

**INTRODUCING AN AFRICAN LANGUAGE FOR  
TEACHING AND LEARNING AT  
WITS UNIVERSITY**  
ALOYSIUS N. CONDUAH  
*University of Witwatersrand, South Africa*

**ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses research relating to the attitudes of selected groups of staff and students at the University of the Witwatersrand to the introduction of an African language alongside English for teaching and learning purposes. Academic staff, academic practitioners, first year and third year students were interviewed in order to elicit their views. A distinguishing feature of the findings was the ambivalence expressed by many of the respondents to the issues investigated. Such ambivalence suggests conflicting attitudes towards, on the one hand, the importance of gaining access to English and on the other hand, the students' need to express their own identities and show solidarity with peers and community.

*Keywords: English, African languages, access, identities*

**1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION AND LINGUISTIC  
EQUALITY**

In South Africa, the importance of language policy issues, especially with regard to the use of African languages, is emphasised in the country's 1996 Constitution. The Constitution declared eleven official languages of which nine are African languages. A Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) was also commissioned on 12 December, 1995 by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology to advise him about possible measures in achieving the government's language policy objective. LANGTAG stated in its final report to the Minister that,

No language is superior to any other but historical development and previous social struggles, including the defining facts of colonial conquest, racial discrimination and apartheid, have made it possible for English and Afrikaans to become the dominant languages in South Africa (LANGTAG, 1996: 13).

LANGTAG (1996: 69) also identified “the fast growth of the English language, and its dominance in the domains of science and technology as well as in sport and music” as a major impediment to the development of African languages in the country. This raises further pedagogic questions about the ongoing

dominance of English as a language of learning and teaching across the education sector in South Africa. There is also widespread concern in South Africa about the performance of black learners in examinations at various levels in education.

There is therefore the need to elevate the status of the African languages in educational institutions as a means of achieving linguistic equality in the country (Baker 1997: 58). However, English is the sole language for teaching and learning at Wits University and most other South African universities. Wits, which has over 21, 000 students, admits South African and international students from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Consequently, all the eleven official languages of South Africa and 65 other languages are spoken at the University as primary languages (Wits Students' Language Profiles, 2002). Most of the students are also English Second Language speakers as shown in the following 2002 student enrolment statistics: Blacks — 47%; Whites — 36%; Indians — 15%; and Coloureds — 2% (Wits Students' Information and Record System, 2002).

## 2. THE USE OF AN AFRICAN LANGUAGE FOR INSTRUCTION

This study, which was done between 20 October 2000 and 15 February 2001, used a range of quantitative and qualitative data procedures to investigate the views of selected groups of staff and students on African languages for instruction. The research participants, who voluntarily took part in the study, included 154 first year students and 11 third year students. The combination of the two groups of students was intended to balance the views of those first year students encountering the English-only tertiary institution for the first time, with a sample of views from those third year students who were about to complete their studies.

Eighty percent of the first year students in the study spoke one or more of the nine African languages as their home language. 12% spoke English and 3% spoke Afrikaans as first language. The third year students comprised two English first language speakers and nine who spoke English as an additional language. Both groups of students interviewed were from Applied English Language Studies, Commerce Development Programme, Geology and Mathematics.

Also surveyed were thirteen academic staff and nine academic practitioners or study advisors who were selected from fifteen academic departments at the University. Their selection was made from different departments in order to ensure that the data sample for the study was taken from as many constituencies within the university community as possible. The academic practitioners are also engaged in general teaching as well as the University's Academic Development Programme. This programme was introduced in 1980 to prepare students from 'disadvantaged schools' to meet the academic demands of higher education. The

academic practitioners offer students extra tutorials and individual consultations with the aim of improving students' proficiency in English and providing them with general academic skills as well.

Respondents were asked the following questions:

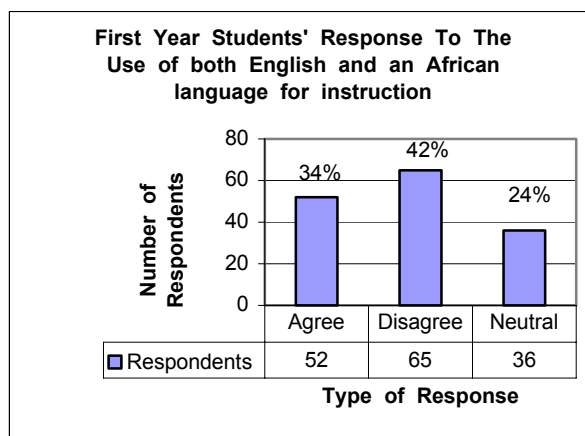
1. An African language should be introduced in addition to English as languages for teaching and learning at Wits University.
2. Would you like to see both English and an African language as languages for teaching and learning (media of instruction) at Wits University? Yes/No.
3. Zulu or Sotho should be the African language chosen for teaching and learning (medium of instruction) at Wits University. Yes/No.
4. There will be more significant improvement in students' academic performance if an African language is introduced in addition to English for teaching and learning at Wits University? Yes/No.

