isiXhosa'. Clearly, there is a need for practices of standardization that are pursued in full consciousness of the fact that standardization is, at least partly, a political business, and that it can be done in ways that either empower or disempower certain sections of the population. (Brand, 2006:73)

Linguistic inequality cannot, therefore, be addressed effectively in isolation from other sources of social inequality. Alexander (2000) is again at pains to stress that the advocacy of the harmonisation of the Nguni and Sotho clusters should not be confused with the delegitimisation and stigmatisation of any of the smaller standardised varieties (e.g. standard isiXhosa or standard Setswana etc.) or the spoken non-standard varieties which belong to each cluster. Indeed, as Stroud and Heugh (2003:11) note in the formulation of their 'post-liberal' model of 'linguistic citizenship', there need be no inherent contradiction between the teaching of standard languages and the use of informal, vernacular varieties for positive educational purposes. Instead, one is able to emphasise the possibility of a complementary relationship between standard and non-standard varieties. Use of non-standard varieties may have an important role to play in generating intimacy and solidarity between learners, in combating inherited feelings of linguistic insecurity and inadequacy and in providing an avenue of expression for marginalised identities. One mistake of the linguistic human rights (LHR) discourse is to believe that the route to linguistic equality is to insist that it can only be achieved through access to, and use of, standard languages. This is because the LHR discourse is, fundamentally, still ideologically sympathetic to the liberal state with its restricting conceptions of language and ethnolinguistic identity and, hence, it only deals in the currency of officialised, publicly authorised language practices. While the integrative importance of standard languages is not to be denied, one must not dismiss the potential of non-standard languages to contribute to the creation of a positive learning environment.

> The importance of informal and at times stigmatized local varieties in intimate contexts [. . . ] challenges the emphasis of LHR discourse on formally sanctioned and publicly recognized linguistic practices. Language or educational policy based within LHR paradigms, with

> their narrow conception of ethnolinguistic identity do not fit complex and ever shifting identities, and there is no sense in which facts such as these can be productively employed in educational contexts within the LHR paradigm. In other words, languages like Tsotsitaal[3] are not legitimised in the rights paradigm, their speakers are thus marginalized. (Stroud and Heugh, 2003:11–12)

Having considered some of the theoretical issues associated with the harmonisation proposal, attention must also be given to practical issues and requirements associated with the implementation of the proposal. Alexander (2000:174) suggests that the harmonisation process could be facilitated by the decision to label texts which, for instance, are mainly in Sesotho or Setswana but contain elements of other Sotho varieties as *Sotho* texts and to label texts which are in Zulu or Xhosa as *Nguni* texts. This seemingly highly simple measure would, however, seem to suffer from a major problem at the level of *acceptance* and this brings us to perhaps the most commonly heard criticism of the harmonisation proposal, namely that it is not consistent with the language attitudes of the South African people. Alexander has been the object of considerable criticism in this regard. For example, Sonntag (2003:90) has criticised Alexander's harmonisation proposal for being 'too idealistic and distant from the everyday experience of those whose cause he [Alexander] so fervently espouses'. Elsewhere, Barkhuizen writes that:

> [Language] planners have to take into account the attitudes of the people of South Africa. Unfortunately, what they think is not what Alexander wants them to think. He therefore feels that 'they have got to understand' both the history of the country's language situation and its plans for the future. Besides being patronising and potentially undemocratic, this task will be a very difficult one indeed. (Barkhuizen, 1997:94)

To an extent, Barkhuizen's is a curious criticism to level. Academics and activists, such as Alexander, are not servants of public opinion in the way that elected representatives (supposedly) are. Instead, their role is to contribute to opinion-forming through presentation of fact and argument. There has been no suggestion from Alexander that harmonisation be imposed undemocratically and unwillingly on the South African people. The challenge for advocates of the proposal is to change popular opinion by emphasising the possible benefits that would be derived from harmonisation. One can respect the right of others to hold a contrary opinion without revering the content of that opinion. The view that to seek to change popular opinion is patronising and undemocratic works effectively as an endorsement of the political *status quo.* Without changes in public opinion, legitimate political changes cannot readily occur. A vibrant civil society is one in which numerous and, indeed, potentially conflicting interests and viewpoints compete to gain favour with public opinion. To stigmatise any proposal which dares to challenge popular opinion as 'patronising' and 'undemocratic' is to provide fertile ground for the establishment of a depoliticised civil society which conforms ideologically to the state-determined

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[3] Tsotsitaal (or Flaaitaal as it also known) is a hybridised urban vernacular, containing elements of languages such as Zulu and Afrikaans, mainly spoken in and around Johannesburg (Makhuda, 2002).

'consensus' and which continues to be a major factor in the maintenance of the state's authoritarian governing practices.

