

**The African Renaissance
and the
Use of African Languages
in
Tertiary Education**

Neville Alexander



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Neville Alexander is Director of the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa. He has done much pioneering work in the field of language policy and planning in South Africa since the early 1980s via organisations such as the National Language Project and PRAESA, as well as through the LANGTAG process.

He has been influential in respect of language policy development with various government departments, including Education.

In this work, he deals with the social, political and economic implications of the intellectualisation of indigenous African languages and suggests a long-term, large-scale and systematic strategy for effecting this core aspect of the revitalisation of Africa.



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

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Counter-hegemonic social movements

In the era of what is now irrevocably called “globalisation”, there is a universal tendency towards a Nietzschean *Umwertung aller Werte*, i.e., a turning upside-down, or an inversion, of all established values, patterns of interaction and power relations¹. In all domains of social life, people are compelled to reconsider their traditional ways of being and their ways of seeing other people either as individuals or as reputed social groups. At the political level, this process is mostly documented and lamented in terms of what is taken to be the inevitable erosion of the sovereignty of the national state. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet bloc in 1989-90 are viewed as the symbolical benchmark of the era, the Year 1 of globalisation. In practical political terms, the resultant dominance of the USA, a situation which is usually described in terms of a “unipolar world”, is both accepted and rejected by the other two clearly discernible constellations of powerful states in what is in reality a tripolar world, which is constantly being structured and rent by the synergies and tensions generated by the American, the European and the East Asian poles. Institutionally, at the global level, the creeping disempowerment of the United Nations Organisation is the ultimate demonstration that national state sovereignty is being diminished as the power and the arrogance of the USA (and of the other poles of political gravitation) increase in a menacing zero-sum process.

Manuel Castells, in *The Power of Identity*, the second volume of his trilogy on *The Information Age*, has traced the reasons for and the modalities of the diverse range of counter-hegemonic social movements on the left as well as on the right of the political and cultural-political spectrum, which arise as a dialectical response by those social forces that are immediately threatened by this hegemonic juggernaut. In the context of this conference, it is, among other things, precisely the power of identity that we wish to examine and to interrogate with the utmost care. According to Castells (1997:65-66), various social movements are generated as defensive reactions to globalisation’s dissolution of the autonomy

of organisations, institutions and local communication systems. They are manifestations of a defensive response to the blurring of boundaries, the individualisation of social relations of production arising from the destabilisation of workplaces and of the labour market more generally that are the consequences of networking and flexibility. And at the most inaccessible personal or subjective level, they are reactions to the terrifying assault on traditional personality systems embedded in patriarchal relations. This “crisis of the patriarchal family” is at the level of individual psychology the source of the diverse religious fundamentalisms, cultural nationalisms and territorial communalisms which we experience and record at the level of social psychology.

This is the real explanation, as he sees it, of the resurgence of ethnically defined social movements at the end of the millennium. Without exploring this strand any further, I want to suggest that much of the vestigial Afrikaner irredentism that manifests itself from time to time is undoubtedly explicable in terms of this explanatory model. However, Castells’ inference that such “resistance identities” – which are doomed – may give rise to “project identities” that are able to turn the logic of globalisation to their advantage and become agents of social transformation is extremely helpful when we consider the phenomenon of the “African renaissance”. The pertinent effects of such project identities, according to Castells, depending on the specific circumstances in which they operate, may be either revolutionary or reactionary. As “havens” of refuge from the turmoil engendered by globalisation, resistance identities postulate “communal heavens” which, if they do not develop beyond themselves, are likely to become “heavenly hells” for those trapped within them. At the heart of Castells’ interpretation – and of most relevance to our discussions in the present context – is his view of the significance of language:

This is why language, and communal images, are so essential to restore communication between the autonomized bodies, escaping the domination of a-historical flows, yet trying to restore new patterns of meaningful communication among believers. (Castells 1997:66)

