

AFRICAN LANGUAGES IN A NEW
LINGUISTIC DISPENSATION:

CHALLENGES FOR RESEARCH AND
TEACHING AT UNIVERSITIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marianna Visser was born in 1957 and matriculated at Framesby High School in Port Elizabeth. Her tertiary studies commenced in 1976 at Stellenbosch University, where she obtained her BA in 1978, and her BA Honours (cum laude) in 1979, MA (cum laude) in 1981, and DLit in African languages in 1987. Her first academic position was at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, where she was appointed as lecturer from October 1981 to March 1986. In April 1986 she returned to her alma mater as lecturer in the Department of African Languages, where she later was promoted to senior lecturer and associate professor. She has served terms as Chair of the Department of African Languages and as Vice Dean (Languages) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Since 2012 she has been appointed as professor in African languages.

Marianna has read papers at various international conferences on African linguistics in South Africa and abroad. She has published in the field of syntax of the African languages, including the book *Xhosa syntax*, which she co-authored. She has also published in the field of second/additional learning and teaching of the African languages and she is a former editor of the *South African Journal of African Languages*. Her research interests further include genre-based literacy development at secondary school level and in tertiary education, genre studies, and the language of evaluation and appraisal in a variety of discourse contexts. She has been intensively involved in academic programme design for African languages and has supervised numerous master's and doctoral studies.

AFRICAN LANGUAGES IN A NEW LINGUISTIC DISPENSATION: CHALLENGES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING AT UNIVERSITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

The linguistic diversity found on the African continent is unparalleled in the world. In discussing the question 'How many African languages are there?' Heine and Nurse (2000:1) indicate 1 436 languages for the continent as a whole. They state that, for the branch of sub-Saharan African languages (comprising the languages most closely related to the official African languages of South Africa), the estimate of 500 languages is generally indicated. They point out, however, that these figures have to be viewed bearing in mind that the distinction between languages and dialects in Africa are often indistinct, partly because so many of the languages, language varieties or dialects still lack standardisation and orthographies. Africa's vast linguistic richness has often in the past been considered a source of socio-political and educational complication, problems and conflict, hence the language policies and practices of many African countries in the postcolonial period chose to adopt and promote the former colonial languages (English, French, Portuguese) as the official languages for government and education.

Over the past two decades a gradual shift has occurred, however, in that the view has increasingly emerged in the language policies of many African countries that the African languages need to be harnessed in the process of accomplishing socio-political, economic and educational development for increasing prosperity to the benefit of all citizens. Thus, the view has generally emerged that, rather than seeing the linguistic diversity of Africa as a complicating factor, it constitutes a key asset in accomplishing social, economic, political and educational advancement for all the citizens in the various countries in Africa.¹

In terms of this view of Africa's multilingualism, the African languages are therefore indispensable for optimising broad socio-economic and educational advancement in African societies and the creation of opportunities for the full development of human potential. Rather than governments seeing the African languages as constituting a linguistic obstacle to unity and to the development of proficiency in the national or official languages such

as English, French and Portuguese, the perspective of 'multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation' has emerged, in terms of which the African languages are seen as a linguistic asset whose promotion and use must complement the use of the national or official languages, such as French, Portuguese and in particular, English, as a global language of communication.²

In terms of the notion of multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation, therefore, the promotion and use of local languages for different purposes and in different contexts in conjunction with major national or official languages such as English, French or Portuguese used as lingua franca in government and in education in Africa is essential for maintaining the vitality of language as cultural capital – as expressed in the Unesco declaration for cultural diversity (Unesco 2001) and Resolution 12 of Unesco's 30th General Conference (Unesco 1999) – and for harnessing this capital for the purpose of socio-economic and educational development.³

The recognition of the nine indigenous African languages of South Africa as official languages, together with English and Afrikaans, in the 1994 constitution of a democratic South Africa received considerable acknowledgement from countries in Africa and internationally, as it entails an explicit constitutional commitment to the promotion of the status and use of the official languages. Current language policy and planning at national, provincial and local government level in South Africa include pertinent specifications in this regard.⁴ As a result, various language services units, such as the national lexicography units, and language committees were established to support the implementation of the objectives and specifications outlined in the South African National Language Policy Framework (Department of Arts and Culture 2002) and its Implementation Plan (Department of Arts and Culture 2003) as regards all the official languages. Accordingly, government departments at all levels had the responsibility to introduce language and communication services in the official languages, including the regional African languages, and the adequacy of such services is subject to continuous scrutiny.

A key issue concerning the status and role of the various official African languages of South Africa pertains to the use of these languages in education at all levels, that is, in primary and secondary schools and at tertiary level, in conjunction with the use of particularly English, as the widely chosen medium of instruction in the majority schools on grounds of its status as national lingua franca in the professions, in the public and private sectors and in higher education, and its role as a major global language.⁵ The issue of the use of African languages at the various levels of education in a multilingual context including English remains a key subject of discussion as regards language in education policy in many sub-Saharan African countries. In this regard, Unesco has published a document 'Why and how Africa should invest in African languages', written in collaboration with educational experts from several African countries, which outlines the configuration of the use of African languages as mediums of instruction in an additive multilingual context including English (cf. Ouane & Glanz 2010).

Questions concerning the promotion of the status and use of the African languages in terms of the perspective of 'multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation' have emerged prominently in the national agenda concerning language policy and planning in many African countries. South Africa is keenly observed in this regard, given that the African languages have the status of official languages. The need to approach the practical challenges in this regard from a research-based perspective is generally accepted. This assumption, in turn, raises the question of how research and teaching in African languages at universities can contribute to providing the research base for quality education and language services, and facilitate endeavours by the government, including the educational sector, and private sector, in advancing the status and use of the African languages.

