

The paper reports on a study of the status of isiXhosa as an additional-language subject (XAL) in the Western Cape. The study set out to investigate the reasons for the apparent decline in the number of learners taking isiXhosa as a third (L3) or as a second language (L2). This decline comes against the backdrop of a language-in-education policy that explicitly supports multilingualism. In the Western Cape, this implies that all three provincial official languages (Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa) should be promoted at school. The sample consisted of learners and their teachers at three secondary schools in Cape Town's southern suburbs. The main finding is that, despite the best efforts of some committed teachers, XAL suffers from a low institutional status that reflects its lack of prestige in the curriculum and in society. The findings pose a number of challenges to those committed to implementing third-language tuition in Western Cape schools.



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

The status of isiXhosa as an additional language in selected Cape Town secondary schools

Thabile Mbatha
and Peter Plüddemann

PRAESA Occasional Papers No. 18

◆

Acknowledgements

Our sincere thanks go to the following institutions and individuals:

The learners, teachers, and principals of the three schools who participated so willingly in this study.

Professor Sandile Gxilishe and Dr Abner Nyamende, both of the Department of Southern African Languages, UCT, and Professor Marianna Visser, Department of African Languages, Stellenbosch University, for helping to conceptualise the study.

Ms Nuraan Davids for doing fieldwork and writing up reports.

Pam Maseko and Xolisa Guzula of PRAESA's translation unit, for the Xhosa translation of the abstract.

The Western Cape Education Department (Educational Research division) for EMIS data, and for permission to access the schools for purposes of data collection.

The Volkswagen Foundation, for funding this paper.

◆

Published by

PRAESA

(Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa)

University of Cape Town

Private Bag Rondebosch 7701

Cape Town, South Africa

Tel: (021) 650-4013/Fax: (021) 650-3027

Email: praesa@humanities.uct.ac.za

Website: <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/praesa/>

ISBN: 1-919948-24-4

Copyright © 2004, individual authors and PRAESA

◆

DTP conversion: Andy Thesen/Printing: Salty Print

◆

◆

PRAESA's series of occasional papers is meant to provide an opportunity for the research done by staff members and associated researchers working in the domain of language policy in education to obtain initial exposure to an interested peer audience. It is hoped that feedback will improve the final version in which this research is eventually published or distributed.

◆

Thabile Mbatha is a lecturer and researcher in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She has a special interest in language teaching and learning, and in researching the use of African languages such as SiSwati, isiZulu, and isiXhosa alongside English in bilingual classrooms.

E-mail: mbathath@nu.ac.za

Peter Plüddemann teaches and does research on bilingual education, with a focus on teacher trainer development in the Southern Africa region. Other interests include surveys and language mapping, and intercultural communication.

E-mail: pluddemp@humanities.uct.ac.za

◆

**The status of isiXhosa as an
additional language in selected
Cape Town secondary schools**

Thabile Mbatha and Peter Plüddemann

CONTENTS

Isishwankathelo	3
Opsomming	3
Abstract	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Research design and methods	7
3. Findings	8
3.1 Profile of participants	8
3.2. Reasons for taking isiXhosa	9
3.3 On whether isiXhosa is exciting, enjoyable and/or easy to learn	9
3.4 Taking isiXhosa again next year?	11
3.5 On whether many learners take isiXhosa	12
3.6 On whether XAL should be a compulsory subject	14
4. Summary of findings	15
5. Conclusion	17
Notes	19
References	20
Appendix 1	22
Appendix 2	24
Appendix 3	26

Isishwankathelo

Eli phepha linika ingxelo ngesimo sesiXhosa njengolwimi olufundiswa kubafundi abasele benentetho engenye entshona Koloni. Injongo yolu phando ibikukumana izizathu ezibanga ukuba lihle kakhulu inani labafundi abathatha isiXhosa esikolweni njengolwimi lwesithathu (*third language – L3*) okanye njengolwimi lwesibini (*second language – L2*). Oku kuhla kwamanani abafundi abathatha isiXhosa njengolwimi olongezelelwe kufika xa kanye kusandula ukubhengezwa umgaqo-nkqubo wolwimi kwezemfundo oxhasa ukufundiswa kweelwimi ngeelwimi ezikolweni. ENtshona-Koloni oku kuthetha ukuba zonke iilwimi zaseburhulumenteni (isiBhulu, isiNgesi nesiXhosa) kufuneka zikhuthazwe, nto leyo ethetha ukuba zifundwe kwaye zifundiswe ezikolweni. Isampula kolu phando ibingabafundi nootitshala babo kwizikolo zemfundo ephakamileyo kwiziphaluka ezisemazantsi eKapa. Iziphumo eziphambili zolu phando zibonise ukuba, nangona bekhona ootitshala abathile abazimiseleyo ekufundiseni, ukufundiswa kwesiXhosa njengolwimi olongezelelweyo kuyadobebeleka ngenxa yesimo esibonisa esibonisa ukungabikho phambili kwesiXhosa kwikharithyulam ezikolweni, nakuluntu ngokubanzi. Iziphumo zolu phando zibeka umceli-mngeni kwabo bazinikeleyo ekuphumezeni ukufundiswa kolwimi lwesithathu kubafundi ezikolweni zasentshona Koloni.

