



The Currency of Power

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assumptions about language, ethnicity, and nationhood underpin these policies and enable people to "make sense" of the gap between language policy and language practice. I employ the semiotic concept of "erasure" to theorize the ideological process that takes place when certain dominant ideas, through their implicit assumptions and discursive force, render invisible particular social phenomena, including speech behavior.

One of the most important (and one of the least interrogated) ideas that have formed the ideological basis for a great number of policies (language and otherwise) in South Africa over the years is that of unitary and bounded languages/cultures/territories. This idea, rooted strongly in the German Intellectual Romantic movement of the eighteenth century, came to South Africa with the European missionaries who began arriving in South Africa in large numbers in the early nineteenth century (Fabian 1986, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). This school of thought is centered on the idea that a nation or race of people is indivisible from its language and territory (Herder 1966), and that an individual carries the whole of his or her culture, language, and national essence within him or her (von Humboldt 1988). Thus the Xhosa and the Zulu, while speaking closely related languages, were considered separate peoples, as well as the Sotho and Tswana, whose regional dialects, it can be argued, form a single continuum rather than two distinct languages (Janson & Tsonope 1991, Willan 1996). Although Herder's influential writings did not envision ethnolinguistic boundaries as the grounds for political nationalism, his ideas have been deployed, consciously or not, in the service of this cause (Tambiah 1996). His idea that a group's memory, culture, and history are all of a piece led the way to anti-Enlightenment projects such as the Afrikaner *volksstad* premised on the need to preserve the unity and purity of "the nation" by all means possible (Templin 1984, Moodie 1975).

The European missionaries who penetrated the South African interior in the early nineteenth century came not only to convert local people to Christianity, but also to "discover" and study the human landscape. They identified ethnic groups, codified languages, and mapped the territory according to discrete "tribes" or "nations" whose boundaries did not overlap, and whose linguistic, ethnic, and territorial distinctness was implicit (Harriss 1988). These "scientific discoveries" by Europeans in the pre colonial period have had long-lasting effect, in that they established the conceptual grounds not only for the institution of separate black "homelands" under apartheid, but also for the official language policies of the new democratic South Africa.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE POLICIES AND THE ERASURE OF MULTILINGUALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA¹

Susan E. Cook

Introduction

South Africa's celebrated transition from apartheid to liberal democracy since 1994 has, in part, been organized around the ideas of reconciling racial groups that were previously pitted against one another, and achieving a new and official sense of equity among the society's ethnic groupings, some privileged and others disadvantaged by the apartheid system. Curiously, though, the effort to reverse the racial and ethnic segregation of apartheid has, in some ways, had the effect of reinscribing the very boundaries and categories it seeks to annul. A good example of this is the language policies being implemented by the present government of South Africa. Despite the worthy aims of protecting and supporting the use of previously disadvantaged languages and using language to promote both unity and diversity in the new South Africa, close scrutiny reveals that the language policies of the new government, and the concepts that buttress them, serve instead to symbolically erase fundamental social realities in contemporary South African society.

In particular, this chapter examines the relationship of national language policies to ground level language practices. The language repertoires and actual speech behaviors of people living in a township in North West Province are contrasted with the language policies in their schools, and on their TVs and radios. To the extent that the official language policies do not reflect the lived realities of people in this region, I will ask what

The South African Constitution of 1996 enshrines eleven official languages, including the two former official languages, English and Afrikaans, and nine "historically marginalized" languages.² The country's official language statement is found in Section One of Founding Provision Six in the Constitution, and as such, is the preeminent statement of the government's approach to language. That is, all specific language policies that are developed and implemented to redress past inequalities in South Africa must flow from, and be in accordance with, the policy of eleven official languages, also referred to as "the principle of multilingualism" (Government of South Africa 2003).

Founding Provision Six also articulates additional principles that govern the development of language policy in South Africa. These include making the state responsible for strengthening the historically disadvantaged languages (including Setswana); mandating that the government must conduct its own business using all of the official languages; and creating a Pan South African Language Board that should concern itself not only with the eleven official languages, but also with the various other languages spoken by South Africans, such as South African sign language.