However, Sonntag's criticism of the proposal is less easily deflected. Under current conditions, the harmonisation proposal does strike one as extremely idealistic and rigidly unyielding to any synchronic practical considerations. Admittedly, it would be fair to say that the language attitudes of much of the South African population are not consistent with genuinely inclusive democratic practices. To use Marxist terms, no doubt familiar to Alexander, one might well argue that very many South Africans are victims of 'false consciousness' (Holden, 1993:143) in that public opinion is undoubtedly moulded to a great extent by the ideological discourse emanating from the capitalist state and those sympathetic to it. The notion of 'false consciousness' is strongly reminiscent of the conception of hegemony most famously advanced by Gramsci (1971). May (2001:18) neatly summarises this understanding of hegemony:

> [S]o effective and widespread is the promotion and promulgation of a particular (dominant) point of view, that even those who may not initially share such a view come to accept it and *internalise* it as normative, as simply the commonsensical 'way of seeing things'. (May, 2001:18)

Such is the gumption which invariably accompanies dominant ideological discourse, any ideas which contain the imagination to challenge these received norms are frequently dismissed for being hopelessly idealistic and unrealistic and hence being of no synchronic practical application. This type of situation very much pertains in South Africa with regard to attitudes concerning the relative values of English and the African languages, at least certainly outside the field of specialists concerned with matters of language policy and planning. The general feeling seems to be that the situation of the African languages is so hopeless with regard to their gaining economic value and social prestige that one should simply submit to the unassailable dominance of an English-only/mainly dispensation and attempt to make the best of it.

In this sense, language planners and policy designers are in something of an intractable position. Given the grave difficulty of implementing language planning measures which successfully challenge prevailing linguistic norms, any proposals which attempt to do so can often justifiably be dismissed as unworkable or irrelevant.

Advocates of the harmonisation proposal must be aware that they are faced with an extremely onerous task with regards to realising first its acceptance and then its implementation is concerned. Respect for democratic practices requires that popular opinion be in accord with the harmonisation proposal before government resources can be allocated to its attempted implementation. Current indications would seem to provide advocates of harmonisation with little optimism in this regard and so consequently, the proposal continues to remain a non-starter. A more viable solution to the linguistic dimension of national integration policy may lie in a long-term strategy to promote a more balanced, symmetrical individual multilingualism.

## 6.8 Individual Multilingualism and Nation-Building

While the example of Switzerland shows that citizens need not necessarily share a common language(s) in order for them to share a common national identity (see Section 4.5), it is obviously far more favourable to the development of such an identity if citizens are able to communicate effectively with each other on an inter-personal and an inter-community basis (S.Wright, 2000a). It was discussed in Section 5.3.1 how most South Africans are in fact bi- or multilingual but despite this, there nevertheless remain significant barriers to communication between certain communities, most notably between African language speakers and speakers of Afrikaans and English. With reference to national integration, there are two main points of concern here. The first concerns the necessity to transfer the multilingual repertoires that high numbers of (particularly urban) African language speakers display on a daily basis in private and informal contexts into the public domain and civil society. For this to happen, the African languages 'must become what may be termed *social and economic mobilisers*, that is, they be vested with at least some of the material privileges and perquisites that are currently shared by only English and Afrikaans' (Kamwangamalu, 2004b:132). The second point concerns the strategy for overcoming the communicative barriers between African language speakers and speakers of English and Afrikaans. The most instinctive, 'common sense' reaction to this problem, mostly styled in the guise of economic pragmatism, is to advocate an asymmetrical solution whereby African language speakers learn English and, to a lesser extent, Afrikaans. The notion that members of the English- and Afrikaans-speaking communities might undertake systematic efforts to learn any of the African languages will, quite rightly given the prevailing socio-economic climate, likely be dismissed as a flight of idealistic fancy. However, let us consider the potential attractions of a situation of symmetrical multilingualism in South African society, that is, an ideal-type situation whereby every South African citizen had a useful knowledge of English, Afrikaans and one or more African language. A genuinely multilingual citizenry which had a multilingual repertoire broadly representative of the composite linguistic communities of the South African population at its disposal would signify considerable progress towards the achievement of the linguistic equality putatively aspired to in the country's constitution. It would also be a great facilitator of communication between citizens of diverse linguistic backgrounds. Communication between such citizens would not necessarily need to take place on the terms of the majority language speaker, as it invariably does at present. A reciprocal learning of languages would potentially allow for greater innovation and flexibility in inter-personal and inter-group linguistic practices. One could also hope expectantly that by learning the languages of other groups, and particularly languages of groups long styled as the 'Other', citizens may come to acquire some deeper sense of cultural understanding, appreciation and tolerance. Such a scenario would clearly provide more fertile ground for the emergence of sentiments of social unity and for the development of community relations, without which, democratic national integration will remain a faint prospect.