In light of the importance that language policy and planning and the related implementation actions introduced by the business and government sectors, including language education policy, be informed by relevant research as regards the range of specialised areas concerned, the question needs to be addressed as to how the university, through its research and teaching programmes, is able to contribute to providing the research base required for effective language policy and planning. This question relates in a significant way to how the university views its role in terms of its social responsiveness.⁶ The academic staff who specialise in African languages at universities have to consider how, in addition to their contribution to scholarly research, their research and teaching fields make a contribution

to the spectrum of issues that need to be addressed by language practitioners and educators involved in language policy and services aimed at promoting the status and use of the African languages. Hence, academics in African languages have to consider, in terms of their role as regards the university's social responsiveness, the nature of the contribution of their research and teaching in preparing future language practitioners and educators of African languages to address challenges concerning the promotion of status and use across the spectrum of domains in the public and business spheres. In this regard the use of African languages at all levels in education within a multilingual context constitutes a salient challenge in South Africa and other African countries.⁷

The challenges that contemporary research and teaching in the discipline of African languages at universities need to address are therefore considerable in terms of the two-fold function of making a contribution to furthering academic scholarship in African linguistics and literature, and providing a research-based contribution to the practice of language and communication services for African languages in the government and business sectors and, particularly, to language education in African languages. It is important in this regard to explore continuously how language planning and policy aimed at promoting the vitality of local (national) languages can be designed and implemented in a manner that allows these languages to thrive in a complementarity relation to the major national or international languages such as English, rather than being in a position of polar opposition to these major national or international languages. The view that the promotion of the status and use of local languages in all spheres of public life, in education and in business activities, needs to take place in conjunction with the use of the major international languages used as lingua franca, such as English in South Africa and, more widely, in sub-Saharan Africa, or Swahili in East Africa, has increasingly been advanced by scholars of language policy and planning. This view is indeed reflected in South Africa in the constitutional provision that the vitality of all the indigenous African languages, and Afrikaans, must be ensured in conjunction with the use of English, widely used as a lingua franca in government, education and business. Given this position, academics, through their research and teaching within the discipline of African languages at universities, have the responsibility in terms of their social engagement to provide the scientific base for quality language services and education in African languages within the multilingual context of South Africa.

In this presentation I will give an overview of the kind of linguistic research and postgraduate supervision in which I

have been involved over several years, and which I believe represent fields of specific significance in the discipline of African languages, both in terms of the contribution they make to the respective linguistic fields of scientific analysis for African languages, and the research base they provide in terms of a socially responsive academic endeavour towards understanding and explaining phenomena concerning the use and promotion of African languages in a wide range of contexts.

I will present a glimpse of four of these fields by briefly discussing each with reference to its research rationale and applied concerns in relation to social responsiveness, key elements of the theoretical framework assumed for conducting the research, and an outline of the analysis of data from one or more specific African languages. These four fields of African linguistics are (i) genre-based literacy development in African languages, (ii) the language of evaluation and appraisal, (iii) second or additional language learning and teaching of the African languages, and (iv) formal syntax and lexical semantics. I will devote more detailed discussion to the two fields concerning language teaching and learning, although all four fields are viewed equally as key areas in the research programmes for African languages in which I am involved. Lastly, I will present some perspectives on the issue of the role of African languages in higher education, a matter which in recent years has figured prominently at national level (cf. Department of Higher Education and Training 2011).

GENRE-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Genre-based literacy teaching and learning is one of the main fields of study and research in Stellenbosch University's Department of African Languages, and is a preferred choice for many postgraduate students who are language teachers and subject or curriculum advisors for African languages in schools and education departments all over South Africa. The focus of this field is on the text-linguistic systems and resources in the various African languages which characterise quality writing in the range of different text types (or genres) that learners are expected to write across the curriculum in the different subjects in secondary school. Writing in the various disciplines becomes increasingly technical, abstract and specialised in secondary school as learners are equipped for the demands of writing in tertiary education and in the vocational or professional workplace.⁸

A central underpinning of the genre-based literacy approach relates to the notion of social justice language

teacher education, which is related to the opportunity for postgraduate study in African languages.⁹ Study in genre-based language teaching equips language teachers of African languages to facilitate the literacy development of learners in their respective first (or home) language for the purpose of mastering the linguistic systems underlying quality writing in the (content) subjects across the curriculum, an essential requirement for educational performance. Genre-based literacy teaching is therefore an approach which is centrally concerned with providing the opportunities to learners from particularly marginalised communities, who have had less preparation for the spoken and written literacy demands of secondary school than learners from privileged backgrounds, to attain educational success in secondary school, and thus to access opportunities for university study and professional careers. This central rationale of genre-based literacy teaching makes it a particularly relevant approach of teaching written discourse at all levels of school and at university, for the reason that it is explicit, both in curriculum content and associated pedagogy, with regard to the key motivation of providing equitable literacy development aimed at educational success for all learners, in particular learners from disadvantaged communities. The characteristics of the genre-based literacy approach are evident in the current curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) prescribed by the South African Department of Basic Education (2011) for language teaching and learning at primary and secondary school level.

In the multilingual context of South Africa, the majority of schools with first (home) language speakers of African languages have the preference for English as language of instruction, given its status as a major international language, as is the case generally in sub-Saharan Africa – with the exception of Angola and Mozambique, where Portuguese, the national language, is the main language of instruction in schools. Thus, multilingualism in learning and teaching is generally the norm in schools in which the (majority of) learners have an African language as first (home) language, hence as dominant language of knowledge construction. Multilingualism in education at all levels, and its potential benefits to teaching and learning across the curriculum, has been increasingly recognised and explored in influential scholarly work.¹⁰

The challenge in South Africa and many other sub-Saharan African countries as regards advanced level literacy development, entailing quality reading and writing in secondary school subjects, relates partly to how learners with an African language as dominant (home) language can be prepared and equipped with the kind of knowledge

of language and skills in written discourse in their home language through the guided practice of teachers in genre text construction, as advanced by the genre-based teaching approach. This approach is characterised by a teaching-learning cycle of deconstruction and joint construction of different genres (text types) by teachers and learners, in preparing learners for independent construction of the genres they are expected to read and write in secondary school across a range of subjects, in tertiary education and in their future professions and workplace. Knowledge of language required for advanced literacy development within the genre-based teaching approach relates to developing a conscious awareness of the nature of the linguistic system, including the vocabulary (lexis), sentence-level grammar, text-structure, informational structure, and discourse-semantic features characteristic of quality academic writing in the range of subjects across the curriculum in secondary school, such as history, geography, life sciences and physical sciences.