A recent piece of legislation entitled the "South African Languages Bill" seeks to operationalize Founding Provision Six with three major policy initiatives. The first is a set of regulations for publishing government documents. This policy requires government bodies to publish any public document in four of the eleven official languages, one from each of four categories, and to rotate among the languages in each group.

The second policy requirement is the creation of a "language unit" for each department of the national government and for each province, both to implement language policies that are in line with the government's overall objectives, as well as to field responses, complaints, and so forth, from the public regarding language issues. The third policy requirement names the Minister of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology as the person responsible for developing indigenous South African languages.

While these initiatives seem innovative, fair, and intended to empower those who were previously deprived of rights by the repressive apartheid regime, the assumptions on which they're based come straight out of Herderian linguistics. Equating social equality with linguistic equality (which is, in effect, what Founding Provision Six does), and asserting that the best way to promote South African culture is to protect and preserve eleven distinct groupings, is equivalent to serving old wine in new bottles.

On a practical level, one of the bill's greatest limitations is that it does not establish jurisdiction over language policies in education or in com-

mmercial broadcasting. It is in the schools, after all, that questions of a language's status, content, and domains of use have a direct impact on society. And it is to television and radio that the vast majority of South Africans turn to for information, entertainment, and images of themselves and the world (Spirulnik 2001). It is for this reason that this chapter focuses on the approach of educators and broadcasters to language questions. As will become clear, the Ministry of Education and the provincial education authorities operate under the same assumptions and principles as those who drafted the Constitution, while TV and radio broadcasters represent an alternate vision of language use in South Africa today.

Language Practices in Tlhabane Township

Before looking at specific language policies in education and broadcasting, it is important to have an overview of people's actual language behavior. The contrasts between how people communicate using language and the assumptions about language embedded in the official language policies will provide the basis for discussion for the remainder of the chapter.

North West Province is one of nine provinces in South Africa and comprises what was, under the apartheid administrative divisions, the Western Transvaal and most of the quasi-independent Bophuthatswana "bantustan," purported home to most of South Africa's ethnic Tswanas. Although the majority of people in North West Province do, in fact, identify as ethnic Tswanas, there are large numbers of Pedis, Sothos, and Afrikaners as well. Smaller concentrations of Anglophone whites, Coloureds, South Asians, Zulus, Xhosas, Shangaans, and members of other ethnic groups also live in the region (Black Sash 1990). The focus of this chapter is the majority Tswana group, the historical inhabitants of this region.

Adjacent to Gauteng Province, where Johannesburg and Pretoria are located, the North West Province is mostly made up of towns, townships, villages, and large tracts of agricultural land. Near the town of Rustenburg lies Tlhabane, a black township built as a labor reserve in the early 1900s. Tlhabane is a typical example of the ethnically and racially segregated reserves that the apartheid regime built to serve the labor needs of nearby white-owned farms, industry, and residential areas. Although the inhabitants of Tlhabane are mostly ethnic Tswanas, there are also many Xhosas, Zulus, Shangaans, Sothos, Pedis, and people from neighboring countries who migrate to this region to find work in the nearby platinum and chrome mines. Socio-economically diverse, as well as ethnically heteroge-

neous, Tlhabane has affluent neighborhoods where the homes have two-car garages and swimming pools, as well as desperately poor neighborhoods where the residents live in crowded and squalid conditions.