Now, the great obstacle that one faces in attempting to work towards the realisation of a situation even remotely approaching this highly idealistic scenario concerns the matter of motivation. Under present conditions there are very few factors motivating English and Afrikaans speakers to learn an African language. While intellectual and cultural curiosity may lead some individuals to learn particular foreign languages, these are generally not motivating factors at the societal level where instrumental and economic concerns have the greatest influence on patterns of foreign language learning (Ager, 2001:116–117; Dornyei, 1990; Gardner, 1985). In this regard, it would seem unrealistic to hope or plan for the type of individual multilingualism, described above, to become the social norm through some kind of 'civic virtue' taking hold amongst citizens. If English and Afrikaans speakers are, in significant numbers, ever going to learn African languages then knowledge of these languages must hold some form of instrumental attraction for them. Until the African languages are imbued with economic value, it is inevitable that knowledge of them within the English- and Afrikaans-speaking communities will remain very low. At this point, it is worth considering a point regarding the harmonisation proposal discussed in the previous section. It seems reasonable to imagine that native English and Afrikaans speakers in South Africa would potentially have greater instrumental motivation to learn a harmonised Nguni or Sotho standard variety than learning one of the sub-Nguni or sub-Sotho standard languages such as isiZulu or Sesotho. By learning a single harmonised Nguni or Sotho language one would, theoretically at least, be able to communicate effectively with speakers of all Nguni or Sotho varieties respectively, certainly more effectively than if one just learnt a single sub-variety. If this were to happen, one would still only need to learn one language but one's communicative potential would be considerably expanded. This, however, is not a realistic scenario in the short term, for several reasons. Firstly, as previously discussed, it would require widespread popular acceptance of the desirability of the harmonisation proposal itself, which currently is not the case. To a certain degree, the predominant attitudes towards the harmonisation proposal may be compared with the lack of enthusiasm shown by many speakers of non-standard European minority languages towards any proposed overarching standard varieties. Examples include the Occitan-speaking community in France which has long history of dispute and conflict regarding the claims of various varieties to act as *the* single Occitan standard variety (Ager, 1990:37–41; Bec, 1967).

The second reason for the present non-feasibility of the harmonisation proposal is that, under present socio-economic conditions, even if an individual were able to communicate with all African language speakers through the medium of an African language, this would still not constitute a significant economic advantage due to the extreme marginalisation of all African language varieties from the public and economic life.

Admittedly, the thoughts outlined here regarding the appeal of reciprocal patterns of individual multilingualism are speculative and may be difficult to give firm substance to at the present time. A more pragmatic, or one might say pessimistic, approach might resign itself, and, to a degree, understandably so, to the interminable dominance of English in South Africa's political and economic life. A preoccupation

with status planning for the African languages has been described as 'unhelpful' (Harnischfeger, 2003:30) for supposedly deflecting attention and resources away from the synchronic necessity of facilitating the acquisition of English amongst the most marginalised sections of society. However, the weight of scholarly research simply does not support a scenario in which full societal acquisition of English will occur without most citizens receiving a fair amount of their primary and secondary education through the medium of their mother-tongue. Even if one were committed to English becoming the sole national *lingua franca* of South Africa, experience shows that mother-tongue education is still necessary for the cognitive development of individual learners, something without which the acquisition of a foreign language such as English cannot occur effectively (see Section 4.5.1). It has been observed that a concentration on English-medium education to the detriment of mother-tongue education leads to the existence of widespread 'semilingualism' (Lewis, 2004:187), that is, a situation where people have an insufficient competence in any language.

English monolingualism is neither a realistic nor an attractive option for a country such as South Africa if one has aspirations for the realisation of societal development and socio-economic equality. It is also explicitly at odds with the Language in Education policy of the Department of Education which states that 'being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African' (Department of Education, 1997). A monolingual approach must therefore be rejected on both ideological and practical grounds. A form of reciprocal, individual multilingualism, while undoubtedly a difficult task to accomplish, remains a far more attractive and more socially beneficial ideal to strive for than one which cements the dominance of elitist, authoritarian forms of political governance. If the political will were in place, efforts aimed at the promotion of a public individual multilingualism broadly representative of the entire South African population could potentially be undertaken. For example, government organisations and other public institutions could demonstrate their commitment to multilingualism by making knowledge of several languages, including an African language, a prerequisite for entry into certain jobs and educational courses. Such a policy would need to be administered with caution, however, in order to avoid accusations of reverse discrimination from speakers of English and Afrikaans who do not speak any African languages. Even a quota system whereby a minimum number of people in whatever organisation are required to have a knowledge of an African language would likely be controversial. A similar policy in sporting circles whereby provincial and national cricket teams have been forced to include a fixed quota of 'players of colour' has proved highly controversial and has aroused considerable resentment amongst certain people who believe white players are now being unfairly discriminated against (Cricket South Africa, 2001). Despite this caveat, some degree of positive discrimination in favour of African language speakers would appear to be an unavoidable practical requirement if the African languages are to acquire greater presence in public life. However, if this positive discrimination is undertaken within the framework of a wider policy commitment aimed at the promotion of individual multilingualism, then it may offer some hope in advancing the cause of emancipatory national integration.