Current scholarly views on multilingual education support the development of academic literacy skills, both oral and written, in the dominant (home) language (which in the case of the majority of school learners in South Africa is an African language, and often more than one African language) in facilitating academic literacy development in the second/additional language used in teaching and learning, and in which academic writing is required. For the majority of learners at school in South Africa whose dominant (first) language is an African language, English is the preferred second/additional language that needs to be acquired, since it is officially the main language of instruction. These learners have to develop academic writing skills in English, both for the purpose of learning English as a language subject and for learning the content subjects, necessitating the development of advanced academic writing skills in English.

Multilingual development research increasingly advocates the view that knowledge of language and writing skills development in the dominant (first) language can play an important role in preparing learners with the general cognitive skills for acquiring literacy and writing skills relating to knowledge of language in the second or additional language. It is for this reason that postgraduate study and research in programmes in African languages include a specialisation option in genre-based language teaching and learning, which entails research on text-linguistic analysis of a range of genres required for advanced literacy development across the curriculum in secondary school. This specialisation of study and research is directed at equipping language teachers and subject and curriculum advisors of African languages with

the research skills in text-linguistic features characterising quality academic writing in different genres in African languages. Language teachers and subject advisors of African languages are thus enabled, through their study and research in the field of genre-based teaching and learning, to acquire text-linguistic competence as regards quality academic writing in individual African languages and to acquire expertise in the nature of knowledge of language and writing skills required for successful writing of a range of genres in the African languages.

The field of genre-based literacy development in secondary school teaching and learning of African languages, therefore, receives considerable attention in postgraduate programmes in African languages at Stellenbosch University (SU). It was included in the postgraduate programme offering for African languages for the reason of providing language teachers of African languages a systematic research-based framework for teaching the different genres (or text types) required for quality writing across the curriculum to learners at high school.¹¹ In addition to reading and writing in language subjects, such as the African languages and other additional languages, including English, learners are expected to be competent in reading and writing the different text types characteristic of their content subjects, such as history, geography, life sciences and physical sciences, each of which is associated with particular genre-related language properties realised by the vocabulary (or lexis), grammar and discourse-rhetorical structure. Competence in the subject-related generic properties through advanced reading and writing in secondary school is crucial for advancing educational achievement and for preparing learners for the demands of academic literacy in tertiary study and the occupational sector.

Providing teachers the opportunity to acquire applied genre-based research and teaching skills for accomplishing successful genre-based literacy development of learners in secondary school constitutes a special instantiation of advancing social justice in fulfilling the social responsibility of the university to learners from disadvantaged communities in contributing to the creation of equality of opportunities for educational achievement.¹² The successful mastery of academic writing in different genres in the individual African languages as language subjects promotes language awareness of genre-specific properties which facilitates reading and writing of genres in the content subjects in secondary school through medium of a second (or additional) language, which for the majority of learners is English.

The model of text construction employed for the

text-linguistic analysis of writing includes, in particular, components for representing knowledge of language relating to the linguistic systems of the lexicon, syntax, cohesion and coherence structure. Genre-based research emphasises the relationship between knowledge of language acquired through genre-based literacy development and knowledge construction and conceptualisation in the content subjects.¹³ It is through the development of advanced competence and skills of different genres that learners interpret, critique, appraise and argue about aspects of the content subjects (or disciplines) in secondary school. School genres that have been analysed in genre research with respect to their text structure (or design) and lexical and grammatical properties as these manifest in specific subject or disciplinary discourse to be addressed by teachers in genre literacy and writing development of learners are generally classified by genre theorists in terms of the broad purposes of writing such as writing to respond, to record events, to instruct, to explain, to describe, to persuade, and to entertain.¹⁴

Recent research on advanced genre-based literacy development presents compelling arguments for the importance of the relationship between genre-based language teaching and learning for the purpose of writing across the curriculum in secondary school and the process of knowledge construction in the individual disciplines. Knowledge of language, including lexis, grammar, text (or discourse) structure and discourse semantics is a key contributing factor to understanding and engaging with the discipline.¹⁵ Thus, genre-based language teaching contributes to the knowledge construction by learners of disciplinary content, in addition to enabling learners to be successful in the writing of genres expected from them in the different subject fields.

Within the South African context of the teaching of African languages as home languages in secondary school, the implications of the relationship between knowledge of language, in particular genre-related language knowledge required for successful writing in secondary school, and effective knowledge construction of disciplinary content give support to the views of introducing the more extensive use (both oral and written) of the African languages, in conjunction with English, as the generally preferred medium of instruction. A second important consequence of the strong relationship drawn between advanced genre-based literacy development and knowledge construction in the disciplines relates to the teaching of writing, in the language subject classes for African languages, of the range of genres occurring across the curriculum, taking into account that writing in the content subjects is performed in English, as the preferred

language of instruction. These two strategies – that is the deliberate extensive use of the African languages (in spoken and written modes) in content subject teaching for learners who have an African languages as home (or dominant) language and the deliberate extended use of some material from content subjects in the teaching of the African languages as language subjects – can potentially be a significant innovation towards accomplishing the goal of strengthening the relationship between advanced genre-based literacy development and knowledge construction by learners in that the full language repertoire of learners is exploited, including their dominant African language and English as second language, as the preferred medium of instruction in secondary school for the majority of learners.