The new linguistic world order

In spite of the illuminating insights that come from the impressive empirical study undertaken by Castells and his students, I believe that we should approach his principled conclusions with a measure of caution. My scepticism derives from the fact that Castells and others who approach the question of identity in this way tend to fall into the trap of essentialist definitions. For, while it is perfectly correct to point to the “tenacity” of ethnic consciousness, as Samir Amin (1978), for example, does, it is fundamentally wrong to suggest or to imply that it has some primordially determined causal force². Given the state of our knowledge about the relationship between “language” (however defined) and ethnic consciousness, the middle position adopted by Stephen May in the most recent analysis of this issue appears to be the wiser option. He argues that

... language is a contingent marker of ethnic identity and ... adopting any other position involves, inevitably, an essentialised view of the language-identity link. However, ... constructivist accounts of ethnicity have, at the same time, understated the collective purchase of ethnicity, and its often close links to particular, historically associated languages ... (May 2002:10)

These references ought to suffice to establish the problematic character of the relationship between language and ethnic identity. The relevance of the issue for the purposes of this paper derives from the fact that, among other things, colonial conquest, imperialism and globalisation have established a hierarchy of standard languages, which mirrors the power relations on the planet. The overall effect of this configuration has been to hasten the extinction of innumerable language varieties and to stigmatise and marginalise all but the most powerful languages. Above all, English, in David Crystal’s coinage, is “a global language”, indeed, *the* global language. From all parts of the world, including the continent where the English language originated, we hear the same complaint: *English is destroying our languages*.

Tové Skutnabb-Kangas has taken the issue furthest by attacking the phenomenon of “linguistic genocide” which, as she explains, is the direct result of globalisation.

The ultimate question, for those of us who are convinced of the need to plot an alternative route for the human species is what we, as language specialists and practitioners, can do in order to strengthen those social and historical forces which are running counter to the apparently unstoppable logic of globalisation. How do we assist in the decolonisation of the minds of the billions of people who are held down by their ruling elites’ de facto abandonment of the principle of equity in favour of self-aggrandizement and convenience? How can we, through language planning and other interventions, initiate or reinforce changes in the patterns of development and in the dominant social relations? These are difficult questions that go to the very heart of the politics of social transformation and that raise all the imponderables about what factors determine, or at least influence, changes in individuals’ attitudes and behaviour. Although I cannot canvass these debates here, they have to inform our analyses if our conclusions are to be even remotely feasible.

Suffice it to say that in the domain of education, if we are to make progress along this path, it is essential that we erase the dual folly of believing

- that an English Second Language-based educational system can lead to quality education for all and guarantee widespread excellence in most learning areas, and
- that there is something sinister about language planning. The fact of the matter is that as our society is constituted at present, language policy is a class question and its formulation and implementation have both a short- and a long-term impact on the Gini coefficient that measures social inequality in our society. A laissez-faire policy in this regard, as in most others, will and does simply reinforce the dominance of those that are located at the top of the pecking order.

Five sources of relevance of the language factor

I want to assert without further analysis that there are five sometimes contradictory, sometimes mutually reinforcing, sources of counter-hegemonic currents from which language as a, indeed *the*, defining attribute of humanity draws its relevance. These are – without ranking them – the ecology of languages, the economy, democracy, learning theory and identity. For our present purposes, I comment only briefly on each of these.

In order to understand the significance of the rhetoric of the African renaissance, as propounded by President Mbeki and by many others in the ranks of the middle class in this country, it is not enough, indeed, it is distinctly disempowering and even paralysing, to look at the imperatives of the existing and evolving linguistic markets on the global or even on a national scale. We have to begin elsewhere. In my view, the most far-reaching and wide-ranging source of strength comes from the ecology of languages paradigm, which has been pioneered and popularised by scholars such as Maffi, Skutnabb-Kangas and others, even though many of the avenues it has opened up or pointed to remain controversial and unexplored. Suffice it to say that the proposition that cultural and, therefore, linguistic diversity is as necessary as biodiversity for the survival and perpetuation of the human species is one with which we have to engage³. It is a proposition, moreover, which gives strength to the arm of all those who are committed to the promotion of mother-tongue-based bilingual education regardless of how divergent their points of departure might be. The proposition pivots on the yet to be proven assumption that there is a direct causal, and not merely a correlational, link between biological and cultural-linguistic diversity⁴. This is no reason for rejecting it, since whether or not the hypothesis is disproved eventually will not affect the fact that all languages are depositories of knowledge and that some of the endangered languages constitute the only possibility of access to valuable, sometimes admittedly esoteric, indigenous knowledge that reaches far back into the history of the human species.