Opsomming

Hierdie referaat berig oor 'n ondersoek na die status van isiXhosa as 'n addisionele skoolvak in die Wes-Kaap. Die doel van die ondersoek was om die redes te vind vir die klaarblyklike daling in die getal leerders wat isiXhosa as 'n tweede of derde taal neem. Hierdie daling moet gesien word teen die agtergrond van 'n taalbeleid wat uitdruklik veeltaligheid ondersteun. In die Wes-Kaap beteken dit dat all drie amptelike tale in die provinsie (Afrikaans, Engels, isiXhosa) op skool bevorder behoort te word. Die steekproef het bestaan uit leerders en hul onderwysers aan drie sekondêre skole in Kaapstad se suidelike voorstede. Die hoofbevinding is dat, ten spyte van die pogings van toegewyde onderwysers, isiXhosa as 'n addisionele taal onder 'n lae institusionele status ly wat die taal se gebrek aan aansien in die skoolkurrikulum en in die openbare lewe weerspieël. Die bevindinge lewer 'n hele paar uitdagings aan diegene wat hulself tot die implementering van derdetaal-onderrig in Wes-Kaapse skole verbind.

Abstract

The paper reports on a study of the status of isiXhosa as an additional-language subject (XAL) in the Western Cape. The study set out to investigate the reasons for the apparent decline in the number of learners taking isiXhosa as a third (L3) or as a second language (L2). This decline comes against the backdrop of a language-in-education policy that explicitly supports multilingualism. In the Western Cape, this implies that all three provincial official languages (Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa) should be promoted at school. The sample consisted of learners and their teachers at three secondary schools in Cape Town's southern suburbs. The main finding is that, despite the best efforts of some committed teachers, XAL suffers from a low institutional status that reflects its lack of prestige in the curriculum and in society. The findings pose a number of challenges to those committed to implementing third-language tuition in Western Cape schools.

1. Introduction

Since the beginnings of colonialism in South Africa, the teaching and learning of African languages at schools has been largely limited to mother-tongue speakers of the languages concerned. The history of language-in-education policy in the country shows that it has been the conquered who have had to learn the languages of their conquerors, and that very few of the latter learned the indigenous languages. This has been the case from the initial mercantilist period of Dutch colonisation of the Cape from 1652, when the Dutch expected the KhoiSan to learn their language, rather than the other way around (Alexander 1989:12). Once they had been written down by the Missionaries over the subsequent two centuries, African languages were utilised as initial media of instruction in the Mission-led schools for 'Africans' as a transition to English. Yet African languages remained foreign to the school curricula of Afrikaans- and English-speaking children. In the early twentieth century African languages first became compulsory as school subjects in Natal (i.e. isiZulu), and by the mid-1930s across all the provinces at primary level (Heugh 1987:309) – but only for home-language speakers. While African-language speakers were forced to learn the two official languages Afrikaans and English in addition to the home language, Afrikaans- and English-speaking learners were never required to reciprocate and learn an African language. This discriminatory policy was continued under apartheid (1948–94). In a study in the then Cape Province¹, Dugmore (1991) sought to establish the status of isiXhosa as a second- and third-language subject, and learners' communicative competence in it. He found that in 1991 only 13,5% of the CED schools offered isiXhosa as a third language (L3) subject. Amongst the reasons were the low level of encouragement given to the study of isiXhosa by the then CED schools, subject choice options, isiXhosa L3 examination requirements and poor teaching methods in primary schools, all of which negatively affected pupils' attitudes and motivation with regard to isiXhosa. Dugmore's study showed that pupils doing isiXhosa L3 attached little value and significance to the language, in comparison with other subjects (ibid: 94–95).

A decade into the multilingual post-apartheid dispensation, the problems identified by Dugmore persist. Despite the officialisation of isiXhosa and other African languages following the ushering in of the democratic dispensation in 1994 and the explicit promotion of multilingualism in the language-in-education policy for public schools (DoE 1997), African languages continue to have a Cinderella status in education. In a province in which isiXhosa is one of the three official languages alongside Afrikaans and English, and in a unicity (Cape Town) that in 2002 adopted a similar trilingual language policy, Afrikaans- and English-speaking learners continue to show little interest in learning isiXhosa. Statistics for the Western

Cape² show that in 2000 a low proportion of secondary schools offered isiXhosa as an additional language (XAL) and that few learners were taking the subject. In the Metro Central educational district of Cape Town, the focus of the present study, roughly one-quarter (13 of 50, or 26%) of schools³ were offering XAL, while fewer than 4% (1074 of approximately 38 000) of learners were taking XAL. By 2002 some 27 853 Grade 12 learners in the Western Cape were taking English as an additional language, 13 368 were taking Afrikaans at this level, but only 394 were taking XAL – a mere 1% of home-language speakers of Afrikaans and English⁴.

This state of affairs⁵ seriously undermines the prospects of nation-building, a factor recognised in several policy documents and related statements⁶. The so-called James Report (Working Group on Values in Education 2000), for instance, echoes the language-in-education policy in identifying the 'fostering of multilingualism' (2000:9) as a core value in education.

When it comes to communication, the onus historically has been on African language speakers to master English and Afrikaans. There has been very little pressure on English and Afrikaans speakers to acquire an African language. South Africa is a multilingual country with 11 official languages. In order to be a good South African citizen one needs to be at least bilingual, but preferably trilingual. It would therefore not be unreasonable to expect English and Afrikaans speakers to acquire at least one African language as part of their linguistic repertoire.