The above two strategies can potentially realise in a significant way the goal of an additive bi/multilingual teaching and learning context conducive to academic performance in that it exploits learners' language repertoire in an optimal way for the purpose of academic achievement, including success in writing in a second language expected from them in the disciplines (or content subjects). At a more theoretical level, the two strategies of bi/multilingual teaching and learning, involving the extended spoken and written use of the African languages in content subject teaching, on the one hand, and the extended inclusion of content subject material (from, for example, history, geography, life sciences) in the language subject classes for African languages, on the other, can represent an important context for investigating the practice associated with recent research on the linguistic landscape, crucially concerned with the spaces and places of language in the public sphere, of which language in education represents a central instantiation.¹⁶ The introduction of these two strategies for the purpose of teaching writing in secondary school therefore can represent an innovation in language education, advancing multilingualism, linguistic equality and diversity. It can be an important instantiation of African languages in terms of the view of multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation in which the status of the African languages are raised through higher function use in conjunction with English as preferred academic language of wider communication. Such a multilingual context would furthermore be an instantiation of the notion of inclusive citizenship in relation to language in education.¹⁷

The research conducted in various master's and PhD studies in the text-linguistic properties of academic and professional writing in African languages examined the nature of vocabulary (lexis), sentence-level grammatical properties, informational structure and discourse semantics within the framework of genre theory and a model of text construction compatible with the genre-

based literacy approach. The genre-based research conducted by postgraduate students on genres in the various African languages relates to the two broad areas of text-linguistics, namely academic writing in secondary school in individual African languages as language subjects, and journalistic discourse, as a form of professional writing, particularly in the printed media, including a range of newspaper and magazine genres. The model of text construction, advanced by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) and extended in subsequent text-linguistic research emanating from systemic functional linguistics, has been employed in several postgraduate studies for examining academic writing of various African languages at secondary school. These studies have explored the unique realisation in various African languages relating to the use of lexis, sentence-level grammar, text structure, information structuring, and discourse semantics in learners' writing of various genres. Some areas of this research included teaching and learning activities in the deconstruction of model writing of genres by teachers, followed by joint construction of genres by teachers and learners, and then independent construction of genre texts by learners in accordance with the cycle format of genre pedagogy.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996:61) assert that “[a]n understanding of how texts are constructed is an essential part of understanding the nature of writing and writing development”. The model of text construction they propose is underpinned by assumptions and properties of written texts such as the following, identified by Grabe and Kaplan (1996:61f):

- (i) Written language is distinct from oral language along a number of textual dimensions and the construction of written language must be studied according to its own structural and rhetorical dimension
- (ii) Texts have a hierarchical structure, most likely constituted as a set of logical relations among assertions
- (iii) Different types of texts will have varying larger structuring (macro structure) because of requirements of purpose, audience, author and information load
- (iv) Texts have a top-level structure which appears to vary with different text types, purposes and audiences
- (v) A discernible top-level of text structure is related to better comprehension, recall and coherence assessment
- (vi) Systems for analysing text structure can be used for research
- (vii) A theory of text type variation is needed for comprehension, production and assessment

research

- (viii) A theory of coherence is important to any model of text construction
- (ix) A theory of coherence must incorporate an analysis of information structure – given-new, theme-rheme, topic-comment, focus-presupposition, topical sentence structure and topic continuity.

With reference to these properties of written texts, Grabe and Kaplan (1996:61) further assert that “learning to write requires the manipulation of many complex structural and rhetorical dimensions with greater complexity occurring in expository or argumentative writing”.

The properties of cohesion and coherence have been subject to extensive study in text construction research. Cohesion represents the formal signalling of textual connections (or relationships) by lexical items and grammatical elements. Through this surface signalling, readers are guided to achieve the preferred coherent interpretation intended by the writer. Lexical forms that signal textual information in terms of cohesion include, for example, reference through the use of pronouns of various kinds, substitution of lexical items with others, repetition of lexical items, lexical relationships through synonymy, antonymy and collocations, and the use of conjunctions for introducing subordinate clauses. Coherence, as a theoretical construct in text construction, refers to the underlying relations between assertions (or propositions) and how these assertions contribute to the overall discourse theme (Grabe & Kaplan 1996:70f). Coherence structures may be lexically accomplished in that necessary inferences, rhetorical and logical relations among assertions can be readily interpreted from specific lexical forms. Thus, the lexicon is viewed as central to a theory of text construction. Certain aspects of coherence are directly traceable to the text structure itself, and other aspects relate to an interaction effect of the reader and the text information together (Grabe & Kaplan 1996:69). Many text linguists have done research on how the information structuring of a text contributes to its coherence and the influence of local clausal relations in building coherence.

The following topics for essays in isiXhosa formulated by teachers and written by learners illustrate argumentative writing and writing a bibliographical recount, respectively:

Mgabadel, N.N.V.: A genre-based approach to writing in Xhosa (MA thesis)

Topic formulated by teacher for argumentative writing:

Isikolo okuso sakhiwe ecaleni kweefektri. Ngenxa yomsi ophuma kwezi fektri, uninzi lwabafundi besikolo sakho baneenkathazo zesifuba kungoku nje nezibangela ukuba baphume bengena esibhedlela. Bakho kambe abasele beswelekile ngenxa yale ngxaki. Bhalela umphathiswa wesebe lezempilo ubike le ngxaki. Zama kananjalo ukuza nesisombululo esingayi kuba naziphumo zibi nakuliphi na icala kulawo achaphazelekayo.

The school which you attend is built next to a factory. Because of the smoke coming from the factory many students of your school have asthma problems which cause them to leave and go to hospital. Some students have already died because of this problem. Write a letter to the minister of health and report this problem. Try also to give solutions that will not have any negative outcomes for any side involved

Topic formulated by teacher for argumentative writing:

lindlela ezisinga kwilali enihlala kuyo zikwimeko embi kangokuba akukho zithuthi zingenayo. Nifunda kwizikolo ezisedolophini ekunyanzelekayo ke ngoku ukuba nisebenzise izithuthi xa nisiya esikolweni. Kukho umnini-duladula ozimiseleyo ukuninceda, ntonje ubethwa ziindlela ezo. Bhalela umphathiswa wezendlela umchazela ngeendlela enicinga ukuba ingasonjululwa ngayo le ngxaki, kananjalo nicele noncedo nakuye.

The roads that go to the rural area where you live are in such a bad condition that there are no vehicles entering there. You are studying at schools in town which makes it necessary to use transport for going to school. There is a taxi-owner who intends to help you but he is hindered by these roads. Write to the Minister of the Department of Works and explain to him the ways in which you think this problem can be solved and also ask help from him.

Mali-Jali, N.: A genre-based approach to writing across the curriculum in isiXhosa in the Cape Peninsula schools (PhD dissertation)

Instruction from teacher for writing biographical recount essay:

Bhala isincoko esingembali yobomi bukaSteve Bantu Biko. Isincoko sakho masisekwe kwisifundo sezeMbali esingobomi bukaSteve Biko.