Language and the economy

If linguistic diversity is today seen as an essential aspect of the survival of the human species on planet earth, it is a long-established fact of modern life that language policy and language practice can either stimulate or impede economic efficiency, labour productivity, economic growth and development. Since human beings are dependent on one another for the production of the means of subsistence, they necessarily co-operate in the labour process and in order to do so, they have to communicate with one another. In this process of communication, language plays the most important role⁵. Hence, the development of linguistic markets, especially in the modern world of the capitalist mode of production, is directly related to the economic functions of a language or of a set of languages. These functions are automatically and objectively determined by the profit-seeking interests of the dominant sectors of economic production and of those who control the means of production. As I shall point out presently, tendencies towards reification and mystification develop such that the owners of material wealth become afflicted with a kind of myopia that makes it almost impossible for them to discern the inappropriateness and even the counter-productiveness of their “tried-and-tested” language policy and language practice in the workplace. In any case, the language(s) in which the major economic transactions of a society take place function like a key to power, money and status. In the field of Applied Language Studies in Africa, there is a growing appreciation of the fact that one of the reasons for the failure of almost any economic development plan on the continent is the fact that development aid is invariably packaged in a foreign language (usually English) and that this fact necessarily excludes the vast majority of Africans from being integral participants in the development process (see, among others, Prah 1995). The most advanced analysis of the genesis and social-order functions of linguistic markets is that associated with the work of the late Pierre Bourdieu.

Language and democracy

The third source of relevance of the language factor is the specifically political objective of maximising the democratic potential of the social formations within which we live. It is unnecessary to spell out the details of the well-known rights paradigm. Stated in the simplest possible terms: all human beings should have the right to use the language of their choice in order to conduct their essential transactions such as going to school, church (mosque, temple, meetings, etc.) or to the post office, the bank, the supermarket, etc., if these languages are prevalent in the political entity in which they live⁶. If they are unable to do so, they are necessarily disempowered, unable to be part of the decision-making processes of the society concerned and unable to make or to influence the concrete decisions that affect vital aspects of their lives. Such circumstances occur in every social formation on a random basis as the result of a lack of resources or because of the insensitivity of one or other bureaucrat. When this happens, the matter can usually be put right without too much trauma and humiliation. The object of our concern is the systematic denial of such linguistic human rights as a matter of political and social policy of the ruling groups in a society. As I shall point out presently, this question is of exceptional importance in a country such as South Africa, where we are going through a period of transition and, in certain respects, of very real transformation.

Given the obvious importance of linguistic human rights for the expansion and consolidation of democratic polities and for the well-being of all individuals, it is significant that as yet there is not a single international rights instrument in which education of children in the mother tongue is guaranteed without qualification (see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000:527-542). This is indeed ironic if we consider the fact that linguistic human rights are the aboriginal human rights, i.e., those rights by which our very humanity is defined and made possible. Although we would have to reformulate it in various directions in order to bring it in line with the state of our knowledge of communications theory

today, if we accept Darwin's dictum: "No man without language, no language without man", we can arrive at no other conclusion.

How children learn

The fourth source of relevance derives from the psycholinguistic and pedagogical domains. Again, there is no need to go into detail. Many scholars who are concerned with education as a professional practice have made seminal contributions in this area. I refer at random to authors such as Cummins, Lopez, Ramirez, Smitherman and many others in America, Skutnabb-Kangas, Huss, Baker, Gogolin among many others in Europe, Tadadjeu, Obanya, Bangbose, Okombo, McDonald, etc., in Africa and, of course, the many Asian and Australian scholars who have contributed to our understanding of the formative role of L1-medium education. Even though it is indisputable that children can learn in any language which they know well enough and there are, of course, countless examples to prove this proposition, it is counter-intuitive to maintain that the children of a local, regional or national community⁷ should as a matter of course be schooled in a second or in a foreign language. Yet, as we know all too well, there are even today many reputable educationists who hold this view⁸.