(See appendices for detailed samples of the questionnaires.)

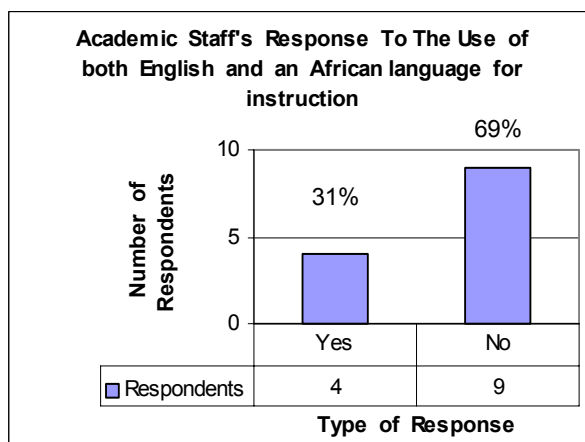
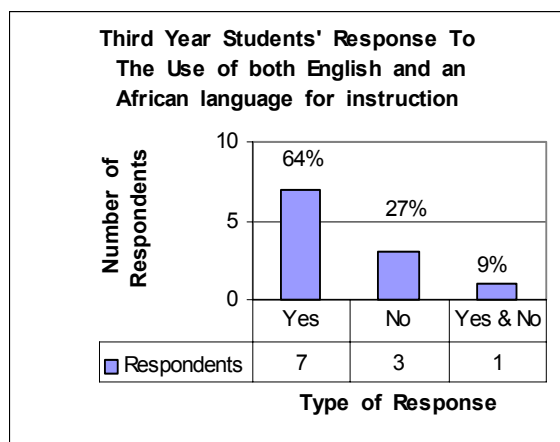
## 2.1 RESPONDENTS' VIEWS CONCERNING POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION OF AN AFRICAN LANGUAGE IN ADDITION TO ENGLISH FOR INSTRUCTION

The first year students responded to the statement: An African language should be introduced in addition to English as languages for teaching and learning at Wits University, whilst the third year students and the academic staff answered the question: Would you like to see both English and an African language as languages for teaching and learning at Wits University? Their responses are shown on the following graphs.

### 2.1.1 An African language should be introduced in addition to English as a language for teaching and learning at Wits University.



**2.1.2** Would you like to see both English and an African language as languages of teaching and learning at Wits University?



Differing views were expressed regarding the use of an African language together with English for instruction. More than a quarter (26%) of all the respondents thought that the use of an African language could enhance teaching and learning because students would be more willing to participate in the classroom and freely express their ideas. A smaller but still significant group of respondents (8%) felt that the introduction of an African language in addition to English would lower the standard of English at the university. This group argued that some students would be more inclined to use an African language rather than English.

Some respondents (41%) anticipated negative social and cultural effects such as disunity among students and violation of some students' linguistic rights if any one African language were selected for introduction.

*There is a problem of too much diversity of races as a result the common ground is English. Having to dwell into another language will be too much problematic because choosing one particular African language will be difficult (S137).*

In their view, introducing an African language would not be feasible because of "... too much diversity of races ..." (S137) in the university. Thus, "... the common ground is English ..." (S137). Against this backdrop, words such as 'problem', 'problematic', 'too much', and 'difficult' express students' anxieties.

The students argued further that the authorities' inability to introduce all eleven official languages for instruction would be contrary to the country's constitution, and that some students were therefore likely to feel marginalized.

*We have 11 official languages and I strongly believe that they should (all) be used... (S107).*

## *Introducing an African Language for Teaching and Learning*

*It would not be right and just for those students who don't understand these two languages (English and either Zulu or Sotho). Only if all 11 languages are introduced and each student will choose which one to go for (S1).*

*If you prioritise one language, it will be discrimination against the other 10 languages (S22).*

The use of 'right and just' in "It would not be right and just for those students who don't understand these two languages" (S1) suggests a violation of students' linguistic rights regarding the language for teaching and learning. A further comment in this regard: "... Only if all 11 languages are introduced and each student will choose which one to go for" (S1) emphasises S1's strong belief in linguistic equality.

Some students in the survey argued that introducing any one African language could paradoxically result in racial and ethnic divisions.

*This is not such a good idea because people must learn to mix and communicate if the above is done more separation will occur culturally (S87).*

Indeed, the statement: "... because people must learn to mix and communicate if the above is done more separation will occur culturally" (S87) underscores the need to maintain good racial and ethnic relations in the university. These respondents may have been reacting to experiences in South Africa's history where the compulsory use of English and later Afrikaans as languages for instruction created instability in schools. However, many students (44,5%) in the survey also thought that introducing an African language in addition to English for instruction could lead to more effective oral and written communication, academic progress for students and unity among ethnic and racial groups at the university.