Although it is located in the heart of historically Setswana-speaking territory, Tlhabane has always been a place where a range of languages have been used. In the 1950s, Breutz reported, "the vernacular in the location is the Native language, mainly Setswana, although most of the Natives know some Afrikaans or English" (Breutz 1953: 48-49). Most of the individuals interviewed in the course of my research command an even broader range of languages.³ The following brief profiles describe the language repertoires and general circumstances of some typical residents of Tlhabane. Ezra,⁴ sixty-five, has lived most of his life in the rural areas, but came to Tlhabane in the 1980s to find work as a plumber. He speaks Setswana and Afrikaans fluently, as well as a little English. He also speaks Tsotsitaal (a non-standard variety of Afrikaans that indexes urbanity and masculinity amongst its speakers), and some Xhosa and Zulu. His home—a twelve by fifteen foot corrugated iron shack with no windows, electricity, or plumbing—is located in the oldest and poorest part of the township, appropriately named "Ou Kassie" ("old location" in Afrikaans). Ezra and his family share one outhouse and one standpipe for water with thirty to forty other people.

In the central part of the township, Frances, thirty-three, lives alone in a roomy shack that stands behind a house that doubles as a *shebeen* (an unlicensed bar usually located in someone's home). Frances moved to Tlhabane in 1990 to work at the Tlhabane Sun, a hotel and gambling casino on the edge of the township. Frances finished high school and studied towards a diploma in business. She is a native speaker of Setswana, but also speaks fluent Afrikaans, English, Zulu, and Xhosa, more often in combination than one at a time.

Fox Lake is one of the newer, more upscale, sections of Tlhabane. It has no shacks, but rather four and six room brick houses with lawns and driveways. It has a suburban feel, and is the neighborhood of choice for businesspeople, teachers, and civil servants. Mr. Tau is a primary school principal, and lives in Fox Lake with his wife and son. He speaks Setswana and English.

Mr. and Mrs. Mmutle live in Bester, the most affluent section of the township, with spacious homes and well-manicured lawns. Although predominantly Tswana-speaking like the rest of Tlhabane's residents, many children from Bester (including the Mmutles) attend private "multicultural" (i.e., English medium) schools in nearby Rustenburg. The Mmutles, both educators, use English for most of their daily interactions, but

believe strongly in the symbolic importance of their mother tongue, Setswana.

What all of these people share is native fluency in Setswana, while the other languages in their individual repertoires are the result of their personal histories and circumstances. In general, few blacks in North West speak fewer than three languages, and most have a passive understanding of two or three more. This is true of men and women, young and old, rich and poor, and to a lesser extent, both urban and rural dwellers.

This degree of multilingualism is not uncommon among black South Africans, or, indeed, among Africans on many parts of the continent. The legacy of colonialism, the phenomenon of language contact, the institution of labor migration, and the politics of racial segregation have all contributed to people's extensive linguistic repertoires. Many people find themselves using one language variety at home, another one (or two) in school, a *lingua franca* designed for communication among people of different ethnic and national origins in the mines (Fanakalo—see Adendorff 1995), and yet another speech form in their social interactions with their peers. It is therefore not uncommon for people in Tlhabane to use three or four different languages in the course of a single day.

In addition to the prevalence of multilingualism in this region, however, is the fact of widespread *multilingualism*, or the command of more than one dialect of a language. In a context such as Tlhabane, it is tempting to take people's shared identity as Setswana speakers for granted and focus instead on the variation in their knowledge of different "languages," e.g., English, Afrikaans, Zulu, and so on. In fact, however, very few people even use standard Setswana at all. Instead, they use a complex array of non-standard forms of Setswana that not only reflect the current political, economic, and cultural realities in urban South Africa, but also are deployed in strategic ways to shape them.

The variety of Setswana that people speak differs from the standard dialect mostly in its lexicon. "Street Setswana" incorporates lexical items from a wide range of other languages, including English, Afrikaans, Zulu, and Tsotsitaal (Cook 1999). Better described as a range of styles than as a single language or dialect (i.e., a well defined and bounded code with a unique grammar, morphophonemic system, and lexicon), varieties of Street Setswana are all linked by the fact that they index the speaker's urbanness, an important part of people's identity as modern, fashionable South Africans (Cook 2002, see also Spirulnik 1998).