Language and identity

The fifth and final source, one to which I have already referred, is the integral relationship between language and individual as well as social identity. In this connection, we normally confine our discussions to the structuring and constitutive role of the mother tongue, i.e., the primary language or languages, in which the child is socialised. Without further exploration of the debates that have been, and are still being, conducted in regard to the main content of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis about the link between languages and the way we perceive the world or construct our diverse realities, I believe that it is most appropriate to accept a weak version of that celebrated proposition. By doing so, we immunise ourselves against any narrow nationalist notions of

language as the “soul” of a nation. We accept the view, which is borne out by all linguistic research and by actual experience, that anything (thought or emotion) can be expressed in any language, even though the overtones and resonances will differ from one speech community to another and from one individual to another because of the unavoidable specificity, i.e., the contextual uniqueness, of all experience. To operate from the premises of the so-called “strong” definition of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis lays one open, among other things, to playing into the hands of the most reactionary, backward-looking elements in modern societies and to sowing the dragon’s teeth of civil conflict and international war. The vaunted genius of different peoples is the result of innumerable, often intangible and inarticulate, factors in the history of those peoples. Language as the transmission mechanism of cultural achievement and practices is necessarily involved in both its reflexive and its formative modalities. However, the main reason why the Swiss or the Dutch used to make good cheese while the people of the Sahel or of Madagascar used not to do so has much more to do with geography and the migration of species than with grammar and phonology⁹.

We have to stress, also, that we are not motivated by any anglophobia. While we cannot, of course, condone the sycophantic mutterings of many of our predecessors on the African and Asian continents and, regrettably, of many living exponents of the belief that English is God’s gift to humanity¹⁰, we harbour no hatred of the language of Chaucer and Shakespeare, of Wordsworth, Tennyson, George Bernard Shaw or even of a Lloyd-George, a Disraeli or a Churchill. From the bitter experience of the Soweto uprising in 1976, we know very well that it is not the language that people use that is at fault; it is people – usually those who have the power and the authority to manipulate and to mobilise “the masses” – who use the language for oppressive and exploitative purposes, who have to be opposed. Besides this principled position, however, there is another compelling reason why we cannot be counted in the ranks of those who joy in English-bashing. The simple fact of the matter is that English as a global language is here to stay, at least

for the foreseeable future. We are opposed not to English – obviously – but to the hegemonic position of English which necessarily puts other languages and varieties at risk to the point of threatening them with extinction. Precisely because of the power and concrete socio-economic advantages which English as a language of global communication carries today, we have arrived in the South African context, specifically within our PRAESA work environment, at the formulation of our strategic pedagogical objective as being the establishment of a mother-tongue-based bilingual¹¹ education system. In this conception English, rather than any other important language, is taken to be the constant element in the equation.

The historic task of the African middle classes

The link between language and identity is one of the fundamental reasons for what I, following the usage by our Philippine colleagues, have begun speaking of as the intellectualisation of the African languages. This process is, or ought to be, an integral part of a socio-political programme of upliftment and autonomous development in all dimensions of post-colonial and post-apartheid African societies. This task, for better or for worse, is associated in the public mind with President Mbeki's notion of an "African renaissance" and with the highly problematical notion of the "New Partnership for Africa's Development" (NEPAD).¹² Without any exaggeration, it may be said that what is demanded of the African middle classes in general, and of the African intelligentsia in particular, is no less than Amilcar Cabral's almost forgotten demand that they "commit class suicide". To put it in a nutshell: the so-called African revolution has not been consummated anywhere on the continent. A new *chimurenga*, a war of liberation from neo-colonial and imperialist dependence, awaits the peoples of Africa. Political and economic independence as well as a genuine and profound cultural revolution have yet to be attained. These desirable goals have, moreover, to be arrived at in a world where the ever tighter integration into the world economy is projected as an inescapable imperative and where any

move towards even a modicum of autarchy or “de-linking” (Samir Amin) is considered to be a kind of national suicide.