Write a biographical recount about Steve Bantu Biko. Your essay about Steve Bantu Biko must be based on a history lesson.

Research on genre-based language teaching and learning has shown a central interest in media language.

Considerable research has been conducted on printed media texts, as genres exemplifying professional writing on grounds of the view that advanced literacy as developed in secondary school writing in the various disciplines is viewed as a prerequisite for learners being successful in writing the genres required at university, in the professional and occupational spheres.¹⁸ The reading of media texts is prescribed in the secondary school curriculum for language subjects in South Africa. Writing of journalists in newspaper or magazine articles and editorials, which exhibit various (blends of) genres, such as writing narrative, descriptions, explanations, discussions and arguments, is generally indicative of expert writing, hence considered to be suitable as material for teaching and learning of advanced literacy at secondary school in the language subjects. For this purpose, the choice of research topics relating to text construction in different genres of newspaper and magazine articles in various African languages is frequently made by postgraduate students in programmes in African languages at SU. This research on text construction in genres of newspaper reports and magazine articles entails in-depth investigation of journalistic writing in terms of its rhetorical structure, coherence and informational structure, cohesion, reference (through the use of different kinds of pronouns, substitution of lexical items, the use of conjunctions in complex sentences), and lexical choices that contribute to properties of communicative purpose and discourse semantics.

The research conducted in programmes in African languages at SU by language teachers and subject advisors in the field of text construction on printed media texts contributed in significant ways to their expertise in facilitating the knowledge of language component in advanced literacy development by their learners.¹⁹ Several of the studies conducted in this field were fully written in the respective African languages, particularly isiXhosa and isiZulu, exemplifying that effective scientific writing in the African languages, including abstract and technical terminology, can be accomplished.²⁰ These studies, therefore, give significant evidence of the higher-function use of the African languages in tertiary education and the important responsibility of universities and schools to address the challenge of using the African languages as the dominant languages of many students in academic discourse, from an accountable bi/multilingual research base, in conjunction with English as a major language of wider academic communication and other national languages.

APPRAISAL-THEORETIC RESEARCH

The language of evaluation and appraisal, in both written and spoken discourse, constitutes a second field of postgraduate research in programmes in African languages in recent years. This research field was especially given impetus by several PhD students from Zimbabwe and Uganda through the Faculty Graduate School, established as an initiative of SU's Hope Project, specifically with the aim of advancing academic networks and partnerships with universities in the rest of Africa. Analysis of spoken and written discourse from the perspective of appraisal theory is concerned with the evaluations that people make of events, actions and viewpoints of other people, and is underpinned by the view that evaluation is suffused in discourse. Initially developing from the theory of systemic functional linguistics, appraisal theory has over the past fifteen years emerged as a theory for research into evaluative language across the full spectrum of spoken and written discourse, with particular focus on the contexts of journalistic language in the printed media, and recently also in the broadcast media, political discourse and corporate communication.²¹ Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) posits the three-dimensional perspective of field (that is, the topic or subject matter in discourse), tenor (the participant relationships) and mode (the spoken or written language form), correlating with the generalised orientations (or metafunctions) of language, termed the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Appraisal relates to tenor and the related interpersonal orientation. The interpersonal metafunction concerns the speaker-hearer or writer-reader relationship as realised through the linguistic resources utilised by the speaker or writer in the spoken or written discourse to express evaluations, referred to as attitude, and how these evaluations can be scaled up or down, referred to as graduation. A second dimension relates to the writer taking a stance with respect to an event or viewpoint and building the authorial self, particularly through dialogic interactions between writer and reader (referred to as engagement). Emerging from SFL, appraisal theory similarly posits a threefold distinction relating to the language system employed, namely attitude, graduation and engagement. For the dimension of linguistic resources relating to attitude in appraisal theory, a further threefold distinction is drawn, namely affect, concerned with linguistic resources for expressing emotional reaction, appreciation, concerned with the linguistic resources for valuing (aesthetic) qualities, and judgement, concerned with linguistic resources for judging people's behaviour.

The appraisal-theoretic research on journalistic texts undertaken for different African languages has been

concerned with analysing and identifying the linguistic resources in newspaper reports, parliamentary language, business deliberations and popular song genres that relate to the domain of affect. These studies investigated how texts activate evaluative assessment, either explicit or implied, in relation to socially determined value systems, and the upgrading or downgrading of these assessments of events or behaviour of human actors, referred to as graduation in appraisal theory.²²

Of interest in this regard is the stance (or intersubjective positioning) of the journalist (that is the reporter voice) or speaker to these assessments and how the reporter or speaker voice aligns or disaligns itself with respect to positions that are in some way alternatives to the position conveyed in the written or spoken discourse through his/her engagement with the events, ideas or behaviour of human actors, as expressed in newspaper reports or spoken discourse through the linguistic resources of lexis, grammar and discourse semantics. The appraisal-theoretic research into the different African languages gives evidence of the rich nature of the linguistic systems of the different languages with respect to the language of evaluation, and the intricate socio-cognitive context inherent to the associations and implications pertaining to the linguistic resources employed in evaluative language use.²³ In-depth language-specific study is being undertaken on all three sub-domains of the attitude meaning function of appraisal theory, namely affect, relating to the emotional reaction of the journalist or speaker, to events, conduct or ideas, judgement (of the behaviour of human actor) in terms of social norms and values relating to the social sanction of actions or the social esteem of a person, and appreciation (of the products of human endeavour, natural phenomena, with reference to their value in a particular field or their aesthetic qualities).

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Second/third (or additional) language learning and teaching, focused on the African languages, constitutes a third field of research conducted in SU's Department of African Languages and in postgraduate programmes in African languages. This research field has also been introduced in undergraduate modules with a view to providing students with the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills for teaching an African language in the educational or professional sector given the rich multilingual context of South Africa in which great challenges exist as regards the second/third (L2/L3) language teaching of the African languages to learners at

school and personnel in vocations and professions in the public and private sector.