## 6.9 Limitations and Potential Criticisms of this Approach to Language Policy and National Integration

The most immediate limitation of the approach outlined in this chapter concerns the scope of its focus. Obviously, an effective policy of popular national integration through societal development must be about more than just language-related matters. It is of great importance not to isolate the language factor as this may lead to both skewed diagnosis and ineffective prescription. Matters such as the provision of healthcare, welfare, transport infrastructure and certain other public amenities, all of which are of great importance for societal development, are beyond the scope of language policy theory and, indeed, may be more foundational in their urgency. For example, as Blommaert (2001:138) notes in relation to language-in-education policy in Africa, 'underlying the issue of the language of instruction is a deeper problem: who goes to school?' Discussions of the language-in-education issue and educational policy in general are rendered of marginal significance if large numbers of children, as a consequence of social and economic deprivation, do not actually attend or barely attend school. For example, figures from the 2001 census (Statistics South Africa, 2003) show that 17.9% of the total South African population and 22.3% of the black African population aged 20 or above had received no formal schooling whatsoever. In the poorer rural provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga, this figure rises to 33.4% and 27.5% respectively. According to the census, 16% of the total South African population aged 20 and above started but did not complete their primary education and only 20.4% of all South Africans (and 16.8% of black Africans) had completed their secondary education. From these statistics it is apparent that discussions centring on medium of instruction issues in higher secondary education, and even more so in university education, are of no direct relevance to more than one half of the entire South African population.

An adequately functioning educational system is obviously one of the most urgent prerequisites for the creation of a mobile and prosperous population. This requires, amongst other things, properly trained (and paid) teachers, adequate school facilities, sufficient classroom materials, textbooks, manageable class sizes, pastoral support structures, schools that are within a reasonable walking distance from the homes of most students and so on. Linguistic concerns, while certainly of great importance, can only ever be one part of a successful educational policy approach. Language policy and planning measures can only hope to be effective if they enter into a symbiotic relationship with wider, foundational social conditions. The language question is not, therefore, the be-all and end-all of successful, emancipatory national integration. For the most oppressed and marginalised members of South African society, there are undoubtedly more pressing concerns than matters relating to language policy or even education. There is the day-to-day struggle to survive in the face of severe poverty, the catastrophic HIV/AIDS epidemic and high levels of inter-personal violent crime. Consequently, it is important that those scholars and activists working in the field of language policy and language pedagogy remain aware of, and advocate, the urgent requirement for social development in other domains.

The cause of societal development will be advanced if a unity of purpose amongst those active in all fields of social policy is formed.

Another potential criticism that may possibly be levelled at the ideas developed in this chapter is that it lacks detail with regards to the minutiae of policy implementation. In defence, it should be pointed out that this was never the principal aim of the discussion. The principal aim was to identify some of the main areas of ideological and practical concern and seek to outline the key emphases of a policy response to the problems raised. The minutiae of policy implementation is naturally best left to experts working on the ground rather than detached academic theorists (in the case of the present author, regularly detached by over 5000 miles from the South African situation), although this does not preclude the possibility and, indeed, desirability of frequent reciprocal consultation and exchange of information. Input from a full range of committed, capable language specialists is desirable for the formulation and implementation of a thorough, wide-ranging language policy. The ideas expressed in this chapter can only ever hope to form a small fraction of that input. Given that the establishment and development of a national community is an on-going, trans-generational process, there can be no definitive solution or final word on the matter. Models of national development will need to be continuously re-assessed and nuanced to meet changing conditions and requirements.

It might be the case that the approach to national integration outlined here will receive criticism for being overly pessimistic and negative with regards to the potential of language planning to contribute to the transformation of South African society.. In response, it should be pointed out that the rigorously developed theoretical insights into language policy and planning explicated in the early chapters of this study, coupled with the overt lack of historical precedents from which to take genuine hope, permit no other conclusion. It should be understood that, given the logic of the prevailing political and economic conditions which sustain its rule, one cannot reasonably expect the current South African government to adopt policies in line with the motivating values behind these suggestions through mere force of argument, particularly when such arguments do not enjoy widespread popular support. The social change needed to bring about popular integration into the national system cannot take place without significant political change. The nature and extent of the political change required is, however, something far beyond the control of any language planning measures.

What role, then, is left for language planners? For some readers, the foregoing discussion might seem to point towards a somewhat defeatist stance with regards to the language planning situation both in South Africa and more generally. However, this need not necessarily be the case. As long as one constantly has in mind the very real limitations of language planning, language planners need not become despondent about the situation in which they find themselves. It might sound trite but humans can only control the controllables. It has never been the argument in this study that language planning alone can ever credibly hope to bring about the requisite transformation in social conditions that would lead to the democratic linguistic transformation of South African society. What one can say is that should such social conditions ever broadly pertain, then language planners will have an important role

to perform in harnessing linguistic resources so that they best complement and support those conditions. Even under such ideal-type conditions, most linguistic matters will not simply just take care of themselves to the most desired effect.