*It will make the learning process a lot easier (S136).*

*For those who have difficulties in other languages. So that they can express themselves and to understand (S14).*

*Most students cannot communicate effectively in English. This will result in other languages being overridden and outclassed (S19).*

S19's view that African languages might be "...overridden and outclassed ..." shows a concern for some loss of identity through the undermining of African languages. In the opinion of these respondents, students who are less competent in English could articulate their ideas in the African language. In addition to understanding lectures better and making meaningful contributions to learning,

all students would have equal opportunities leading to better academic performance and peaceful co-existence. These results were, however, unexpected because much as I had anticipated students' difficulties with the use of English, the percentage (44,5%) of the students who favoured the use of a local language and the intensity of the students' views, as evident in the following quotes, were overwhelming.

*I think and I strongly believe that one African language should be recognised for teaching and learning... (S24).*

*We are not all privileged enough, some of us come from township schools and rural schools where teaching is done in the mother tongue (S100).*

The phrases "*I think and I strongly believe that one African language should be recognised for teaching and learning ...*" and the use of the certainty modal in "*...one African language should be recognised ...*" expresses S24's strong conviction regarding the use of an African language. S100 also reiterates some respondents' perceptions that there are two groups of students. One group is privileged because English is its first language and has also attended well-resourced schools. In contrast, the other group is mostly "*... from township schools and rural schools ...*" (S100), which have poor material and human resources.

The results of this research are consistent with the model suggested by Alexander and Heugh. In their multi-medium and additive bilingual models of education (Alexander 1995a: 80; Heugh 1995: 86, respectively), they suggest that primary languages of learners in South Africa should be maintained throughout education whilst a second or third language would be added. Their models emphasise that "African languages are promoted as valid languages of learning/media of instruction" (Heugh, 1995: 88) alongside English to ensure students' equal participation in the learning process.

## 2.2 INTERPLAY BETWEEN ACADEMIC SUCCESS, AFRICAN IDENTITY AND ACCESS TO ENGLISH

Among those African language speakers who responded to the survey, there were however complex positions presented on the advantages of taking African language instruction to accompany English. Conflicting and competing views were expressed, for instance, regarding pressure to maintain both African identity and access to English.

*One part of me feels it is good to study in English the other part of me feels that it will still be nicer if another language were introduced (S71).*

### *Introducing an African Language for Teaching and Learning*

The above quote emphasises a struggle to accommodate both English and an African language as indicated in “*the other part of me feels its good to study in English the other part of me feels that it will still be nicer ...*” (S71). This quote aptly captures students’ struggle to simultaneously accept the need for access to English and to assert their African identity. Whilst the attitude expressed seems to reject an assimilative approach to education, it suggests perhaps a desire for a more multilingual approach to the learning situation.

Students tended to recognize the need for access to English because this access could provide them with “social mobility and material power” (Granville et al., 1998: 258).

*The corporate world demands it. We are now going global. If other languages are introduced let them be languages like French that can be used to compete out there (S148).*

The word, ‘*demands*’ underscores the importance of English for the students’ future careers and the global dominance of English. At the same time, students regarded the use of an African language for teaching and learning as a means of asserting their African identity.

*I think and I strongly believe that one African language should be recognized for teaching and learning. We want our culture to be part and parcel of the global community (S24).*