To the credit of the forward-looking political leadership of the continent, they have recognised the need for a regional closing of ranks in order to acquire the strength and the sense of unity of purpose that will make it possible to bargain for a better deal for the continent at the global tables of plenty represented primarily by institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation. This is the real political purpose of the idea of the “African renaissance” and the fancy footwork around NEPAD and related economic concepts. It is also the real reason for the retooling of the Organisation of African Unity in the guise of the African Union. In other words, we are seeing a concerted attempt by the most enlightened sectors of the upper and middle propertied classes of Africa, under the leadership of the South African and Nigerian bourgeoisie, to speed up the modernisation project that began with such great hope and expectation in 1957-60 and that imploded so lamentably after 1973. It ought to be very obvious that I consider all these moves, as necessary and as smart as they appear to be, to be no more than chimera. For, at bottom, they will do no more – and in some of the moving circles, they are not intended to do any more – than to entrench the privileges and the rule of the very elites that have ruined the continent and made it into a byword among the nations for inefficiency, ineptitude and simple backwardness. Far from eliminating, or even reducing, the crippling and devastating inequalities that were to a very large extent deliberately engendered by colonial and neo-colonial policies, they have already deepened them to the point where President Mbeki’s give-away characterisation of South Africa’s population as consisting of “two nations, one rich, and white, the other, poor and black”, can be applied to the whole of Africa. The coincidence of “race” and class in this formulation is itself significant when one recalls Chinua Achebe’s description of the post-colonial entrepreneurial and bureaucratic classes of the 1960s as “the black white men of Africa”.

Be that as it may, at the level of language policy and language use the post-colonial situation accurately reflects the reality of dependence and secular stagnation. The starkness of the situation is captured best in the simple, matter-of-fact words of the Mazruis:

... [An] important source of intellectual dependence in Africa is the language in which African graduates and scholars are taught.... [Today], in non-Arabic speaking Africa, a modern surgeon who does not speak a European language is virtually a sociolinguistic impossibility. ... [A] conference of African scientists, devoted to scientific matters and conducted primarily in an African language, is not yet possible ... It is because of the above considerations that intellectual and scientific dependence in Africa may be inseparable from linguistic dependence. The linguistic quest for liberation, therefore, must not be limited to freeing the European languages from their oppressive meanings in so far as Black and other subjugated people the world over are concerned, but must also seek to promote African languages, especially in academia, as one of the strategies for promoting greater intellectual and scientific independence from the West (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998:64-65).

In other words, Africa's middle classes have to commit class suicide. This requirement arises from our acceptance of the correctness of the insights of Pierre Bourdieu and his school as to how linguistic markets operate. Already in 1971, Pierre Alexandre (1972:86) had demonstrated how, in post-colonial Africa, one's degree of proficiency in the ex-colonial language had become a determinant of class location and even of class position. The African elites who inherited the colonial kingdom from the ostensibly departing colonial overlords, for reasons of convenience and in order to maintain their grip on power, have made no more than nominal gestures towards equipping the indigenous languages of the continent with the wherewithal for use in powerful and high-status contexts. The result is a vicious downward spiral where the fact that these languages are not used