The one area in which language planning can perhaps strive to be more than just complementary to existing societal trends is with regards to language attitude planning (Verhoef, 1998). Trying to influence opinions, rather than attempting to directly influence behaviour, is probably the most realistic short-term goal for language planners. Once powerful opinions are influenced and persuaded of the desirability of a particular vision or course of action, the possibility of initiating meaningful societal change becomes greater. It is above all in this sense, then, that one can emphasise the contemporary and future importance of language planning in advancing the cause of inclusive, emancipatory national integration. The trouble with much language planning is that it attempts to influence behaviour before dedicating itself to influencing opinions and attitudes. It is therefore unsurprising that such planning is either experienced as coercive and prescriptive or as an abstract, detached irrelevance. A great challenge for future language planning is to engage its target populations so that they may participate in, and help to shape the processes of, the sociolinguistic development of their societies. The more this is able to happen, the more progress might be made towards the goal of founding cultures of bottom-up language planning, something which is a necessary antidote to the deleterious effects of coercive, top-down language policies which continue to abound around the world and especially in highly unequal, post-colonial contexts such as South Africa.

# Chapter 7
# Conclusion

## 7.1 General Summary of Findings

The first objective of this study was to define and explain the main concepts of analysis before applying them to the specific South African context. Chapter 2 examined the concepts of 'nation' and 'ethnic group' and many of their attendant cognate terms. The two concepts were held to be kindred on account of their joint possession of a core ethnic character. This joint presence of ethnicity which, it was shown, is a subjectively determined sense of group self-differentiation, lends both the ethnic group and the nation a similar psychological character and function. Some authors, though, have unsuccessfully sought to differentiate nations and ethnic groups on psychological grounds when, in fact, the most useful and verifiable basis for making a valid distinction between the two concepts is a sociological one. It is the possession of modern sociological characteristics such as a common civic/public culture and a uniform, standardised education system which distinguishes nations from mere ethnic groups. From this, though, it does not logically follow that nations themselves are distinctly modern entities. Nations cannot be defined purely in terms of their modern elements. To do so is to overlook or ignore ethnicity as a defining feature but without any ethnic core, there can be no nation. Without the ethnic core, one is just left with a set of civic or political elements which, by themselves, are incapable of generating the types of psychological solidarities and attachments and ultimately therefore, the types of identities that may be described as national. As far as the relationship between language and ethnic identity is concerned, the perhaps somewhat underwhelming insight that there is often a very central, but by no means essential, relationship between the two was affirmed. Nevertheless, mere empirical observation shows that it is quite rare for ethnic identities to not, in some way, find expression through some form of linguistic distinctiveness. If a group cannot claim a unique language or language name for itself, then it is still generally able to express its ethnic distinctiveness through elements such as accent and other salient linguistic particularities. Where national identity is concerned, not only is language frequently a highly important marker of the nation's core ethnic identity, it also has a crucial role to play in the construction and maintenance of the standardised civic culture which sets the nation apart from the ethnic group. The South African case is

J. Orman, *Language Policy and Nation-Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, 171–178,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4020-8891-9_7, 

a potent illustration of the fact that a linguistically fractured public space is a serious impediment to the creation of a common, inclusive civic culture.

Chapter 3 offered an in-depth conceptual analysis of language policy and planning and the way in which these are frequently linked to matters of ethnic and national identity. Firstly, though, a definition of language policy as a combination of language practices, language beliefs or ideologies and language planning or management measures was proposed. It was noted that language policies may exist in covert or overt form and vary in salience depending on the context in question. Furthermore, contradictory official and *de facto* language policies may be in operation simultaneously within a polity, giving rise to the existence of an unharmonised language policy situation. Given the strong linkage established between language and ethnic/national identities in Chapter 2, one was then in a position to style language policy and planning as a species of identity policy and planning. And, indeed, it was shown how all types of language planning, whether corpus, status or acquisition planning, frequently reflect a concern for, and sometimes have an impact upon, issues of ethnic or national identity. As a result, it was possible to construct a typology of language-in-national identity policies which can be broadly correlated to the ethnolinguistic composition and complexity of the state in which they operate. Chapter 3 ends with an extensive description and analysis of some prominent contemporary thought in language policy theory. The single greatest issue that has preoccupied much contemporary language policy theory essentially involves the determination of how much normative value should be placed upon the antagonistic, contradictory processes of linguistic convergence and divergence. In language policy terms, this has become conceived as a conflict between the desire to promote national unity or nation-building on the one hand and to protect linguistic diversity on the other. Although these discussions were not engaged with on a normative level for the reasons set out in Section 1.1, it was shown that even if one willingly suspends one's normative disbelief, much of the most prominent work in current language policy theory deals in inadequate conceptualisation and therefore fails on an internal level to effectively tackle the issues it engages with. Despite some game attempts, liberal culturalist theory cannot get around the unavoidable tensions that arise from the simultaneous advocacy of minority ethnic rights and the promotion of a nation-state style identity discourse. Elsewhere, spokespersons for linguistic diversity who continue to conceive of the object of their passion in terms of the number of language names currently in use, rather than by a true measure of objective linguistic variation, provide themselves with a highly dubious conceptual basis upon which to espouse their cause.