In addition to Street Setswana, there are also regional dialects of Setswana that vary significantly from the standard variety. Most Setswana

speakers understand and speak Sesotho and Sepedi, as well, which are closely related to Setswana. These three languages are considered distinct languages rather than closely related dialects only because of the precolonial politics of European missionization. Nevertheless, they have been codified as separate languages for at least 150 years.

As with Setswana, there are numerous dialects of Afrikaans (including Tsotsitaal and regional dialects), Zulu (standard Zulu, urban Zulu, and Is'camtho), Sesotho (standard Sesotho, Pretoria Sotho), and English spoken and/or heard in North West Province (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000). Not only are people multilingual with regard to their "mother tongue," Setswana, then, but they may also command different dialects of the other languages in their repertoires.

Referring back to Ezra, Frances, Mr. Tau, and the Mmutes, then, these typical residents of Tlhabane township are all multilingual *and* multilingual speakers. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into detail about how each of these individuals uses the particular languages and dialects in his or her repertoire to pursue their various life projects. It is sufficient to point out that each one of them has a sophisticated understanding of the social salience attached to using different styles of Street Setswana, to codeswitching between Setswana and English, and to incorporating lexical items from Afrikaans, Zulu, and Pedi into their speech, and that all of them deploy these interactional strategies on a daily basis. Perhaps a trivial reality in the lives of these people, these language behaviors seem quite remarkable in light of the language curriculum being taught in Tlhabane's schools.

Language in Education

Language policies in schools are rightly considered the heart of any national language policy. It is, after all, through the state-sponsored education system that most members of a society acquire literacy, knowledge of second and third languages, and information and attitudes about the "correct" form of the official language(s), and the relative status of the different languages they encounter (Kembo 2000, Bamgbose 1991). In South Africa, where a majority of children complete at least primary school, it follows that the language policies emanating from the Ministry of Education play a major role in shaping people's linguistic behavior and attitudes.

Although the South African constitution enshrines eleven official languages on a national level, what does this mean for language instruction in primary schools in Tlhabane? How does the current curriculum depart from the hated apartheid system that had children learning via the medium of their "home" language in primary school, but then switching to a mandatory 50/50 split between Afrikaans and English medium in secondary school?

Because Tlhabane was previously part of the Tswana "bantustan," government schools in and around Tlhabane abandoned the apartheid curriculum long before the new Constitution was written. As a quasi-independent nation, the Bophuthatswana had its own Department of Education, and was able to shift away from the apartheid regime's approach to the language of instruction back in the 1970s. This does not mean, as one might expect, that Bophuthatswana schools emphasized Setswana through high school, when the apartheid regime would have had them teaching in English and Afrikaans. Rather, English medium instruction was gradually introduced earlier and earlier, until by 1977, students studied Setswana as a subject until the end of secondary school, whereas all academic subjects were taught in English from Grade Four on (Bophuthatswana Department of Education 1977). This was due to popular pressure, in Bophuthatswana as elsewhere, from students and their parents to provide earlier access to English so that they might have a real chance to become proficient in the language of economic advancement. This system, as well as the pedagogical methods used to implement it, is still in place in ex-Bophuthatswana. In fact, since the fall of the "homeland" regime in 1994, it has been exported to the areas of North West Province that were not part of the Tswana "bantustan." In effect, then, the language policies in the "homeland" schools had already departed from apartheid policies by the time the new Constitution came into being, and the language situation in the schools has changed very little since 1994. Circa 1997, schools in Tlhabane still taught English, Afrikaans, and Setswana in the same proportions as before. Children in Tlhabane attend six years of primary school, three years of middle school, and three years of high school. When children enter the first grade (usually at age six or seven), they are taught exclusively in Setswana, presumed to be the "home language" for most. English is introduced unsystematically in the first grade, and then more formally in the second year. Afrikaans is introduced as a subject in the third grade, and by the fourth grade, most subjects are taught via the medium of English. Setswana remains a mandatory subject through grade twelve.