is the cause of their stagnation and of the belief that they cannot be used in these functions¹³. The failure of leadership and the willingness of the elites to follow in the wake of their colonial forerunners are, naturally, reflected in the language attitudes that characterise the generality of the population. Since their role models overtly and repeatedly demonstrate their lack of belief in the capacity of the indigenous languages to fulfil all the functions of a language in all domains of modern life, the people begin to accept as “natural” the supposed inferiority of their own languages and adopt an approach that is determined by considerations that are related only to the market and social status value of the set of languages in their multilingual societies. They fall prey to what I have dubbed a Static Maintenance Syndrome (SMS). This means that the native speakers of the languages believe in and cherish the value of their languages, i.e., the vitality of the languages is, within certain limits, not placed in doubt. However, they do not believe that these languages can ever attain the same power and status as, for example, English or French. They themselves and, more pathetically, those who ought to know better because of their access to the relevant scientific information, end up believing that their languages are intrinsically incapable of attaining the analytical shape and capacity of the more powerful languages of the world as we know them today. Because of the operations of the linguistic market, what Karl Marx referred to as a fetishistic relationship is set up between the indigenous and the dominant colonial languages¹⁴. This is the meaning, in the African context, of the kind of “evidence” proffered by ordinary parents when they try to explain their opposition to, or their scepticism about, mother-tongue education by claiming that “our languages do not have words for concepts such as ‘atom’ or ‘theorem’; so, how can we expect our children to learn real mathematics or physics?”¹⁵. The overall social-psychological result of this debilitating attitude is what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has called the “colonisation of the mind”¹⁶. From a linguistic point of view, while the languages continue to be used in most primary contexts (family, community, church, pre- and primary schools), they are kept, as though

by some taboo, from being used in all high-status or secondary domains such as science and technology, languages of tuition in secondary and tertiary education, philosophical and social-analytical discourse, among many others¹⁷. The intelligentsia reinforce this static maintenance syndrome because their relative proficiency in the dominant ex-colonial languages allows them to enjoy what Bourdieu called the “profits of distinction”.

Although it is not the subject of this paper, it ought to be clear that what I have been describing here is a stereotypical aspect of the continuum of language shift – language loss – language death. The point is, of course, that given our understanding of these processes and of their deleterious effects on whole peoples and layers of society, and given our knowledge of what can, and should, be done in order to counter these processes of social and political disempowerment, which are not unlike the phenomenon of soil erosion studied in the earth sciences, vision and leadership can set up countervailing tendencies by promoting and instituting specific practices deriving from language planning. But this is precisely what has not yet happened, certainly not to the extent where we can sense the turning of the tide.

It is appropriate to refer here to the point of departure of what we hope will become one of a series of successful attempts to initiate the weaving together of the kind of counter-hegemonic networks of scholars and activists that are needed at this historical juncture. In a recent proposal, David Szanton recalls the fact that after forty years of political independence, the languages of the former colonial powers monopolise virtually all academic and intellectual discourse at African universities. Unlike the situation in most Asian countries, in Africa the local languages have not been adapted for use in academic debate, research or scholarly publication. He describes the “painful and dramatic” losses incurred on our continent as a consequence of this developmental failure. In particular, he refers to the fact that the majority of the African people are precluded from participating in tertiary-level education and that this means that individual as well as national development is undermined.

In the present context, it is important to state that he goes on to spell out some of the devastating socio-cultural and epistemological consequences of this colonial occupation of the tertiary education sector. Among other things, he makes the point that the curricular foci and research programmes of African scholars are determined in the metropolitan capitals of the North and that the specific contributions of the African people to the social and the natural sciences are generally ignored or treated as local, so-called indigenous, knowledge which is patronisingly viewed as being underdeveloped and not capable of being “universalised”.

What is being lost here is not just knowledge of these rich African materials, but also the opportunity, indeed the intellectual and political requirement, to rethink or re-conceptualize the forms, structures, processes, analytical procedures, and domains of experience and knowledge in African terms – rather than accept, and blindly migrate towards, the so-called “universality” of their Western versions. In consequence, the rich and original contributions that Africa could make to intellectual life, to international debate and understandings, rarely come to the fore. ... [Those] scholars and students, socialized in the so-called superiority of Western forms, thought, and modes of analysis, are in effect turning their backs on their own societies, the dynamics, meanings, and social and developmental needs of their own fellow citizens... Instead, they look for approbation to counterparts in the West – if indeed they do not or cannot escape to employment in Western NGOs, aid agencies, or emigrate abroad entirely. That they are withdrawing and alienating themselves from their own society, have become dependent on the West, and often seem irrelevant or living in a world far distant from local concerns, is of course widely recognized, and ironically, often both admired and resented by the larger populace. Indeed, by functioning in a colonial language, African universities become more of an “ivory tower” than their counterparts in Europe or the US (2003:1).

What is to be done?