Our recommendation would therefore be that all learners acquire at least one African language as a subject throughout their school years. (ibid. 2000:10)

In similar vein, President Mbeki in July 2000 hinted that it should perhaps be made compulsory for children to learn the language of another culture group at school as part of a process of cultural exchange through multilingualism (EduSource 2000: 19). More recently, the Revised National Curriculum Statement or RNCS specified that '[a]ll learners learn an African language for a minimum of three years by the end of the General Education and Training Band' (2002:4).

It is against the background of this contradiction between policy and practice that the present study⁷ is to be understood. Concern expressed by various interested parties in 2001⁸ resulted in a series of meetings at the University of Cape Town at which it was decided to try to establish, through a small-scale study, the reasons for the unpopularity of XAL in the Western Cape. An additional aim was to inform the implementation of the LiEP by contributing new information to the existing provincial education database. In the following we briefly describe the research methodology before outlining some of the main findings and relating these to the new (draft) language policy for primary schools in the province.

2. Research design and methods

The broad research approach adopted was empirical, and consisted of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It was decided to use questionnaires as well as interviews. The study thus had the characteristics both of a survey as well as of a series of case studies, insofar as each school had its own internal dynamics.

Several research instruments were used:

1. a questionnaire on the school's language profile and policy, submitted to the principal (Appendix 1)
2. a survey questionnaire submitted to learners taking XAL (Appendix 2)
3. structured interviews with focus groups of learners, both those taking XAL and those not taking XAL
4. structured interviews with the XAL teacher at the school (Appendix 3).

The sample was taken from among the thirteen Metro Central secondary schools offering isiXhosa as an L2/L3. Three schools were randomly selected. The research subjects were Grade 8, 9, 10 and 11 learners from the three selected schools, plus their isiXhosa teachers. A total number of 133 learners took part in the study.

Questions of generalisability inevitably arise in view of the size of the sample, the nature of case study research, and issues of reliability in self-reported data. Findings should therefore be treated with caution. What we can say with some confidence is that the findings are representative of the views of a particularly affluent sector of Cape Town society. All three schools happened to be located within Cape Town's predominantly English-speaking southern suburbs, and all three are historically 'white' institutions. An attempt was made to include a historically 'coloured' school in the sample, as we assumed dynamics there could be somewhat different. However, the school in question declined to participate on the grounds that the research would disrupt fourth-term exams, which were imminent.

In what follows, findings from the questionnaires submitted to learners will be supported with results from the focus-group interviews conducted with learners.

3. Findings

All three schools are overwhelmingly English-dominant in two ways: the vast majority of learners and teachers have English as a home language; and the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English. In view of the similar socio-economic and linguistic profiles of the three schools, learners will be grouped together for purposes of data analysis. Individual differences between schools will be highlighted only where these appear relevant to the present study.

3.1 Profile of participants

A total of 133 learners across the three schools answered the survey questionnaire.

Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Unknown
69 (52%)	26 (20%)	22 (17%)	14 (11%)	2 (1.5%)

Table 1. Respondents (learners) by grade (N = 133)

The majority of respondents were in Grade 8, with a sharp drop from Grade 9 upwards reflecting the broader range of subject choices in the senior grades.

Afrikaans	English	isiXhosa	other
5 (4%)	110 (83%)	27 (20%)	7 (5%)

Table 2. Learners by home language (N = 133)

The home-language breakdown shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) speak English at home. Some 20% speak isiXhosa at home, with smaller numbers for Afrikaans (< 4%) and other languages. Sixteen of the respondents (12%) come from bilingual homes, mostly in the isiXhosa/English (7) and the Afrikaans/English (5) combinations, respectively. The presence of Xhosa first-language speakers raises the issue of home-language maintenance at school, something that can not be addressed here.

English HL speakers	isiXhosa HL speakers
5,2 yrs	7,8 yrs

Table 3. Average number of years having learnt isiXhosa at school

The average number of years our respondents learnt isiXhosa at school was 5,2 years in the case of English-speakers and 7,8 years in the case of Xhosa-speakers. Furthermore, 92% of the learners were taking isiXhosa as a L3 and only 8% were taking isiXhosa as a L2.

3.2. Reasons for taking isiXhosa

Learners were asked to state why they were taking isiXhosa at school. Their answers can be summed up as follows:

Number	Reason given
35	Use value – isiXhosa seen as important for some professions such as Law and Medicine.
32	IsiXhosa is fun and enjoyable and results in good marks.
24	Important to learn the Xhosa language and culture because South Africa is a 'rainbow' nation.
23	Subject choice combination (Grade 8 learners mainly).

Table 4. Responses to the question, "Why are you taking Xhosa?"

In the interviews with learners taking XAL, the reported reasons for learning the subject corroborated findings from the questionnaire.

1. "Because we live in South Africa, it is one of the main languages and so its nice to learn to speak this and you can speak to more people."
2. "Learning Xhosa is very exciting unlike when we were at junior school. It can be very exciting, except when I was at junior school the teacher that we had made it one of the worst subjects. We sort of used to hate going to it because of the teacher. I think that we have got a very good teacher here, and I think that the teacher has a lot to do with it."
3. "I'd prefer to do isiXhosa ... because I know more people who speak it – I'd rather take it as a subject." (Xhosa first-language speaker)
4. "If you want to get a degree in anything like public relations, like being doctor or a lawyer, then you have to do Xhosa, so you might as well take it in school if you're going to do something."