On an ideological level, then, the language policies in Tlhabane's schools anticipated Founding Provision Six (even as they hearken back to the apartheid era) in two important ways. First is the assumption that Setswana speakers don't (or don't need to) speak other African languages, and second, that there is only one legitimate form of Setswana. Thus, the language teachers in Tlhabane's schools actively police the boundaries between Setswana and other languages, as well as between "proper Setswana" and the forms they consider corrupt and inferior. In addition, given that most adults don't use standard Setswana in their everyday interactions, children from Tswana-speaking homes usually require remedial instruction in the standard form of the language. Students enter school not only with simplified grammar and limited vocabulary—a normal stage of language acquisition—but with a lot of non standard words that teachers seek to excise from their vocabulary. These range from words that are standard in "another" black South African language to words that are borrowed into Setswana from English and Afrikaans and "Setswanalized." Some examples of the "foreign" words I heard being banned from Setswana classrooms are:

Table 3.1:

Word (lang. of origin)	English gloss	standard Setswana
<i>etsa</i> (Sotho)	do	<i>ditra</i>
<i>maama/papa</i> (Afrikaans/Sotho)	mother/father	<i>mmad/re</i>
<i>konomaka</i> (Afrikaans)	clean	<i>phapafatsa</i>
<i>kamore</i> (Afrikaans)	room	<i>phaposi</i>
<i>disstories</i> (English)	stories	<i>dikgang</i>
<i>Krismas</i> (English)	Christmas	<i>Bosalo juwa Morena</i>
<i>dikwaatlele</i> (Afrikaans)	dishes	<i>dijana</i>

Most of these words have been used by Setswana speakers for generations, and are only considered "foreign" by language purists. Setswana teachers not only label these words "incorrect," but also feel they symbolize a dangerous trend toward abandoning or contaminating Setswana culture and identity (Kotze 2000). As teachers of "pure" Setswana, these professionals thus see themselves as ethnic nationalists fighting for the survival of their culture and identity. This perceived threat of linguistic and moral degeneration is revealed in the way teachers characterize lexical borrowing in Setswana. Mr. Tau, the primary school principal profiled above, refers to lexical borrowing as "stealing." At Sunnyside Primary School in Tlhabane, Mrs. Mmutle, the fifth-grade Setswana teacher, regards bor-

rowing as laziness at best, cultural treason at worst. She carefully corrects her students as they give oral presentations, cautioning them to use *sejanaga* instead of *bese* (bus), *peretshiswana* instead of *baesekele* (bicycle), and *terena* instead of *vizimela* (train).⁵ After class, I told her that I couldn't find *peretshiswana* in my Setswana-English dictionary. "What did they say for bicycle?" she asked. I said "*baesekele*." Mrs. Mmutle replied, "No, they are being lazy! We are trying to phase out that language; we want to speak OUR language." It should be noted that most Setswana speakers consider terms like *sejanaga* and *peretshiswana* extremely arcane, and it would be very unusual, not to say ridiculous, to hear them in conversation.

While Setswana teachers don't readily acknowledge that standard Setswana is not the only form of spoken Setswana, they do so implicitly by calling this variety "pure Setswana" or "clean Setswana" (*Setswana se se phepa*, *Setswana se se thapileng*). Thus, the state-sponsored version of Setswana is considered not only linguistically correct, but also morally superior to other varieties. The need to distinguish between "pure Setswana" and some other (unnamed) variety is best exemplified in the Setswana portion of the national matriculation exam. Since at least 1994, the Department of Education has included a section on the test where students must provide the "pure Setswana" equivalents for a number of terms. In 1996, this section read as follows:

(g) *Kwala mafoko a latelang ka Setswana se se phepa*
(Write the following words in pure Setswana)

- i. *Silabase* ("syllabus" from English)
- ii. *Sepitiko* ("speed cop" from English)
- iii. *Tshampione* ("champion" from English)
- iv. *Ripoto* ("report" from English)
- v. *Sepatshe* ("wallet" from Afrikaans)