Citizens can, through the acquisition of an African language, enhance their professional activities and contribute to the creation of social cohesion and a sense of inclusive citizenship among people in South Africa. The achievement of these goals relate, among other factors, in a key respect to citizens having the motivation to expand their language repertoires to include proficiency at some level of an African language, a key instantiation of the practice associated with the notion of African languages in a new multilingual dispensation. This challenge applies in particular to learners at school and staff across the full spectrum of the occupational and professional sector, who need to be provided with the opportunity to learn an African language. The need among some staff for developing second/third language communicative proficiency in an African language spoken in the work context is especially salient in certain sectors of public service such as health care services, social work, police services, municipal services, and in education. A number of studies at master's and PhD level have been conducted by students to provide the research base for second/third language learning expertise of students in their (future) professional contexts. These studies made a contribution to the implementation of key initiatives in accomplishing the learning of an African language as second/third language, hence the realisation of African languages in a new linguistic dispensation in which the use of all national languages is expanded for the purpose of communication in local contexts, in conjunction with major languages of wider communication, such as English.

In programmes in African languages at SU, research on L2/L3 learning and teaching of the African languages is conducted within the framework of task-based teaching and learning, where the communication task is viewed as a central theoretical construct with respect to a range of design features. Certain task features are believed to facilitate enhanced L2/L3 development when incorporated in a principled task-based methodology and teaching materials through which negotiation of communicative meaning through interaction is promoted in conjunction with selective focus on grammatical form instruction and practice.²⁴

A number of studies conducted focused on public sector contexts such as doctor-patient, police-public and police-internal communication tasks, which require specific purpose use of language. In addition a study was done on campus communication tasks for teaching isiXhosa to students on a university campus. The features

of these communication tasks were investigated from two main theoretical perspectives, namely the task typology construct, as advanced by Pica et al. (1993), and task complexity perspectives developed by Robinson (2001, 2005, 2010, 2011) and further refined by other researchers. The view that interlanguage development of L2/L3 learners, that is, their continually developing competence in the target language, can be enhanced by choosing and using communication tasks with specific features that promote comprehension of input of the target language, feedback by interlocutors on learner production and subsequent interlanguage modification resulting in the attainment of more advanced levels of competence and proficiency, underpins research on task features and task typology. Five tasks are generally distinguished in terms of the features they exhibit as regards the promotion of interlanguage development, namely information gap, opinion exchange, jigsaw, problem-solving and decision-making tasks, of which the last two are identified as most beneficial to interlanguage development. The task features relate to interactional negotiation of meaning and task goal outcome. Communication tasks that require both participants to hold and supply information promote greater opportunity for interlanguage development through negotiation of meaning. Similarly, tasks with a convergent goal, directed towards one outcome, promote negotiation of meaning between participants to a greater extent than tasks with divergent goals, allowing multiple outcomes.

Several studies conducted in programmes in African languages have addressed questions relating to the cognitive and linguistic complexity in communication task design for second/third language learning and teaching. Task complexity research has been advanced in particular by the cognition hypothesis postulated by Robinson (2005) and refined in subsequent work. The cognition hypothesis posits different types of features relating to the cognitive demands that communication tasks pose to second/third language learners, on grounds of which tasks can be classified and sequenced for the purpose of syllabus design, language teaching methodology and materials design. The clusters of features exhibited by the discourse content of a communication task are categorised as either (predominantly) directed at the development of the cognitive and linguistic resources of learners, that is promoting opportunities for interlanguage development to more advanced, hence complex, levels of competence, referred to as resource directing features, or directed towards the actual communicative use of the learners' already existing competence, referred to as resource dispersal features. Linguistic complexity, that is, lexical density and complex morphosyntax, is generally

correlated with the cognitive complexity of communicating tasks. By grading and sequencing communication tasks in accordance with their resource directing and resource dispersal features, syllabus designers are able to deliberately organise tasks in a manner that systematically facilitate interlanguage development to more advanced levels of communicative competence and proficiency. Task features that are identified as correlated with cognitive complexity include (i) [\pm here-and-now], indicating that tasks which require performance of present tense language use are less complex than tasks which require command of past or future tense use; (ii) [\pm few elements], indicating that communication tasks which necessitate fewer temporal and locative phrases/clauses, denoting elements needed to be referred to and distinguished, are less complex than tasks which require more of these elements being referred to and distinguished; (iii) [\pm reasoning], indicating that communication tasks that demand reasoning such as clausal or intentional reasoning are of greater cognitive complexity than tasks which do not require reasoning. This cognitive complexity also correlates with greater linguistic complexity since the syntacticisation of reasoning entails complex sentence structures. Other task features that are identified for the purpose of analysing complexity include the degree of planning time allowed for performing the task, the prior knowledge the learner has of the communicative content of the task, and the feature of single or dual/multiple task simultaneously.

The research on task design for teaching and learning African languages, in particular isiXhosa, as second/third languages has been underpinned by the consideration of providing a scientific base for acquisition planning as regards the implementation of courses, both at school level and in the public and private sector to personnel over a wide spectrum whose professional competence and service can be enhanced by proficiency in an African language, and who therefore can contribute to the implementation of the notion of African languages in a new linguistic dispensation as this notion relates to multilingual abilities of citizens in South Africa. Task descriptions of communication tasks from different studies conducted in postgraduate programmes in African languages investigated the task typology and complexity properties of communication tasks in isiXhosa for specific purposes. These task descriptions were followed by an analysis of the task features in authentic discourse content illustrating the respective tasks.

Du Plessis, M.: Complexity in second language task-based syllabus design for police communication in isiXhosa (MA thesis)

Scenario:

Usebenza kwi-ofisi yamapolisa ujongene nezikhalazo zabahlali. Usemsebenzini ngeli xesha kungena umntu e-ofisini eze kumangala. Niyabulisana nincokole, ubuze ukuba ungamnceda ngantoni, umbuze iinkcukacha zakhe kwaye umbuze ukuba ingaba ukhona undonakele ukuze uncede. Umbuza imibuzo emva kokuba ekuxelele ngokwenzekileyo ukuze uacelwe ngesiganeko.