3.3 On whether isiXhosa is exciting, enjoyable and/or easy to learn

In response to the question, "Is Xhosa an exciting subject?", 105 of 133 (79%) of those currently taking the subject indicated 'yes' and 28 (or 21%) said 'no'. The most oft-cited reasons given by the 'yes' group were:

Number	Reason given
33	learning about Xhosa culture and getting to know more about how other people live
32	learning isiXhosa is a novelty – in the new South Africa people are expected to open up and learn other languages
21	to learn languages for communication with other people in South Africa at work and outside.

Table 5. Reasons why XAL is “an exciting subject to learn”

Interviews revealed other learners’ perceived laziness to be one of the causes that prompted learners to think that isiXhosa was not an exciting subject.

1. “In Xhosa there are a lot of new words you have to learn and some people ... just don’t work. You have to memorise, like, a list and lots of words and eventually they all just drop it.”
2. “I must say that at junior school I didn’t have fun.”
3. “Earlier, I said that the reason why I wanted to learn Xhosa was to learn to speak it, and we weren’t learning to speak it. We were learning the structure and it got very boring. The same applies to Afrikaans, except that it is compulsory.”

According to some, the XAL examinations were very easy but the learners still could not communicate in isiXhosa. They seemed to suggest that there was something wrong with the pedagogy used because it was not working. Learners stated repeatedly that they wanted to learn to *speak* isiXhosa, but they were learning the *structure* of the language of the sentence, which many found to be boring. The learners suggested that they preferred learning isiXhosa outside the class, rather than inside it.

In answer to the question, ‘Do you enjoy learning Xhosa L2/L3?’ 62% of those taking XAL reported that they did and 38% said they did not.

Yes	No
82 (62%)	51 (38%)

Table 6. Summary of responses to the question, ‘Do you enjoy learning Xhosa L2/L3?’ (N = 133)

When asked about which aspects of Xhosa L2/L3 they enjoyed most, both the ‘yes’ and the ‘no’ groups cited orals and dialogues (conversations).

The ‘yes’ group also enjoyed the learning of Xhosa culture, songs, and learning the language system.

Similarly, 58% of those currently taking XAL said it was easy to learn the language, while 41% said it was not easy to learn.

Yes	No
77 (58%)	55 (41%)

Table 7. Summary of responses to the question, “Do you find it easy to learn Xhosa L2/L3?” (N = 133)

- Most frequent reasons reported by the ‘yes’ respondents were that they
- had received a foundation in primary school (30 responses)
 - had learnt the language system (22 responses)
 - were studying it and had put effort into it (16 responses).

The most oft-cited reason amongst the ‘no’ respondents was that learning isiXhosa was too hard (35 responses) because the language system differed from the English and Afrikaans language systems.

3.4 Taking isiXhosa again next year?

In response to the question, “Will you be taking Xhosa L2/L3 again next year?”, the majority (65%) of those currently taking the subject answered in the affirmative.

Yes	No
86 (65%)	47 (35%)

Table 8. Summary of responses to the question, “Are you going to take Xhosa L2/L3 again next year?” (N = 133)

When asked about the reasons, the ‘yes’ respondents answered that Xhosa L2/L3 was

- enjoyable (33 responses)
- easy (19)
- one of their subject choices (18)
- a compulsory subject (17).

Most of these responses came from a large number of Grade 8 and 9 learners. Yet 44% of those with English as a home language (the majority) said they would not be taking isiXhosa as a matric (Grade 12) subject.

For the ‘no’ respondents, on the other hand, 25 of those in Grade 8 – for most of whom felt they had no choice in selecting XAL as a subject –

reported they found isiXhosa too difficult and would therefore not continue with it in Grade 9. Amongst the Grade 10 learners, 21 said they would not take it the following year, but would instead choose subjects such as Accounting or Art.

3.5 On whether many learners take isiXhosa

Respondents were asked to reflect not only on why they were doing isiXhosa, but why most of their classmates were not. In answer to the question, “In your view, do many learners take isiXhosa?”, 29 of the questionnaire respondents said ‘yes’ and 71 indicated ‘no’. Reasons given for the ‘no’ answers were as follows:

Frequency	Reason given
27	isiXhosa very difficult
24	isiXhosa not enjoyable
17	lack of foundation from primary school days
15	negative attitudes towards isiXhosa

Table 9. Reported reasons for low number of learners taking XAL

In interviews, respondents elaborated on why so few of their classmates took XAL.

Difficulty with the language. Learners stated that some students began by liking the language but as soon as it became challenging they had decided to drop it. Some noted that isiXhosa was difficult because the language system was different from that of English and Afrikaans.

Status of isiXhosa. The learners noted the uncertainty about the role of isiXhosa in future jobs. They said that English and Afrikaans remained the two languages that were attached to important jobs. In the curriculum isiXhosa was not seen as an important language. Learning isiXhosa was a choice, and the language was offered only at schools where parents and learners wanted it.

Not knowing the benefits. Not knowing what doors might open to those proficient in isiXhosa contributed to the unpopularity of XAL. Learners stated that “people don’t really know the benefits of the importance of studying Xhosa.” Learners not taking XAL reported that they had only a vague idea of how they might need isiXhosa, for example in Law and Medicine. They said they were not clear about the

specific roles that isiXhosa was supposed to play in the present and in the future.