In Chapter 4, an overview of language policy and planning trends and their impact upon processes of group identity formation throughout the colonial and postcolonial history of South Africa was presented and interpreted in the light of the theoretical insights developed in earlier chapters. It was noted that the history of identity planning through language planning in South Africa has largely been one of failure and resistance due to the fact that most language planning has been coercive and top-down in character and not in harmony with prevailing sociological and political conditions. The sociolinguistic history of South Africa is a salutary reminder

of the limited potential of language planning to effect fundamental changes in the social environment which do not accord with wider, agentless, macro-social trends. Developments in the post-apartheid era have demonstrated the powerlessness of official language policies when they are flagrantly contradicted, underimplemented or even ignored by hegemonic governing regimes. Constitutional aspirations in the direction of public multilingualism, linguistic equality and respect for diversity have been severely compromised by the consolidation of 'elite closure' which has seen the institutionalisation of highly exclusionary, English-mainly linguistic practices in the public arena. This has led to the emergence and political pre-eminence of an elitist-bourgeois, monolingual-anglophone South African national identity in the post-apartheid era, something which has sown the seeds of conflict around the issue of language.

One such conflict was discussed in Chapter 5, namely the issue around Afrikaans which demonstrates the extremely detrimental effects that ethnocentric language conflict can have on efforts to promote a common, inclusive national identity. The great political dominance or, indeed, hegemony of the ANC in the post-apartheid years has allowed its own particular vision of South Africa nationhood to acquire strong normative force. As a result, the ANC has become increasingly prescriptive and less consensus-seeking with regards to what may form the content of South African national identity. Unfortunately for Afrikaans speakers, the ideological thrust of ANC national identity policy has meant that their language is being increasingly marginalised in public life. The presence of Afrikaans has declined in many areas of national importance, most notably with regard to its use in universities and other higher educational establishments. This issue in particular has been the source of great discontent and has very much become the locus of the Afrikaner community's 21st century *taalstryd*. The extremely emotional and essentially irrational nature of this identity conflict, for all parties involved, has leant it an intractable quality that temperate, rational language planning measures cannot effectively address. If, somehow, the focus of the conflict is able to shift to the material, instrumental interests of the many socially marginalised Afrikaans speakers that are being damaged by the increasing anglicisation of educational establishments and other public institutions, then language planning may be able to offer some tailored assistance in resolving this unsatisfactory state of affairs. If Afrikaans speakers are to be able to make a positive contribution towards the development of an inclusive South African national identity through the medium of Afrikaans, it is imperative that conflict tendencies around the language are nullified so that Afrikaans can become an effective vehicle for the empowerment of its speakers in all domains of public life.

Chapter 6 outlined some of the key potential principles and practices behind a language policy that would form part of a wider policy initiative aimed at the equal incorporation of South African citizens into the national system. It was shown how the hegemonic pre-eminence of a liberal capitalist ideology embraced by the ruling ANC has entrenched authoritarian governing practices in the post-apartheid era. As far as language is concerned, such authoritarianism is mediated through continuing marginalisation of the African languages from public life and, by consequence, also

the speakers of these languages. The nature of the country's constitution and the mandates of organisations such as PANSALB has provided highly inadequate scope for the effective promotion and institutionalisation of a genuinely emancipatory public linguistic environment. Instead of focusing on issues of socio-economic equality and improvement, the current political environment has ensured that language activism is generally ethnocentrically orientated and concerned with the acquisition of rights which, for the majority of South African citizens, remain basically meaningless since their socio-economic marginalisation means that they are unable to claim them or insist on their implementation. Some initiatives which have been proposed as a means of founding a truly representative linguistic public culture include the proposal to harmonise the Sotho and Nguni language clusters and the stimulation of nationwide (in the social, ethnic and geographical sense) reciprocal individual multilingualism. However, a number of obstacles are preventing any effective moves towards the realisation of these scenarios. The most significant of these obstacles with regards to the harmonisation proposal is that its essential desirability is not widely accepted or viewed favourably in popular public opinion which is largely compliant with, or acquiescent to, the ideology of the dominant ANC which itself is inherently hostile to any meaningful changes in the current *status quo* of elitist political power relations in South Africa. This *status quo* also renders aspirations towards the successful promotion of reciprocal individual multilingualism most unrealistic because current conditions remove nearly all sources of motivation for English and Afrikaans speakers to learn African languages. As a result, asymmetrical, uneven patterns of individual multilingualism, which reflect the wider power relations in South African society, persist. One of the great challenges for language planners in the South African context is to influence and change both powerful and popular opinions so that they come to favour, and advocate, linguistic practices which are consistent with other non-linguistic initiatives which have the equal incorporation of all South Africans into the national system as their guiding motivation. Whether such a momentous task will be possible ultimately remains to be seen but theoretical insights into language policy and planning unfortunately would not seem to offer much cause for optimism.