You are working in the police office and you are responsible for the complaints of the community. You are on duty when a person comes into the police office to lay charge. The two of you are having a conversation. You greet each other. You ask the person how you may help, you ask him his personal details and you ask him to explain what happened. You ask him questions after he told you what has happened so that you have clarity about the situation.

Scenario:

Usebenza kwi-ofisi yoLawulo lweMicimbi yoLuntu. Kukho umntu ongena e-ofisini yakho efuna ukungenela uqeqesho lobupolisa. Umcacisele ukuba uqeqesho lude kangakanani na kwaye kuza kwenzeka ntoni ngekota nganye. Umcacisele ngako konke abaza kukufumana kuquka nombala wemali. Emva koko umbuze imibuzo embalwa. Umbuza ngempilo, ukuba wakhe wafunyanwa enetyala kusini na, iilwimi akwaziyo ukuzithetha kwanezinga lemfundo eliphezulu aliphumeleleyo. Umnika ifomu yokwenza isicelo ukuze ayigcwalise.

You are working in the Human Resource Management office. A person comes into your office and wants to apply for police training. You explain how long the training is and what they will do in each semester. You explain everything they will receive, as well as the money situation. Further, you ask her a few questions. You ask her about her health, criminal record, the languages that she can speak and her highest qualification. You give her an application form to complete.

THEORETICAL LINGUISTICS

Theoretical syntax and lexical semantics constitute a fourth area of research which has received extensive attention in studies on particularly the nine official African languages of South Africa. The theoretical framework of generative syntax which was assumed for much of this research is concerned with the nature of knowledge of language, accounted for in terms of principles and properties universal to all languages, and as language-specific properties. Numerous postgraduate students in programmes in African languages conducted research on the morphosyntactic and lexical-semantic properties of a range of constructions in specific African languages. A main concern in research relates to the

grammatical functions that noun phrases can have, that is, the different syntactic positions that can be occupied by noun phrases whose semantic roles are lexically determined by the verb (or predicate), and how these alternations in syntactic positions can be distinguished in terms of linguistic properties.²⁵ Individual African languages have been studied comprehensively as regards issues at the interface of morphosyntax and lexical semantics, both for the nominal and clausal structures of these languages.²⁶

The wide areas of formal theoretical linguistic research conducted in research in SU's Department of African Languages has resulted in an in-depth linguistic analysis of specific African languages as well as understanding of the nature of morphosyntactic and lexical-semantic variation cross-linguistically in the family of African languages. The research and teaching in theoretical linguistics constitutes a meaningful basis for areas of applied linguistic research such as genre-based language teaching and learning second/third language teaching and learning, and appraisal-theoretic discourse analysis, giving evidence of the importance of basic linguistic research to applied research in several dimensions.

AFRICAN LANGUAGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Against the background of the four fields of research of which an overview was given in this presentation, the question of the role of African languages in higher education, identified as a matter of priority in recent official higher education documents, raises possibilities relating to the perspective of African languages in a new linguistic dispensation, as referred to above. This perspective is essentially concerned with how the trend has emerged in many countries in the world, including African countries, that local (national) languages are re-evaluated, their status raised and they are promoted in education and public sphere contexts, for use with major languages of wider communication, such as English.

Within the South African higher education context, where students' language repertoires mostly include English as lingua franca and educational publications in English form the central source of prescribed learning materials, learning and teaching necessarily takes place to a considerable degree through the use of English academic materials. However, the use of the other national languages in South Africa is important in higher education, as it is at all levels of education, to create learning opportunities for students through the medium of specifically their first (dominant) language, in addition

to their second language, taking into account proficiency levels of students in the different skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and the design of teaching and learning opportunities that facilitate second/third language development and interactional and intercultural learning that promotes effective knowledge construction in the subject field.²⁷

The challenge that needs to be addressed as regards multilingualism in higher education in South Africa, is partly similar to many other higher educational contexts in the world, namely to manage the use of all national languages in conjunction with the use of English as a lingua franca, given its global status as language of wider communication for the purpose of scientific research, technology exchange and research publications.²⁸

In South Africa, English is a lingua franca in higher education, following from its role as preferred medium of instruction in the majority of schools with learners who have an indigenous African language as home (dominant) language. The challenge, therefore, relates to how language in education policy and planning, and the management of multilingual language policy in higher education, can accommodate and promote language diversity, the increased development of individual multilingualism by students and staff, varied to different levels of attainment across the spectrum from (only) receptive to productive multilingual capacities, in conjunction with the use of English as a lingua franca.²⁹ Successful language in education planning and management of this kind can result in yielding the kind of multilingual context in which students can use their dominant language(s) as well as their second/third language(s), supported by quality language services, in a language constellation conducive to both effective learning and teaching and the fostering of intercultural citizenship, thereby realising the possibility of promoting the vitality of local national languages simultaneously with the use of English as lingua franca in higher education from a research-informed basis of multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation.

CONCLUSION

The African languages in South Africa and, more widely, in countries in Africa are currently included in important decisions made at national and local government level as regards the implementation of language policy and planning which will be crucial to their long-term status and vitality for higher-function purposes, in a constellation with major languages of wider communication, such as English. In recent years language policy and planning in many countries has given evidence of how the status and use of

local/national languages can be promoted parallel to the use of a lingua franca such as English. Language planning and policy of this nature acknowledges the linguistic practices associated with the notion of multilingualism as a new linguistic dispensation, and takes into account the increasing proficiency in multiple languages by citizens in countries across the world, including proficiency in local national languages and language(s) of wider national and/or international communication. Appropriate language management across the spectrum of the public and private sphere and in the educational sector, in particular, is crucial to successful implementation of multilingual language policies which reconcile considerations of the use of global languages with considerations of the vitality of the local national languages. Multilingualism research based language management to this effect in the government sector and specifically in the education sector will be decisive in realising the success of the new multilingual dispensation in Africa in the coming years.