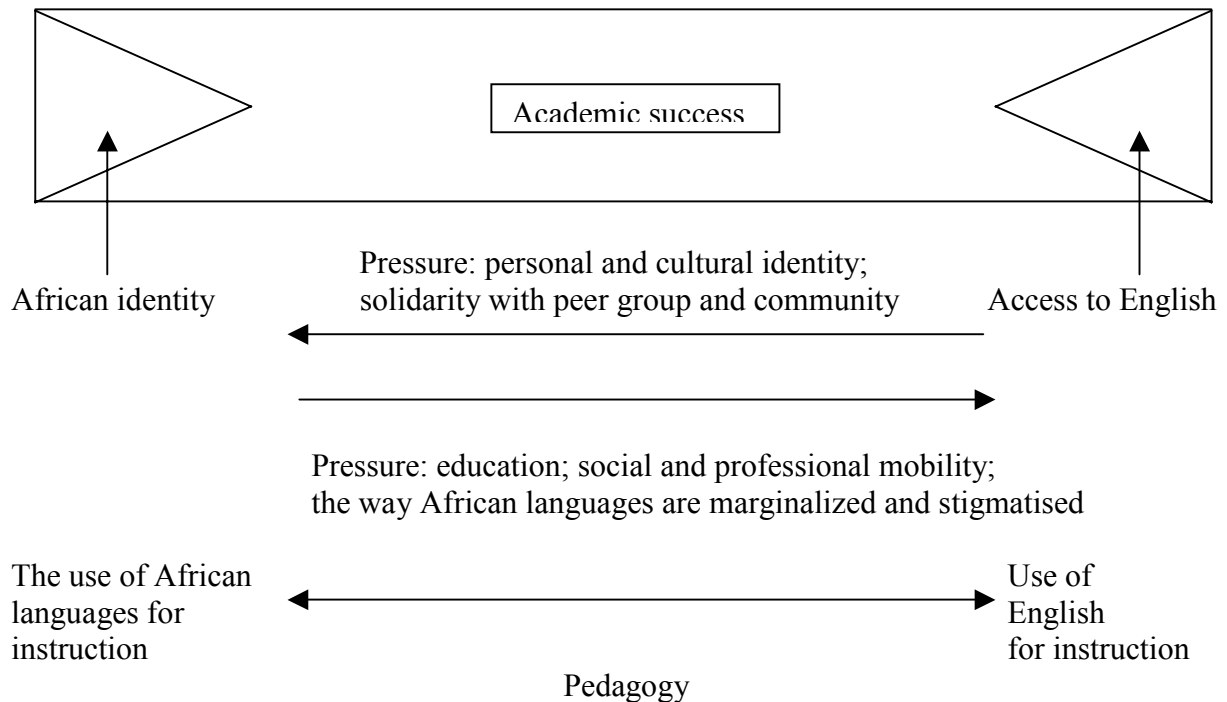
*So that the African languages should not be taken for granted and that people from different corners of life might be interested in learning and teaching other fellows (S122).*

However, the use of both the strong and the weak modals in “... *the African languages should not be taken for granted ...*” and “... *people from different corners of life might be interested in learning and teaching other fellows*” (S122) simultaneously suggests certainty and uncertainty. In this case, S122 has conflicting attitudes concerning the effects of using an African language for instruction. Indeed, students see a link between African languages and their own identities. They feel that in promoting these languages, they (the speakers) and their culture could “... *be part and parcel of global community*” (S24).

Since the students in the survey appeared to be torn between the importance of English as a global language and the need to feel associated with their own languages, their attitudes aptly reflect the view expressed by Skutnabb-Kangas that learners often struggle to identify themselves within both their own language and culture and the culture of an additional language. In doing so, they seem simultaneously to distance themselves from their language and culture, and yet fail to become part of the culture of the additional language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 15). However, the findings of this study significantly suggest some students’ eagerness to be identified with their language and culture.

Figure 1 below attempts to demonstrate the conflicting pressures suggested in the data by students who feel the need to gain access to English. However, they feel the need to use their own primary African language for teaching and learning as well as to support their identities as African students in a white western institution.

**Figure 1.** The language continuum — An interplay between three factors.



*Source: Adapted from LINC materials, 1987: 280.*

At one end of the continuum, pressure for international interaction and social and economic empowerment appears to make students consider the importance of gaining access to English. One student advocates a limited use of an African language, considering the international status of English.

*Possibly on a small scale, for specific cases, but by avoiding English, no student can hope to excel in any mainstream of commercial field, due to international pressure (S153).*

S153’s acceptance of an African language “... *on a small scale for specific cases ...*” and the conjunction, ‘but’ in “... *but by avoiding English no student can hope to excel ...*” also suggests a struggle to deal with the competing demands of English on the one hand and African languages on the other.

At the other end of the continuum, pressure to show solidarity with peers and community also tends to make students from culturally diverse backgrounds desire recognition for and affirmation of their African identity.



## *Introducing an African Language for Teaching and Learning*

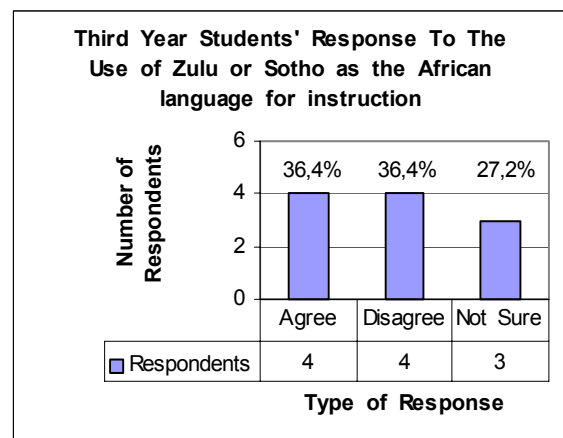
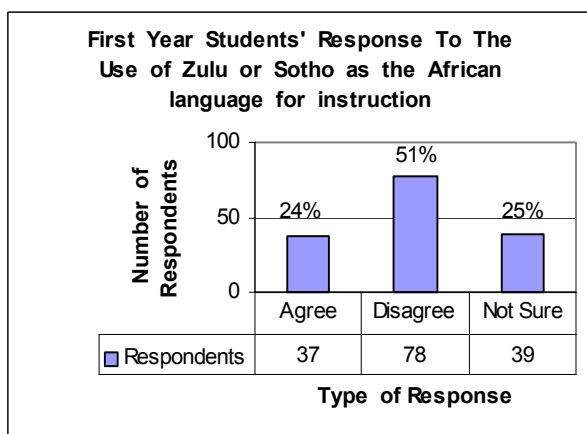
*If possible, other languages should be used to accommodate those who can express themselves fully in their mother tongue and find it difficult to express themselves in English (S20).*