There are several striking observations to make about the language policies in the Tlhabane schools. First, and most obvious, is the fact that literature has changed since 1994. If language is seen as one of the tools of democratization and making restitution for the evils of apartheid, it is unclear how the Ministry of Education, which is in charge of language policies in schools, intends to approach those tasks. Second, the teaching of Setswana, English, and Afrikaans perpetuates a system in which Setswana is considered the "home language" and English and Afrikaans are taught as "languages of wider communication." Although we saw above that many Setswana speakers also command two or three other

"historically disadvantaged" South African languages, this is clearly not the result of having learned them in school. Finally, the school language policies overlook the issue of multilingualism altogether. Standard Setswana, despite its lack of real usefulness in everyday life, is taught as though it were the only variety of Setswana. Urban varieties and even the more "respectable" regional varieties are derided, corrected, and marked "wrong" on national exams.

The rationale for this configuration of language subjects and media of instruction in the schools in North West is the presumption that most students speak Setswana as their home language, that they need (and want) competence in English for social and economic reasons, and that Afrikaans still plays a significant (if unpopular) role in the region's economy and demographics. Many teachers speak of "phasing out" Afrikaans gradually, but they are aware of the strong sensitivities surrounding this issue.

What is the effect, then, of a language curriculum that presumes a population of ethnic Tswanas who (1) speak a single, standard dialect of Setswana as their home language, (2) require English as a vehicle for participating in the national and international economy, (3) must endure obligatory Afrikaans lessons because "the language of apartheid" still has a role to play in the region, and (4) do not need to speak other African languages? In a community of multilingual and multilingual individuals who have very little practical use for the standard version of their "mother tongue," these policies serve to symbolically silence the realities of their lives. Policing the boundary between standard Setswana and Street Setswana through admonishment, correction, and testing may reinforce people's attitudes that standard Setswana is an important symbol of their ethnic identity, but it does not change the way they communicate outside the classroom. Similarly, failing to offer instruction in Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, or Tsonga to students in the North West may enable Tswana students to maintain their allegiance to a form of ethnolinguistic nationalism based on chauvinistic notions of separatism and superiority, but it does not change the importance or status of these other languages in people's everyday behavior or attitudes.

Susan Gal and Judith Irvine define "erasure" as "the process in which ideology, in simplifying the field of linguistic practices, renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible" (Gal and Irvine 1995). By this process of erasure, then—the ideological eclipsing of certain realities—the language ideologies that dominate official policy making, in particular the one culture/one language idea, obscure the dynamic multilingualism and multilingualism that characterize the speech behaviors in

this region. Gal and Irvine point out that erasure on the level of representation does not necessarily mean the "actual eradication of the awkward element," i.e., the behavior or phenomenon that doesn't fit into the official picture. This only becomes an issue when the "problematic" behavior becomes integral to some alternative ideology that might challenge the dominant notion of how things are/should be. For the time being in North West Province, the ideological erasure of individual multilingualism and multilingualism does not seem to have much of a direct impact on people's behavior. On the other hand, it does provide the logic for policies that emphasize diversity (separateness) at the expense of unity (oneness), and rationalizes the allocation of resources based on an inaccurate picture of the linguistic repertoires that children bring to the classroom.

Language policy makers are not unaware of these contradictions, but seem powerless to address them. Makana E. Makapan, "Chief Language Practitioner" for Setswana in the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, acknowledges the challenges faced by those in language planning fields who are charged with promoting languages such as standard Setswana that are not necessarily the dominant spoken forms.⁶ I asked him whether he thinks it is true that standard Setswana is dying out. He said yes, but added that the responsibility lies with parents, teachers, and government people to ensure that it doesn't, lest people lose their culture and identity. This may suggest some perception of an ideological threat to the idea of ethnolinguistic nationalism. When I noted that many Tswana-speaking parents choose to send their children to English-medium schools because they want their children to be able to compete on the job market, he agreed, but said that learning English doesn't have to mean forgetting Setswana, by which of course he means the standard dialect. Those on the front lines of the battle for linguistic and cultural purity (e.g. Setswana teachers) also appreciate the contradictions inherent in their work. Upwardly mobile educators send their children to English-medium schools, and wouldn't be caught dead using standard Setswana in their verbal interactions, preferring instead to use English or Street Setswana to index their modern, urban South Africanness. These are the very people trying to ensure that students appreciate the "proper" form of their mother tongue, standard Setswana. Meanwhile, English is competing for people's allegiance as the language of economic mobility; Afrikaans still plays a surprisingly important role in black popular culture and certain economic spheres; and Street Setswana is the everyday speech form of choice for most Tswanas. So while multilingualism and multilingualism are being "erased" at the official level, they are thriving on the level of practice.