The role of universities in preparing students as future academics and language practitioners through their study in programmes in African languages will be a decisive factor in their acquisition of knowledge, competencies and skills relating to the kind of language management and

practice that successfully facilitate the promotion of the prestige and use of the African languages, especially for higher-function purposes, in a constellation of languages, with English as a lingua franca. To this end, the selection of fields of teaching and research in programmes in African languages at universities will play a major role in equipping students with the theoretical and applied knowledge and research skills in providing the scientific base for their (future) professional service as language teachers of African languages, or as language and communication practitioners in the government or private sector where they have the responsibility for promoting the status and use of the African languages. Programmes in African languages at universities will need to be characterised by continually innovative academic study and research in, among others, a range of theoretical and applied linguistic fields which will stimulate students' creativity. Study and research in programmes in African languages need to explore in depth the rich linguistic resources of the African languages and the major contribution that these languages can make, theoretically and empirically, to academic scholarship in linguistics. In addition, they need to provide students with the applied research skills to put into practice the initiatives associated with the notion of African languages in a new linguistic dispensation.

¹(cf. Batibo 2005, Blommaert 2007, Breton 2003, Githiora 2008, Kamwangamalu 2012, Makoni, Makoni, Abdelhay & Mashiri 2012, Martin & Kula 2008, Muthwii 2007, Ouane & Glanz 2010, Simpson 2008, Topan 2008, Williams 2006).

²(cf. Amaro, Flynn & Rothman 2012, Aronin & Hufeisen 2009a,b, Aronin & Singleton 2008, 2010a,b, 2012, Bono 2011, De Angelis 2007, De Angelis & Dewaele 2009, Edwards 2012, Franceschini 2009, Hall, Cheng & Carlson 2006, Hammarberg 2010, Jessner 2008, Lasagabaster 2011, O'Laoire & Singleton 2009, Riley 2007, Weber & Homer 2012).

³(cf. Marten, Van Mensel & Gorter 2012, May 2012, Tedick, Christian & Fortune 2011, Walter & Benson 2012, Wigglesworth & Lasagabaster 2011).

⁴(cf. Department of Arts and Culture 2002, South Africa 2012).

⁵(cf. Ammon 2010, Cogo & Dewey 2012, Crystal 2003, Kirkpatrick 2007, Maurais 2003, Mufwene 2010, Ricento 2010, Wilton & De Houwer 2011).

⁶(cf. Escrigas & Lobera 2009, De Ketele 2009, Herrera 2009, Neave 2000, Taylor 2009, Teichler & Yağci 2009).

⁷(cf. Baldauf Jr. 2008, Kearny 2009, Liddicoat & Baldauf Jr. 2008, Moyer 2012, Ricento 2007, Shohamy 2006, Spolsky 2009).

⁸(cf. Christie 1993, 1997, Christie & Derewianka 2008, Coffin 1997, Cope & Kalantzis 1993, Feez & Joyce 1998, Grabe & Kaplan 1996, Martin 1993a,b, 1997, Martin & Rose 2008, Rose 1997, Rose & Martin 2012, Rothery & Stenglin 1997).

⁹(cf. Hawkins 2011a,b, Zeichner 2011).

¹⁰(cf. Bieswanger 2007, Brown 2012, Byram 2012, Cenoz & Gorter 2010, 2012, Cenoz & Jessner 2009, Garcia, Flores & Homonoff Woodley 2012, Genesee 2011, Kaplan & Baldauf Jr. 1997, Kemp 2009, Liddicoat 2007a,b, May 2012, McKay 2012, McKay & Bokhorst-Heng 2008, Pauwels & Hellinger 2007, Yiakoumetti 2012).

¹¹(cf. Department of Education 2007).

¹²(cf. Barnett 2003, Coldstream 2003, Coon 2010, Fitzgerald, Allen & Roberts 2010, Hawkins 2011a,b, Votruba 2010, Watson 2003, Weideman 2010).

¹³(cf. Freebody 2013a,b, MacNaught, Maton, Martin & Matruglio 2013, Martin 2013, Martin & Maton 2013, Maton 2013, Matruglio, Maton & Martin 2013).

¹⁴(cf. Christie & Derewianka 2008, Feez & Joyce 1998, Rose & Martin 2012, among others).

¹⁵(cf. Christie & Maton 2011, English 2012, Martin 2013).

¹⁶(cf. McKay 2012).

¹⁷(cf. Desforges, Jones & Woods 2005, Hall & Williamson 1999, Hoffman 2004, Isin & Turner 2002, 2007, Isin & Wood 1999, Jones & Gaventa 2002, Kabeer 2005, Lewis 2004, Lister 2007, Nyers 2007, Pakulski 2007, Young 2000).

¹⁸(cf. Bhatia 1993, 2000, 2004, Dorgeloh & Wanner 2010, Gillaerts & Shaw 2006, Giltrow 2010, Günthner 2010, Iedema 1997, Martin & White 2005, Nordberg & Shaw 2006, Pérez-Guerra & Martinez-Insua 2010, Planken, Van Mierlo & Van Meurs 2006, Virtanen 2010).

¹⁹(cf. Jali 2005).

²⁰(cf. Simayile 2008).

²¹(cf. Bednarek 2006, Martin & White 2005, White 1997, 2000).

²²(cf. Jakaza 2013, Mugumya 2013, Sabao 2013, Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1995).

²³(cf. Kabugo 2013, Musiyiwa 2013).

²⁴(cf. Collentine 2010, East 2010, Ellis 2003, 2012, Gelenhuys 2011, Gilabert, Barón & Levkina 2011, Kuiken & Vedder 2011, Kress 1993, Lewin, Fine & Young 2001, Michel 2011, Nunan 2003, Robinson 2001, 2005, 2010, 2011, Smithdorff 2008, Steenkamp & Visser 2011).

²⁵(cf. Chierchia 2004).

²⁶(cf. for example, Du Plessis & Visser 1992, Fernando 2013, Yekiwe 2002).

²⁷(cf. South Africa 2012, Pérez Cañado 2012, Pérez-Llantada 2009, Tin 2000, 2003a,b, Visser 2007, 2008).

²⁸(cf. Björkman 2013, Garrett, Cots, Lasagabaster & Llurda 2012, Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011, Seidlhofer 2005, 2011).

²⁹(cf. Bruce 2010, Maurial & Suxo 2011, Pérez-Llantada 2009, Preisler 2011, Smit & Dafouz 2012, Smith 2010).

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