*So that our African languages do not die. Teaching in one of these African languages will be better for the future generations (S107).*

S107 displays certainty about the positive impact of introducing an African language for instruction. This certainty is expressed by the use of the strong certainty modal, “*will*” and the negative in “... *African languages don't die over foreign languages ...*”, and “...*one of these languages will be better for the future generations ...*”. However, the quote from S20 above expresses an ambivalent opinion indicating some students’ failure to commit themselves to one position. This can be seen in the strong certainty modal in “... *other languages should be used to accommodate those who ... find it hard to express themselves in English ...*” (S20). These statements suggest that both English and an African language could be used. Similarly, “*If possible, other languages should be used ...*” (S20) also underscores a struggle to make a clear decision. Indeed, the uncertainties shown in a number of the students’ responses clearly indicate this struggle to contain competing pressures and demands.

### **2.2.1 Selecting one African Language for Teaching and Learning**

Problems remain regarding the criteria for the choice of an African language. The first and third year students who were interviewed in this study were presented with the following statement in the questionnaire: “Zulu or Sotho should be the African language chosen for teaching and learning at Wits University”. The results are shown on the graphs below.



It is significant to note that 76% and 63% of the first and third year students respectively either opposed the choice of Zulu or Sotho or were undecided, whereas only about one fifth of both groups of students accepted it. When these results are compared with the comments regarding the introduction of an

African language, it appears that selecting either of these two languages could be problematic.

*The problem here is why Zulu, why Sotho, what about other languages. We are opening up to a lot of debate on impractical reality. Our society (South Africa) had to adapt to English being the medium. It is good enough, global enough, it will not completely erode our Africanism. So let us stick to English (S137).*

Concerns about good relations among all groups in the university community were stated over and over again. Likewise, the need to "... *stick to English*" is repeated (S137). However, the underlined words: "... *We are opening up to a lot of debate on impractical reality ... it will not completely erode our Africanism ...*" (S137) suggest S137's struggle to reconcile African identity and access to English.

Some students who were clearly in favour of using either Zulu or Sotho for instruction argued that,

*Also to promote these languages and I think [as] whites pass at [the] university, Zulus and Sothos will have a high pass rate because they understand their mother tongue (NF3).*

NF3 sees the positive side of selecting either Zulu or Sotho for instruction. The use of an African language would enable more African students to pass. On the contrary, others condemned the use of Zulu and Sotho because it would enable only those groups to improve.

*Why Zulu or Sotho, how about the other African languages? If we were bound I would not do it. I would rather go to another university (NF5).*

*Ask yourself, "Why should it be Zulu and Sotho out of all 11 languages. What about other people's languages?" (S70).*

The following words and questions, '*Why?*', '*How about?*', '*If we were bound*', '*Ask yourself*' and '*What about*', in the above comments tend to suggest strong sentiments regarding loss of identity as a result of compulsory use of another person's language. A possible option to this group of students is to "... *go to another university*" (NF5). Their attitude accords with Dyers' (1999: 81) observation that,

Students have expressed the concern that language policies favouring the use of dominant regional languages as media of instruction at universities, might rekindle the spectre of apartheid by excluding speakers of other mother tongues.

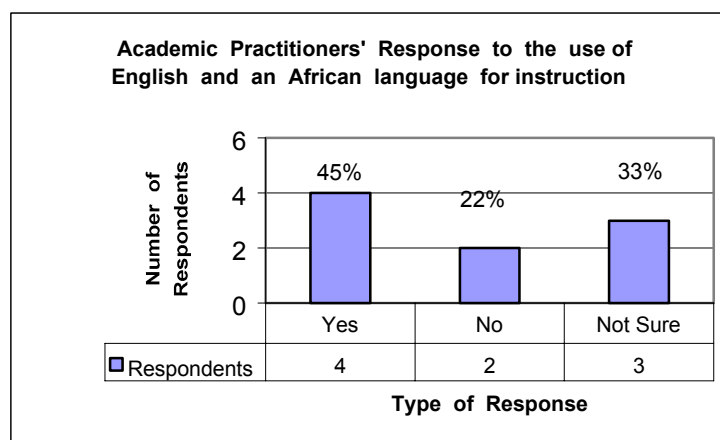
## *Introducing an African Language for Teaching and Learning*