Language Policies in Broadcasting

South Africa's TV and radio stations' approach to language is an important component of the overall language policy picture for several reasons. First, like the schools, the broadcast media are not bound by the mandates of the South African Languages Bill. That is, while the Constitutional Provisions concerning language apply throughout society, the specific policy recommendations proposed by the Bill explicitly exclude both public and private broadcasters. Second, the broadcast media are one of the most important ways that people gain access to information *via* language, as well as gaining information *about* language (Fardon and Furniss 2000). Third, radio and TV are primarily oral, as opposed to written, media, a fact that has important implications for the ways that a multilingual society can be addressed and represented.

Although broadcasters are not bound by the proposed initiatives of the Languages Bill, the appropriate role of TV and radio in redressing the linguistic inequalities in South Africa has been the subject of serious debate since 1994. The South African Broadcasting Corporation, the country's public television broadcaster, set out to reorganize its programming schedule in February 1996 in order to comply with the eleven official languages mandate of the Constitution. The resulting line up featured one channel that broadcast programs in English, Zulu, Xhosa, Sindebele, and Seswati, a second channel featuring programs in English, Afrikaans, Setswana, Sepedi, Sesotho, Xitsonga, and Tshivenda, and a third channel broadcasting programs exclusively in English. Although the overwhelming proportion of prime-time programs were in English, the second most frequent language for prime-time programming was listed as "multilingual." This label applies to programs that feature dialogue characterized by code-switching or by hybrid dialects such as Pretoria Sotho or Street Setswana.

A night of TV programs from a May 2005 program guide reflects this same approach to language content, even if many of the individual programs have changed since 1996: SABC 1 features "That's So Raven" (from the U.S.) at 7:00, the news in Zulu at 7:30, "Generations," a South African made, multilingual drama series, at 8:00, and "Girlfriends" (from the U.S.) at 8:30. The line up on SABC 2 features programming in Afrikaans, English, and Sesotho, and SAABC 3 is all in English, including both local and American content.

With reference to the official ideological preoccupation with ethnolinguistic unity, then, the language policies of the SABC do not, in fact, erase multilingualism and multidialectalism the way the schools do. On the

contrary, although SABC nods to the Constitution by attempting to offer at least some programming in each of the eleven official languages chiefly through its news broadcasts, the habits and preferences of the viewing public seem to play an important role in determining the proportions of English language programs to programs in other languages, and of "multilingual" programs to monolingual programs. In contrast to language learning in schools, broadcasting is an almost exclusively oral medium.⁷ Because language purism most often reaches the heights of its prescriptiveness with regard to the written form, this may help explain why the idea of ethnolinguistic nationalism comes across more strongly in the classroom than on TV and radio.

Radio has undergone a similar transformation since the end of apartheid, and reflects a similarly relaxed approach to language/ethnic purity, as compared with that in the schools. In 1995, the Independent Broadcasting Authority, the umbrella agency that has oversight of all broadcasting in South Africa, began issuing radio licenses to community stations throughout South Africa (Minnie 2000). No longer controlled by the apartheid state, the airwaves were suddenly full of "local content," including all eleven official languages, and plenty more besides. The new radio stations in Gauteng, the Province that includes the major cities Johannesburg and Pretoria, include "ALX FM," a talk and music station aimed at the Alexandra community in English, plus Nguni and Sotho languages, including Tsotsitaal" (Mail and Guardian newspaper, August 11-17 1995); and Radio TNT, "aimed at young people; broadcast by Technikon Northern Transvaal students in English, Tsonga, Venda, Zulu, North Sotho, and Tswana for 18 hours a day" (ibid.)