## 7.2 Some Suggestions for Further Research

Many of the findings and ideas presented in the preceding chapters are not limited, in their relevance or application, to the contextual scope and content of this study. The necessarily limited nature of any research of this sort clearly begs the need for further, related research. One can identify a number of areas in which additional, beneficial research relevant to the findings and ideas discussed in this study might be conducted. There is clearly still a great need for continued research within a specifically South African context. No single piece of work can credibly aspire to be the final word on such dynamic, diachronic processes as national identity formation and language policy formulation and implementation. Consequently, the

interplay of linguistic and identity factors with processes of national integration is something which requires on-going documentation. The usefulness and desirability of context-specific models of language policy and national integration, such as the one outlined in Chapter 6 of this study, is subject to change across time and can only be properly ascertained through continued testing in, and engagement with, prevailing synchronic conditions. Changing social and political conditions will have implications for the acceptance, rejection, improvement and refinement of such models and ideas. Therefore, it is the task of future research to determine or, at least, contribute towards the determination of the relevance and value of past research.

Naturally, the character and content of any further research carried out and presented within the specific South African context will reflect the ideological tendencies and concerns of those researchers undertaking it. For example, any research by adherents to the Linguistic Human Rights and/or ecolinguistic paradigms, which, on past evidence, tends to be strongly normative, will clearly have a different tone and emphasis to the model of language policy and national integration developed in Chapter 6. Given that this study rejects imposing normative ethical prescriptions, it would seem a redundant exercise to suggest further avenues of research for those whose ideological convictions and preferences differ significantly from those of the present author. For those that do broadly share the preferences for a model of language and society outlined in Chapter 6 of this study, a number of suggestions for further research undertakings may be made. Firstly, it is clearly beneficial that any such linguistic research consciously situates itself within a paradigm of a wider, practical policy commitment to social development and the reduction of social inequality (Ager, 2001:105). However, this is not to say that such research need necessarily be insensitive to, or ignorant of, the issue of ethnically-based claims and any conflicts that result from such claims, merely that, unlike with a lot of language policy research, this will not be its primary emphasis or priority. Secondly, given that the causes of societal underdevelopment and socio-economic inequality are more than just linguistic in origin and persistence, it is vital that future research overcomes the tendency of much sociolinguistic or sociology of language research to restrict itself to a unidisciplinary approach. There is obviously great benefit to be gained from combining a sociolinguistic approach to the relevant issues with insights from other fields of social research (see Section 6.9). Such a multidisciplinary approach might conceivably, and hopefully, lead eventually to the emergence of a unified field of societal development research, of which a linguistic element would naturally form an important part, certainly in the South African context at least and doubtless in many other post-colonial contexts throughout the world. However, some caveats are worth stating in connection with this. If one chooses to undertake research within a paradigm of 'language policy for societal development', one must be careful not to blindly import findings from one context to another. If language policies and planning measures taken on their behalf are to maximise their potential to succeed, it is important that they be 'tailor-made' to their specific contexts, although this obviously does not disqualify them from possessing a less context-specific ideological emphasis. The successful development of coherent, context-specific models of

language policy therefore requires the sensitive harnessing of the particular and the universal.

None of the foregoing, though, is to deny the desirability and usefulness of comparative case-study research. The benefits of a comparative approach to the study of the relationship between language and national identity have been demonstrated by several previous studies (e.g. Chriost, 2003; Oakes, 2001). As far as the South African case is concerned, one highly interesting avenue of potential research would involve a comparison with language policy and planning trends in the European Union. At one level, there would seem to be a number of significant similarities between the two polities. The official language policy of the EU is, like that of South Africa, liberal-democratic in character, as revealed by its extreme preoccupation with matters pertaining to 'rights' and its putative promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism through the institutionalisation of a set of named, official languages, whilst simultaneously promoting the unified ideal of a common European identity. Consider the following statements from some EU-related documents.

> The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. (Article 22 of European Charter of Fundamental Rights, Nice Treaty, 2000)
>
> European identity and European citizenship as defined by the Treaty on European Union incorporate the notion of cultural and linguistic diversity. For speakers of regional or minority languages, the notion of European citizenship has an important dimension only if the European Union effectively respects its lesser-used languages as an important part of – and an added value to – the European heritage and culture. (European Bureau For Lesser Used Languages, Ljouwert Declaration, 2002)

The parallels with the language-related clauses from the post-apartheid South African constitution are unmissable (see Sections 4.5 and 6.3). Neither policy makes any overt commitment to social development and improving the material life of citizens through the implementation of language policy but, instead, only goes so far, in characteristically liberal fashion, as to promise to 'respect' or 'tolerate' linguistic diversity. The returns from this supposed commitment to linguistic diversity have been predictably meagre in both cases. For example, Phillipson (2003:142) describes the European Union's commitment to promoting linguistic and cultural diversity as 'a general EU goal that is seldom converted into specific implementation or monitoring'. It is also apparent that both the South African and EU policies are working with a highly inadequate conception of linguistic diversity, measuring it in terms of the number of named languages rather than by an objective measure of linguistic variation (see Section 3.6.1). A further similarity between the EU and South Africa is that while neither has had much success in implementing and consolidating genuinely multilingual practices in line with their respective constitutional aspirations, both seeming to conform to the rule 'the more languages, the more English' (De Swaan, 2001:144), the two polities have enthusiastically embarked upon a strong symbolic promotion of the linguistic and cultural diversity that they purport to represent as part of a programme of top-down identity construction (see Section 6.4). It has not been common for the term 'nation-building' to be used in connection with language and identity policy at the supra-state, EU level, but as S. Wright has noted:

> [I]n some respects nation building and the construction of the European Union bear certain resemblances. Of course for the idealists who instigated the steps towards European integration the main idea was to overcome the pathological nationalisms of Europe, not to recreate them at a higher level. Nonetheless, where overt strategy has been employed to foster European identity, there are certain parallels and, where situations and circumstances have evolved fortuitously, there are patterns to be observed. (S. Wright, 1997:465)

Attempts by European integrationists to overcome these divisive, 'pathological' nationalisms are highly reminiscent of the ANC's strong resistance to political expressions of sub-state ethnolinguistic identities or 'tribalism' as it has historically been referred to. The following is taken from a 2005 ANC 'discussion document' on the 'national question':

> What is the national question in South Africa? In the first place, it is about the liberation of blacks in general and africans [sic] in particular. Secondly, it is the struggle to create a non-racial, non-sexist democratic and united South Africa. Thirdly, it is the quest for a single united South African nation with a common overriding identity. Fourthly, it is about combating tribalism, racialism or any other form of ethnic chauvinism. (ANC, 2005)

Pillay (2005:57) observes of the ANC's conception of South African nationhood that it 'claims a conceptual globality as its terrain' while styling sub-state ethnic demands as 'pragmatic localities'. Competing conceptions of the universal and the specific are clearly at work in both South Africa and the European Union. The irony is that the universality claimed by the ANC government for its model of South African nationhood would logically be considered a particularistic claim by the EU if South Africa were a member state of the organisation. Equally, a hypothetical, future world governing organisation would likely style expressions of European identity as particularistic. Identity-based claims to universality must therefore be treated with deep scepticism and be seen for what they are, namely an attempt at the normalisation of the specific identity in question.

The similarities between the language-in-identity policies of South Africa and the European Union outlined above provide substantial scope for some potentially interesting theoretical discussions. However, such discussions can only hope to make sense against the background of a full appreciation of the differences that exist between the two polities. One difference has already been suggested at, namely that of scale. South Africa is a state with a population of around 45 million (2001 Census) while the European Union is an expanding supra-state organisation of 27 member states (following the admission of Romania and Bulgaria into the union in January 2007) with a population of over 400 million. Even more important than the issue of scale, though, at least as far as an analysis of language policy and identity trends is concerned, is that of the major sociological, demographic and structural political differences between South Africa and the European Union. De Swaan points to three significant differences between the EU and 'formerly colonised countries' such as South Africa:

> European societies are much wealthier than their overseas counterparts, their populations are far more educated, and the languages of the European states are without exception 'robust'. They have been under the protection of the central state for two centuries or more; they are imposed in the schools, the courts, and the bureaucracies, in courts [sic], in politics

> and government. That is why the supercentral languages will not easily dislodge them from the domestic functions in their 'home' societies. Thus, it is the European state system, even in the era of its transformation into a supranational political entity, which continues to shape the dynamics of the European language constellation through the peculiar resilience each state has conveyed to 'its' language in the past. (De Swaan, 2001:146)

South Africa has nothing really comparable with the European state system. Its provincial governing structures are fairly weak and do not represent or speak for any particular ethnolinguistic groups in a way comparable to how European states represent their corresponding national groups. Unlike the EU, the South African 'language constellation', to use De Swaan's term, is emphatically shaped at the highest level of the polity. Whilst the EU seeks to wrestle ever more power from its member states from 'above', political power in South Africa is already highly concentrated at the top level (i.e. state) and so, therefore, the struggle for the redistribution of power becomes one from 'below'. An interesting issue for further research, bearing in mind the differences between South Africa and the EU just mentioned, would be to investigate the respective success of the two polities' identity building policies. A possible hypothesis that would need testing is that given the main focus of most European citizens' ethnopolitical loyalty is, despite the challenging effects of globalisation trends (Malesevic and Haugaard, 2002; S. Wright, 2004:157–178), still the state, the EU might face considerably more difficulty in engendering a sense of common European identity than the South African state would in creating a common South African national identity.

The South African and EU settings thus provide an excellent opportunity for studying the differing effects of ideologically highly similar language policies (i.e. liberal democratic, rights-based policies with a putative commitment to pluralism) in two extremely different societal settings. Whether the emphasis of such research is placed on issues of identity or on issues of societal development, or, on both since the two are often inextricably linked, depends on the preferences and choices of the researchers in question. However, it is to be hoped that the introduction of a suitable comparative element into any future research might aid the development and implementation of ever more appropriate language policies and planning measures for each of the societies in question. South Africa, in particular, is in urgent need of an effective language policy approach if it is to go any way towards meaningfully addressing the many linguistically mediated problems that beset the country and face the challenges of the 21st century with renewed optimism.

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# Name Index

# Subject Index