The students' attitudes raise a number of interesting pedagogic questions as to which language — English or an African language — would be more appropriate for major teaching and learning use. Cummins (1996 & 2000) and Alexander (1995b) and Heugh (1995) suggest that the learner's primary language (an African language for most students at Wits University) and an additional language (English) are equally important and necessary for students' academic progress. The findings from this study corroborate the opinions of these writers. In view of these research results, the introduction of an African language for instruction could raise students' self-esteem and fulfil their desire to be accepted in the university community.

Indeed, students showed significant fear of repeating past mistakes where Afrikaans, which is not even an international language, was imposed as a language for instruction on learners. Thus, the success of introducing an African language for teaching and learning at the University of the Witwatersrand require education of all groups in the university community concerning the possible outcomes as outlined in the research literature on bilingual education. Students' readiness to accept the chosen African language would be crucial for the feasible introduction of an African language, and this needs to be an informed process, rather than one based on discredited inappropriate historical parallels.

### **2.2.2 Perceptions About the Use of an African Language for Progress In Students' Academic Work**

Academic practitioners were interviewed to solicit their opinions concerning the significance of an African language in students' academic progress. They responded to the following statement: There will be more significant improvement in students' performance if an African language is introduced in addition to English for teaching and learning at Wits University. Their responses are captured on this graph.



Most (Whites: 78% and Blacks: 22%) believed that there could be progress in students' academic work if an African language were introduced. However, it is important to observe that more than half (57%) of them either opposed the use of an African language or were undecided with 43% in support. What appears to be surprising is that considering the task of the academic practitioners in helping students to improve upon their academic performance, one would have expected them to be committed to the use of learners' primary language in the teaching and learning processes and therefore advocates the introduction of an African language for instruction.

Some academic practitioners who accepted this suggestion showed uncertainty about the use of an African language as evidenced in the cautious modality of their expression: "*Students probably feel more comfortable using their home language and therefore are better at expressing themselves in it*" (AP9) and "... I'm not sure how significant it would be ... questionnaires are not really adequate — we will need to do more qualitative research ..." (AP5).

Their tentative approval both implicitly and explicitly indicates not only the need for more research, but the need to publicise the research evidence which does exist, and which favours the introduction of African languages for instruction. However, the results of this study clearly demonstrate students' desire to have both English and an African language used for teaching and learning.

Academic practitioners who doubted that an African language would ensure significant improvement tended to be concerned more with the effects of using these languages on their own disciplines than on the overall academic performance of students. Thus, one of them feels that,

*Using a local language to teach sociology would generate real challenges to both students and teachers (AP6).*

The argument appears to be that the relatively undeveloped specialist vocabulary and conceptual base outside English or other European languages in which sociology evolved, could limit the potential for deep learning. Therefore African languages are considered inappropriate for instruction. Prah, however, argues that,

African development cannot mean the ... relegation of African languages to disuse, stagnation and death. The real and only basis for sustained and realizable socially emancipatory development for Africans, hinges on the usage of African languages, as the instrumental premises of African scientific and technological development (Prah, 1993: 75).

Prah emphasizes the importance of African languages in all sectors that are concerned with the improvement of Africans. The views of some respondents actually reflect the opinion expressed by Prah. One academic practitioner stated that,

## *Introducing an African Language for Teaching and Learning*

*... if learners have a choice of language medium in which to explore their understanding of concepts, their performance is likely to improve (AP 2).*

Where the use of an African language would enhance understanding of teaching and learning and contribute African experiences and perspectives to educational content, it may have to be considered, both for its direct effect on individual learning outcomes, and for its longer-term role of the cultural contribution of African thought to scholarship itself.

Having examined the views of the academic staff, academic practitioners and the students, I would like to point out that students have to recognize the need to stretch themselves in order to reach the required levels of language competence. One respondent proposed that “*even people [students] who cannot speak English very well should make an effort to improve on that ...*” (S152). The concern was that “*if it [an African language] is introduced, the African students may not bother to learn English ...*” (S129) and the policy “*... might discourage those people [students with low proficiency of English] from attending lectures taught in English ...*” (S152). Thus, in order to attain academic growth, students may have to experience some language difficulties in doing their assignments.