South Africa has a vibrant music industry, and there is therefore no shortage of "local content" to broadcast on radio. This stands in contrast to the TV broadcasters, who struggle to find quality South African-made TV programs. Although there were radio stations dedicated to the various language communities in South Africa before the end of apartheid, they did not necessarily program in indigenous languages. A survey of "local content" on various radio stations in 1995 found that "Setswana Stereo," for example, broadcast local content somewhere between 19 and 55 percent of its on-air time. The official radio station of Bophuthatswana, "Radio Bop," broadcast locally made music and programs only about 5 percent of the time.

In Tlhabane, many people previously listened to Radio Bop, which broadcast in Setswana and English, until Radio Mafisa came along in 1997. This hipper, more urban oriented local radio station began broad-

casting a wide range of music, talk, and other formats, including a lot of Kwaito, the enormously popular urban black South African music, akin to hip hop in the U.S. Radio Mafisa's disc jockeys speak Street Setswana, Afrikaans, and English. Radio Mafisa quickly overtook Radio Bop as the station of choice in the urban and peri-urban areas around Tlhabane.

Exclusively oral, unfettered by presumptions that ethnic Tswanas only speak standard Setswana (and English for certain formal purposes), the radio stations in North West increasingly reflect lived linguistic practice, rather than an ideologically based ideal.

Conclusion

In practice the vast majority of black South Africans are both multilingual and multidialectal. Ethnic Tswanas in North West Province are but one example of a socially and historically constructed grouping that is to a large degree emblemized by the "pure" form of the language they are presumed to speak. Although the notion of linguistic, cultural and territorial unity has its roots in eighteenth-century Europe, it remains as powerful today as it was when it served as the basis for establishing the bantustans during the apartheid era. The prevalence and hegemonic nature of this idea is obvious in Founding Provision Six of the new Constitution. The celebrated document that boasts radical new freedoms and protections for South Africans of every racial, religious, sexual, and geographic community establishes eleven official languages (hence ethnic groupings) based on the same understanding of the relationship of linguistic practice to social and cultural belief that has been around for over two hundred years. What gets "erased" in the process are the very realities that distinguish life in South Africa for most blacks today. Their verbal interactions are governed not by the standard form of their "own" ethnic languages, but by the stylistic and strategic deployment of numerous language varieties. Explained away by language purists as "laziness" or the result of too much contact with "foreigners," the prevalence of individual multilingualism and multialectalism may not constitute an immediate threat to those in power who would prefer to maintain the conventional cultural map of South Africa. But if a vision of South African unity based on pan-urban experience, or trans-ethnic identity were to take hold (as some expected it would under the leadership of the ANC), such behaviors would surely be increasingly scrutinized and vilified as a threat to the moral and philosophical foundations of the South African nation. Semi-

otic erasure would turn into practical action to address the "problem," and a great many South Africans would be surprised to learn that their everyday speech patterns have "suddenly" become a threat to the age-old myth of homogenous, bounded ethnic groups.

Notes

1. I am indebted to my students in Anthropology 260 at the University of Pretoria for their feedback on this chapter. Also to Alexis Arieff and Holliness Thebyane for their invaluable contributions.
2. The eleven official languages are: isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele, Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi, Tshivenda, Xisonga, English, and Afrikaans.
3. Data for this study was gathered in 1996 and 1997.
4. All names in this section are pseudonyms.
5. Ironically, both *terenz* and *sizimela* derive from English (from "train" and "stream").
6. Interview with Makapan on August 11, 1997.
7. The recent addition of English subtitles to many of the "multilingual" programs on SABC television is an interesting exception, and merits further analysis.

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