Negative attitude towards isiXhosa. A number of respondents said they would be emigrating. They reported that “some people don’t see the relevance of Xhosa because if you look at Xhosa speakers they can speak English anyway. Some people think that if they can speak English and communicate that is fine, so it is unnecessary to learn isiXhosa.”

Frustrations encountered when learning isiXhosa. Several learners who had already dropped isiXhosa in Grades 10 & 11 said their reason for having done so was because they were frustrated by their bad marks. Learners said if they were learning isiXhosa without the burden of getting bad marks they would study it. They added that it was worrying to study and learn things off by heart and still get bad marks.

Different starting points. Those who started learning isiXhosa in Grade 4 reportedly had an advantage over those who started in Grade 8. However, the learners reported that even though they had spent an average of 5,2 years learning isiXhosa from primary school, they were still unable to speak the language.

Shaky foundations. Interviewees reported that because of the poor teaching of isiXhosa in primary school it became very hard to catch up. Some teachers at primary school did not teach isiXhosa well. This led to the drop-outs at high school as learners found isiXhosa too difficult. Some stated that they started Afrikaans in Grade 3 and suggested that isiXhosa should be started at the same time, so that when they got to high school they would have a fair choice between the two languages.

The XAL curriculum. Several learners suggested that the fact that isiXhosa was not a compulsory subject, unlike Afrikaans, reduced its chances of being taken seriously as a subject at high school. Grade 12 learners not taking XAL said they became disappointed and frustrated by their failure to speak isiXhosa after many years of being in a XAL class. One learner said, poignantly, “I didn’t want to learn the vowels. I just wanted to be able to speak to people. So when I got to Standard 7 and I couldn’t have a conversation with a Xhosa speaking person, I just dropped it. Learning it did not help me to speak the language. I only learnt to add a vowel and how the plural works.” The learners reported that no matter how they learned the rules of the language it did not help them to acquire communication skills in isiXhosa. This seems to suggest that the pedagogy used when teaching isiXhosa is not effective.

3.6 On whether XAL should be a compulsory subject

Those currently taking XAL were asked in the questionnaire whether they thought Xhosa L2/L3 should be a compulsory subject for all learners in Western Cape schools. Out of 133 respondents, 86 (or 65%) indicated 'yes' while 45 (or 34%) indicated 'no'.

Yes	No
86 (65%)	45 (34%)

Table 10. Responses to a question about whether XAL should be compulsory in Western Cape schools (N = 133)

Of those who agreed with the notion of compulsion, 29 said it would facilitate communication with Xhosa speakers, while 26 referred to isiXhosa as being a provincial and a national language. Other reasons given were that it may also have use value in landing some jobs.

Among those who disagreed with the idea of compulsion, 25 felt XAL should only be learnt by those who chose to learn it, 10 said isiXhosa was irrelevant, and students should therefore not be forced to learn it. A number of learners not taking XAL said that when they finished school they would be emigrating: "Well quite simply, I don't think I'll be in South Africa, so I don't think Xhosa will be any advantage whatsoever."

4. Summary of findings

It is evident that the reasons for why XAL remains in crisis in Western Cape secondary schools have not changed since the days of Dugmore's 1991 research. The main indicator of this crisis is the low proportion of schools offering the subject, and the even lower proportion of learners taking the subject. The main reasons we found for the lack of interest in XAL can be summed up as follows:

- 1. Pedagogy:** large numbers of learners appear to have been alienated at primary school and junior secondary school levels by grammar-based teaching approaches to XAL that tended to emphasise structure and system at the expense of communication and cultural awareness. Structural rather than communicative approaches to the teaching of African languages have long been a feature not only of second- and third-language teaching of isiXhosa, but of first-language teaching as well, also in the Eastern Cape (cf. Barkhuizen 2001). The structural approach to the teaching of African languages has also extended to departments of African languages at university level (Dowling and Maseko 1995) and to teacher training institutions. It is no accident, therefore, that of the three XAL teachers in this study, it was the first-language speaker whose approach was the least popular with learners. Conversely, many of the learners in this study responded positively to a more communicative-conversational approach. It seems clear that unless communicative approaches are introduced, as envisaged in the new curriculum, it is more than likely that on pedagogical grounds alone, XAL will continue to lose potential clients. The goal of XAL should be to enable learners to develop conversational fluency and communicative ability, rather than merely possessing knowledge about grammar and 'culture', important as this may be. The grouping of language subjects into one Languages learning area, in the Revised National Curriculum Statement, is designed to facilitate the cross-fertilisation of progressive teaching and learning approaches. In this way African languages stand to benefit from the experience in communicative pedagogy of English as a Second Language (ESL) subject.

2. **Curriculum:** the status of XAL within the school curriculum continues to be lower than that of Afrikaans as an additional language in English-medium schools. Although the LiEP and the new curriculum have given schools the right to decide on their own language subjects (within certain parameters), none of the three schools has given English-speaking learners the option of choosing between Afrikaans and isiXhosa as a *second* language. Afrikaans has continued to enjoy the status of compulsory subject, while isiXhosa has been grouped as an optional third language alongside a range of competing subjects, with less timetable allocation (cf. Plüddemann et al. 2004). This amounts to little more than a continuation of apartheid-era language practices on the part of the schools concerned.
3. **Use value beyond school:** many learners, including some of those still taking XAL, questioned the usefulness of being proficient in a language that appeared to have no currency in high-status domains such as higher education and the world of work in the Western Cape, let alone outside the country. While most of those taking XAL felt that isiXhosa had instrumental value, the majority (those not taking XAL) clearly did not. Arising out of this finding, the challenge to the provincial education authorities, in conjunction with the Western Cape Language Committee and other interest groups, is to create economic incentives for the learning of isiXhosa. The Medical Faculty at the University of Cape Town is pointing the way by obliging medical students to take (and pass) isiXhosa for communicative (medical-related) purposes.