At the same time, academic staff needs to provide students with support to ensure the successful performance of tasks. One respondent stated that,

*If a student is not exposed to an English class, then lecturers assume that [all] students know the basics of the English language and take it for granted [and fail] to explain technical terms (NF 8).*

For this reason, classroom tasks should be sufficiently demanding to teach the materials, but adequate support from staff should also be given to students who require it in order to meet the demands of the academy and this may include first-language instruction as advocated by some respondents in the survey. This view is consistent with Cummins’s argument that “Cognitive challenge is essential for academic growth but the contextual support necessary for bilingual students to meet that challenge must also be present in the activities” (Cummins, 1996: 59).

### 3. HARMONISATION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

With regard to the violation of linguistic rights when one African language is chosen above another for learning and teaching, one local solution for the institution under study can be found in the harmonization of Nguni and Sotho languages. Alexander (1989; 1992) clearly proposes the harmonization of these two languages. In Conduah (1999), I argued that the harmonization of Nguni

and Sotho languages is an important option in any attempt to address issues regarding the multiple African languages in South Africa.

Biographical data collected from the survey of 154 first year students in this research indicated that 63,4% of them are Nguni (34,5%) and Sotho (28,9%) speakers. Thus, if a standard Nguni or Sotho language were to be used for instruction, most students from the sample would be likely to feel represented. Such a language would conflate different dialects: four main dialects, Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi from the Nguni language group with the Sotho language group consisting of Tswana, Pedi and Sesotho variants.

Recent statistics show that from a base of 46% of the Wits student body recorded as Black (including international students from other parts of Africa), and therefore likely to be first African language speakers, 40% are speakers of the nine African languages in South Africa. Out of this number (40%), 35% speak one or more of Nguni or Sotho dialects (Wits Students' Language Profile, 2002). This suggests that a total Wits student population of 35% will be able to participate in instruction via a harmonized Nguni or Sotho language.

#### 4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study clearly highlights the following issues:

- The need for access to English
- A struggle on the part of students to accommodate both English and an African language for instruction
- Conflicts between access to English and students' African identities
- Conflicting attitudes towards both the Zulu and Sotho languages and disagreements regarding criteria for selecting an African language
- A 'we-they' divide between the students who are African language speakers and non-African language speakers

I would like to argue that the socio-political conditions in South Africa and the composition of the student population at the University of the Witwatersrand seem to necessitate careful reconsideration of the university's current language policy of using English as the only language of instruction. Most of the students (more than 54%), currently being admitted to the university, are from previously 'disadvantaged' schools. They are also mainly English Second Language speakers. These students' academic growth could be greatly enhanced if what appears, from the survey results, to be their two prime needs — access to English and affirmation of their African identity — could be met through the use of both English and an African language for instruction.

It is my view, having taken cognizance of all the data, that without a change to the current policy on language of instruction, the university's publicly promoted commitment to

- Promoting freedom of enquiry and the search for knowledge
- Fostering a culturally diverse, intellectually stimulating and harmonious environment within which there is vigorous critical exchange and communication (*Wits Today*, Wits website)

may be meaningful to a small number of its students and remain an illusion for the majority.

## REFERENCES

Alexander, N. 1989.

*Language and National Unity in South Africa/Azania*. Cape Town: Buchu Books.

1992 Harmonising Nguni and Sotho. In: N. T. Crawhall (ed.), *Democratically Speaking — International Perspectives on Language Planning*, pp. 56–68. National Language Project.

1995a Models of Multilingual Schooling For A Democratic South Africa. In: K. Heugh, A. Siergruhn & P. Pluddemann (eds.), *Multilingual Education For South Africa*, pp.79–82. Johannesburg. Heinemann.

1995b Multilingualism For Empowerment. In: K. Heugh, A. Siergruhn & P. Pluddemann (eds.), *Multilingual Education For South Africa*, pp. 37–41. Johannesburg. Heinemann.

Baker, J. M.1997.

*The Importance of the Role of Language in Fostering Multilingualism in Educational Contexts in South Africa*. **A Journal of Language Learning**, 13(2): 50 –58.

Conduah, A. N.1999.

*Harmonisation of the Nguni and Sotho Languages: Possibilities and Pitfalls*. A Long Essay. Unpublished. Johannesburg. University of the Witwatersrand.

Cummins, J. 1996.

*Negotiating Identities: Education For Empowerment in a Diverse Society*. Ontario, Canada: CAFE.

2000 *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters LTD.

Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. 1996.

*Towards A National Language Plan For South Africa: Final Report of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG)*. Pretoria, Department of Arts, Science, Culture and Technology.

Dyers, C. 1999.

*Xhosa Students' Attitudes Towards Black South African Languages at the University of the Western Cape. South African Journal of African Languages*, 19(2): 73–83.

Granville, S., et al. 1998.

*English With or Without G(u)ilt: A Position Paper on Language in Education Policy for South Africa. Language and Education*, 12(4): 254–269.

Heugh, K. 1995.

The Multilingual School: Modified Dual Medium. In: K. Heugh, A. Siegruhn and P. Pluddemann (eds.), *Multilingual Education for South Africa*, pp. 83–88. Johannesburg: Heinemann.

LINC. 1987.

*Materials For Professional Development*. Unpublished. These were intended as learning support materials for teachers in preparation for the new curriculum in the United Kingdom in 1987.

Prah, K. 1993.

*Mother Tongue For Scientific and Technological Development in Africa*. Geneva, German Foundation for International Development.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. 1981.

*Bilingualism or Not — The Education of Minorities*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters LTD.

University of Witwatersrand. 2002

*Wits Students' Language Profiles*. Unpublished. Johannesburg. University of Witwatersrand.

University of Witwatersrand. 2002.

*Wits Students' Information and Record Systems*. Unpublished. Johannesburg. University of Witwatersrand.

**About the author:** Aloysius N. Conduah is a PhD student in the School of Literature and Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. He read his Master of Arts degree in English Language Education with particular interest in language policy issues. He is currently researching on the relationship between language and employment among Ghanaian immigrants living in Johannesburg, South Africa.



APPENDIX

**QUESTIONNAIRE A  
STUDENTS' LANGUAGE PROFILES (First year students )  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**1. CURRENT LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND (Wits)**

1.1 English should be used as the only language for instruction at Wits University

Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure	
----------------	--	-------	--	-------------------	--	----------	--	----------	--

Reason/s -----

--

**2. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

2.1 An African language should be introduced in addition to English as languages for teaching and learning (mediums of instruction) at Wits University

Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure	
----------------	--	-------	--	-------------------	--	----------	--	----------	--

Reason/s-----

-

2.2 Zulu or Sotho should be the African language chosen for teaching and learning (medium of instruction) at Wits University.

Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure	
----------------	--	-------	--	-------------------	--	----------	--	----------	--

**QUESTIONNAIRE B  
VIEWS OF THIRD YEAR STUDENTS  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**1. CURRENT LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

1.1 Are you experiencing difficulty with the use of academic English in class? Yes/No.

1.2 If yes, difficulties are mostly in the following areas:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Oral competence					
Reading difficulties					
Inadequate vocabulary					
Problems with sentence structure					
Paragraph construction					
Discourse level structure					
Disciplinary discourse competence					
Other					

Any comments on any area/s-----  
-----  
--

**2. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

2.1 Would you like to see both English and an African language as languages for teaching and learning (media of instruction) at Wits University? Yes/No

Reason/s-----  
-

2.2 Zulu or Sotho should be the African language chosen for teaching and learning (medium of instruction) at Wits University. Yes/No

Reason/s-----  
--

**LANGUAGE MODEL**

3.1 Do you believe that the use of both English and an African language as media of instruction would help to improve the academic performance of students at Wits University? Yes/No.

*Introducing an African Language for Teaching and Learning*

**QUESTIONNAIRE C  
VIEWS OF ACADEMIC STAFF  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**1. CURRENT LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

1.1 Currently English is the only language for teaching and learning (medium of instruction) at Wits University. Do your students have difficulties with the use of English in teaching and learning? Yes/No

1.2 If yes, difficulties are mostly in the following areas:

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
Oral competence										
Reading difficulties										
Inadequate vocabulary										
Problems with sentence structure										
Paragraph construction										
Discourse level structure										
Disciplinary discourse competence										
Other										

Any comments on any area/s-----  
-----

1.3 Research has suggested that learners must first acquire literacy skills and learning strategies in their first languages in order to function well in the second/additional language.

Do you think that students are likely to develop sufficient proficiency in English (an additional language for most students) to cope with the academic demands of the use of English at Wits University? Yes / No

Reason/s -----  
-----

**2. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

2.1 Would you like to see both English and an African language as languages for teaching and learning (media of instruction) at Wits University? Yes / No

Reason/s -----  
-----

**QUESTIONNAIRE D  
VIEWS OF ACADEMIC PRACTITIONERS  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**1. CURRENT LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

1.1 Which group of students experience difficulties with the use of English for teaching and learning at Wits University?  
-----  
--

1.2 How would you identify the difficulties?

Language only	Concepts only	Language and concepts together	
---------------	---------------	--------------------------------	--

1.3 Difficulties are mostly in the following areas:

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree
Oral competence									
Reading difficulties									
Inadequate vocabulary									
Problems with sentence structure									
Paragraph construction									
Discourse level structure									
Disciplinary discourse competence									
Other									

Any comments on any area/s-----  
---

**2. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

2.1 There will be more significant improvement in students' performance if an African language is introduced in addition to English for teaching and learning. Yes/No

Reason/s-----  
---

**3. LANGUAGE MODEL**

3.1 Students are likely to perform better if English continues to be the language for instruction at Wits University. Yes/No

Reason/s-----  
---