5. Conclusion

The findings are pertinent to the new (draft) language policy in the primary schools of the Western Cape (WCED 2002), which has as one of its central recommendations 'to institute incentives to guide all children towards electing to take (offer) the third official language of the Province as their second additional language (SAL)'. The document cites socio-economic and political, legal, educational and financial factors in support of this position, and spells out various steps to effect the recommendation. Among these are language awareness campaigns, teacher training to prepare teachers for bilingual and multilingual systems (cf. Young 1995), teacher redeployment along the lines of language competence, and the ever-present need for an explosion of quality African-language books and other learning support materials.

One challenge the policy will face is in regard to the dilemma of choice versus compulsion. While making the learning of African languages such as isiXhosa compulsory would raise their status overnight and swell the numbers of takers, it would also risk a serious political backlash. That, certainly, is the thinking behind the 'voluntarist' nature of the LiEP (cf. Mangena 2002), and the careful formulations about 'incentives' in the draft Western Cape language in education policy. Contending views have been expressed, as we have seen, by President Mbeki and by the James Report, although the latter stops short of a call for making African languages compulsory for Afrikaans and English speakers. Granville et. al (1998) do make an explicit case for compulsion, arguing that the compulsory taking of a marginalized (African) language in a multilingual post-apartheid dispensation cannot be equated with the apartheid-era imposition of Afrikaans, perceived as the language of the oppressor under Bantu Education. Furthermore, they suggest that some of the resources currently used in the vast ESL industry should be devolved to profile and resource the African languages. The authors aver that the absence of compulsion, for reasons of political sensitivity, would simply perpetuate existing inequalities and undermine the goal of producing multilingual citizens. Zubeida Desai⁹ has argued that one of the benefits of compulsion would be improved learning support materials, as privileged 'white' parents, already used to a certain standard of English teaching, would demand that quality Xhosa books¹⁰ be made available for their children!

In conclusion, two key issues remain to be addressed with regard to the choice vs. compulsion dilemma. One is that compulsion in and of itself would not address the issue of pedagogy. As indicated earlier, a generation of teachers of African languages would require retraining in more communicative and learner-centred methods to enhance learners' enjoyment and interest. For an example of a successful communicative approach to the

teaching of African languages based on the core value of *ubuntu*, see Murray's review of the TALK project (Murray 2002). The second is the question of the use value of African languages in the linguistic market beyond the school gates. Simply put, if isiXhosa cannot be used in higher education and the workplace, there are few incentives to learn it at school. The challenge for language planners 'from above' and 'from below', therefore, is to demonstrate that African languages have a vital role to play in the political economy. A first step in this direction may be to ascertain the actual use-value of African languages in mainstream jobs as well as in the small-, medium- and micro-enterprise sector. Besides yielding baseline information, such an inquiry would help raise awareness of language as a resource, particularly if it was timed to coincide with public language awareness campaigns¹¹.

Notes

- 1 Under apartheid, the Cape Province comprised today's Northern Cape, Western Cape and Eastern Cape. The former Cape Education Department (CED) was responsible for schooling for classified 'whites'.
- 2 Statistics provided by the Education Management and Information Service (EMIS) of the Western Cape Education Department.
- 3 Schools exclude those that fell under the former Department of Education and Training, i.e. historically schools for African-language speakers, as these do not offer isiXhosa as an Additional Language.
- 4 Source: Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS) unit, Western Cape Education Department.
- 5 According to Deumert and Dowling (2004), isiXhosa is offered as an additional-language subject at 81 secondary schools in the Western Cape while Afrikaans is offered at the same level at 503 secondary schools.
- 6 The new (draft) language policy in the primary schools of the Western Cape, for example, avers that '... research points to a belief that the introduction of a third language in the schools has the potential to promote cross-cultural tolerance and nation-building.' (http://wced.wcape.gov.za/documents/lang_policy/preamb_intro.html#6).
- 7 This occasional paper is an edited and updated version of a paper presented at the July 2002 conference of the African Languages Association of South Africa (ALASA), Durban.
- 8 See: Acknowledgements (inside front cover).
- 9 Personal communication, 2003. Zubeida Desai may be reached via the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape.
- 10 A number of communicatively-oriented guides to the learning of isiXhosa as an additional language have become available in recent years, some of which successfully draw on foreign-language pedagogy (e.g. Kirsch et al. 2001).
- 11 The Western Cape Language Committee runs an annual Xhosa Awareness Week and a Multilingualism Awareness Week campaign. (See http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/directories/public_entities/403/404)

References

- Alexander, N. 1989. *Language policy and national unity in South Africa/Azania*. Cape Town: Buchu Books.
- Barkhuizen, G. 2001. 'Learners' perceptions of the teaching and learning of Xhosa first language in Eastern and Western Cape high schools'. Summary Report. *PanSALB Occasional Paper* No.3. Pretoria: Pan South African Language Board.
- Department of Education. 1997. 'Language in education policy 14 July 1997'. (<http://education.pwv.gov.za/Policies%20and%20Reports/Policies/Language.htm>).
- Department of Education. 2002. 'Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) Policy. Languages: English - First Additional Language'. Pretoria: DoE.
- Deumert, A. and Dowling, T. 2004. 'The trouble with English'. *Mail & Guardian*, April 2 to 7.
- Dowling, T. and Maseko, P. 1995. 'African language teaching at universities'. In Heugh, K., Siegrühn, A. and Plüddemann, P. (eds), *Multilingual Education for South Africa*. Isando: Heinemann.
- Dugmore, C.P. 1991. 'The Status of isiXhosa in Cape Education Schools'. Unpublished Masters Dissertation, University of Cape Town.
- Edusource Data News*. 2000. No. 28/March.
- Granville, S., Janks, H., Joseph, M., Mphahlele, M., Ramani, E., Reed, Y. and Watson, P. 1998. 'English with or without g(u)ilt'. *Language and Education* 12.4: 254-72.
- Heugh, K. 1987. 'Underlying ideologies of language medium policies in multilingual societies with particular reference to Southern Africa'. Unpublished Mphil thesis, University of Cape Town.
- Kirsch, B., Skorge, S. with Magona, S. 2001. *Clicking with Xhosa. A Xhosa Phrasebook*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Mangena, M. 2002. (Edited speech). *PanSALB News* October-December, pp. 2-3.
- Murray, S. 2002. 'Democratic values, humanism and African language learning'. *Perspectives in Education* 20.1:111-21.
- Plüddemann, P., Braam, D., October, M. and Wababa, Z. 2004. 'Dual-medium and parallel-medium schooling in the Western Cape: from default to design'. *PRAESA Occasional Papers* no.17. Cape Town: Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa.
- Western Cape Education Department. 2002. 'Language Policy in the Primary Schools of the Western Cape'. (http://wced.wcape.gov.za/documents/lang_policy/).
- Working Group on Values in Education. 2000. 'Values, Education and Democracy'. [The James Report.] (http://education.pwv.gov.za/Policies_Reports/reports_2000/Values.htm).
- Young, D. 1995. 'Preparing teacher trainees to teach in multilingual classes'. In Heugh, K., Siegrühn, A. and Plüddemann, P. (eds), *Multilingual Education for South Africa*. Isando: Heinemann.

Appendix 1

STATUS OF XHOSA IN CAPE TOWN SECONDARY SCHOOLS SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE*

SECTION A

1. Name of school 2. School's telephone number 3. Fax number 4. Street address 5. Postal Address 6. E-mail address
7. What is (are) the main teaching medium(s) in your school? (Afrikaans/ English/ English & Afrikaans)
8. How many teachers have the following as their main home language? (Afrikaans/ English/ Xhosa/ other-specify)
9. Roughly how many learners have the following as their main home language? (Afrikaans/ English/ Xhosa/ other-specify)
10. Is Xhosa taught at your school? (yes/no)
11. If 'Yes', is it taught as a curricular subject or as an extra-curricular activity?
12. Has your school ever offered Xhosa as a L2/L3? (y/n)
13. Please explain.
14. Does your school offer Xhosa as a second language (L2) or third language (L3)? (y/n)

SECTION B: ONLY FOR SCHOOLS WHO ARE TEACHING XHOSA

15. If your school does teach Xhosa as a second language (L2) or third language (L3), please explain why it teaches Xhosa at L2/L3 level.
16. How many learners take Xhosa L2 or Xhosa L3 in the following grades? (8,9,10,11,12)
17. How many teachers of Xhosa do you have in your school?
18. Are the teachers qualified to teach Xhosa? (y/n)
19. If so, what are their qualifications?
20. What is the home language of the Xhosa teacher? (Afrikaans/ English/ Xhosa/ other-specify)
21. Are the teachers of Xhosa employed by the Department or by the School Governing body?
22. Are there any Xhosa language assistants? (y/n)
23. If yes, how many?

24. Who employs the Xhosa language assistants? (Department/ SGB/ NGOs)
25. a) Do any mother tongue speakers of Xhosa take Xhosa L2/L3 as a subject? (y/n)
b) If 'Yes,' how many?
c) What are the reasons?
22. Is Xhosa taught as a first language subject? Please elaborate
23. How many periods are given to Xhosa in the time-table per week in Grades 8–9 and in Grades 10–12?
24. Is Xhosa an examined subject at matric at your school? (y/n)
25. Do the learners have to choose between Xhosa and any other subjects? (E.g. Xhosa/ Computer Studies, Xhosa/Drama or Xhosa/ German? (y/n)
26. Please explain your answer to 29.
27. In your opinion is Xhosa losing or gaining popularity in your school?
28. In your opinion what are the reasons why students learn Xhosa in your school?
29. In your opinion what could be some of the reasons for the popularity or decline of Xhosa in your school?

* Please note that this is merely a list of the questions. For the laid-out version of the questionnaire, feel free to contact the authors (e-mail addresses elsewhere in this publication).

Appendix 2

STATUS OF XHOSA IN CAPE TOWN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

QUESTIONS TO LEARNERS TAKING XHOSA L2 OR L3*

Please tick the correct answer in the boxes and write your longer answers in the spaces provided.

A: IDENTITY

1. What is/are your home language or languages? (Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other-specify)
2. Is Xhosa your L2 or L3?
3. In your view, are there many people learning Xhosa in your school? (y/n)
4. In your opinion, what are the reasons for this number of learners of Xhosa?

B: STATUS OF XHOSA

5. Is learning Xhosa optional in your school? (y/n)
6. Please explain your answer to 5.
7. Is Xhosa L2/L3 one of the subjects you are going to write in the matric exam? (y/n)
8. Is Xhosa a subject that many of your peers are happy to learn? (y/n)
9. Please explain your answer to 8.
10. Is Xhosa an exciting subject to learn? (y/n)
11. Please explain your answer to 10.
12. Xhosa has many speakers in the Western Cape. Do you think that Xhosa should be learnt by all students in the province either as L1, or L2 and L3? (y/n)
13. Please explain your answer to 12.

C: MOTIVATION

14. Is it important at all that you should learn Xhosa at school? (y/n)
15. Please explain why.
16. Why do you learn Xhosa?
17. Did you choose to study Xhosa? (y/n)
18. Do you enjoy Xhosa? (y/n)

19. Please explain which part of Xhosa you enjoy the most? (E.g. Stories, dialogues, songs etc.)
20. Do you find it easy to learn Xhosa? (y/n)
21. Please explain why you think it is easy or difficult.

D: LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

22. Do you have any friends who speak Xhosa? (y/n)
23. Are there any Xhosa books that you use for learning Xhosa?
24. Do you read or speak Xhosa outside school? (y/n)
25. Can you read some Xhosa words with the knowledge of Xhosa you acquired from your lessons? (y/n)
26. Please explain why you are able to read or unable to read some Xhosa words.

* Please note that this is merely a list of the questions. For the laid-out version of the questionnaire, feel free to contact the authors (e-mail addresses elsewhere in this publication).

Appendix 3

STATUS OF XHOSA IN CAPE TOWN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

QUESTIONS TO TEACHERS OF XHOSA L2 OR L3

A: TEACHER'S PROFILE

1. How many years have you been teaching Xhosa?
2. Are you employed by the Department or the SGB?
3. Are you permanent or temporary?
4. Is your contract renewable?
5. Is there another Xhosa teacher in the school?

B: STATUS OF THE SUBJECT

6. How many periods are given to Xhosa in the time-table per week?
7. Do the students choose between Xhosa and other subjects (e.g. Xhosa/ Computer Studies, Xhosa/ Drama or Xhosa/ German)? Please explain.
8. How do you feel about the subject combination?
9. Is Xhosa an examination subject at matric level in your school?

C: CURRICULUM AND TEACHING APPROACHES

10. What do learners enjoy most about Xhosa?
11. Do the students find it easy to learn Xhosa? Please explain your answer.
12. What is the content of the Xhosa L2/ L3 curriculum, or what are some components of the L2/L3 curriculum?
13. What LSMs do you use when teaching Xhosa?
14. What are some of the titles of Xhosa books that you use?

D: MOTIVATION AND SUPPORT

15. Why do learners learn Xhosa in your school?
16. How does the learning of Xhosa benefit the learners in your school?

17. What kind of support do you get from the school?
18. What kind of support do you get from outside the school?
19. Where would you like to see Xhosa in the next few years?

E: ATTITUDES

20. In your opinion is Xhosa gaining or losing popularity in your school?
21. What are the reasons why students study Xhosa L2 or L3 in your school?
22. In your view, what could be some of the reasons for the popularity or decline in the number of students learning Xhosa L2/ L3?

Other publications in the series of PRAESA Occasional Papers:

1. Bloch, C. 1998. Literacy in the Early Years: Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Early Childhood Classrooms
2. Plüddemann, P., Mati, X. and Mahlalela-Thusi, B. 2000. Problems and Possibilities in Multilingual Classrooms in the Western Cape
3. Alexander, N. 2000. English Unassailable but Unattainable: The Dilemma of Language Policy in South African Education
4. Wolff, E.H. 2000. Pre-school Child Multilingualism and its Educational Implications in the African Context
5. Vesely, R. 2000. Multilingual Environments for Survival: The Impact of English on Xhosa-Speaking Students in Cape Town
6. Heugh, K. 2000. The Case Against Bilingual and Multilingual Education in South Africa
7. Broeder, P., Extra, G. and Maartens, J. 2002. Multilingualism in South Africa with a focus on KwaZulu-Natal and Metropolitan Durban
8. Bloch, C. 2002. Concepts of Early Childhood Development, Literacy Learning and Materials Development in Multilingual Settings
9. Heugh, K. 2002. Revisiting Bilingual Education in and for South Africa
10. Mahlalela, B. and Heugh, K. 2002. Terminology and Schoolbooks in Southern African languages: Aren't there any?
11. October, M. 2002. Medium of Instruction and its Effect on Matriculation Examination Results for 2000, in Western Cape Secondary Schools
12. Perry, T. 2003. Language Rights, Ethnic Politics: A Critique of the Pan South African Language Board
13. Alexander, N. 2003. The African Renaissance and the Use of African Languages in Tertiary Education
14. Giliomee, H. 2003. The Rise and Possible Demise of Afrikaans as a Public Language
15. Plüddemann, P., Braam, D., Broeder, P., Extra, G. and October, M. 2004. Primary Schools in the Western Cape: Language Vitality and Language Policy
16. Bloch, C. 2004. Enabling effective literacy learning in multilingual South African early childhood classrooms
17. Plüddemann, P., Braam, D., October, M. and Wababa, Z. 2004. Dual-medium and parallel-medium schooling in the Western Cape: from default to design.