How can this situation be reversed? How can we continue the struggle for the total liberation of the African people? And how can we do this in the realm of the sociology of language and of sociolinguistics more generally? These are the ultimate questions we have to find answers to if we are to move from rhetoric to action.

To begin with, it is essential to understand that nothing short of a comprehensive programme of social transformation will eventually produce success. Mere language planning cannot bring about the fundamental shifts in consciousness and in behaviour which are necessary to lift the indigenous languages of Africa on to a different historical trajectory. It is important, therefore, to be ever mindful of possible synergies and mutually reinforcing initiatives arising from the activities of sociologists of language and those of scholars and activists working in adjacent disciplines. On the other hand, there is no reason for paralysis. Because of the knock-on impact or the butterfly effects of initiatives originating in one domain on what happens in other domains of life, there is always enough reason to plan and to carry out programmes of action in one's sphere of operation in the full knowledge that initially, only very few people will be interested.

All linguists and other language professionals have to cease being "bats of erudition" and begin to consider the issue of counter-hegemonic initiatives and the creation or activation of countervailing forces in terms of the five sources of relevance to which I referred at the beginning of this paper. From within each of these ways of looking at the language question, there is a range of possible initiatives one can undertake. All of them are, of course, dependent on making generally accessible the knowledge and information derived from the latest research findings in their fields. I shall confine myself here to one simple example drawn from the political economy of language policy.

If we leave our consideration of the issues at the level of languages purely and simply, it might seem as though we are

playing a game on a computer screen. It is essential that we always link the theoretical and strategic macro-linguistic issues to the actual socio-economic and socio-political dynamics of each and every one of the affected countries and sub-regions of the continent, whether we are referring to SADC, to ECOWAS, to the North African or the East African confederations, the Arab League, or to any other similar international structure. The relevant issues are linked to real political and economic developments in our specific countries. Let us take a “simple” but tragic example such as AIDS. We would not be able to fight against the AIDS pandemic anywhere in the world if we did not use local languages. We would not be able to counteract industrial accidents, and to increase productivity in the workplace, if we did not use local languages. The fact that in South Africa, people are under the spell of English to the extent that they limit even the expansion of the economic market, because they do not want to use, or do not see the point of using local languages, is to my mind a prime example of self-defeating, counter-productive practices. Or, if one looks at the very simple but foundational example of the lettering on consumer products such as a corn flakes or any other cereal box or carton, nowadays, all the writing is in English, although one still finds some vestiges of Afrikaans and odd bits of other African languages. Yet, it is a fact that the literacy understandings and practices of little children are inspired by such apparently simple things¹⁸. They want to know from their mother, their father or some other adult what the writing or the image on the box means. What does it say? Who is this? This little cartoon figure: what does it say? And so forth. That is one of the ways in which an interest in literacy is inspired in the child. But, if it is all in a foreign language, which the mother or father in many cases cannot even read, what are you left with? It means that you are blocking, as it were, the natural graphic curiosity of the child. Whereas, if these things were available in the mother tongues of all the children so that parents would be able to choose cereal boxes in terms of the language(s) they want their children to be exposed to, we would probably have a very different situation when the child comes to school on

day one. This simple example gives us an inkling of how in fact the business community is shooting itself in the foot, and shooting the country in the heart, by not using African languages, for example in the advertising of corn flakes. There is no lack of similarly telling examples.

Intellectualisation: issues and strategies

Rosalie Finlayson and Mbulungeni Madiba of the University of South Africa in Pretoria have recently taken up the question of the intellectualisation¹⁹ of the indigenous languages of South Africa and have demonstrated very clearly both what has already been done and what still has to be done. In respect of South Africa, their contribution is an exceptionally useful first attempt at addressing the relevant technical linguistic issues. They deal with the language profile of South Africa as it is today, the historical path by which we have arrived at the present language map, the constitutional provisions on language and the impressive institutional architecture for the realisation of these provisions in post-apartheid South Africa. The central part of the paper deals with some of the technical linguistic and socio-linguistic issues with which corpus planning and the development of new registers and styles are confronted in South Africa today. Overall, it is a sober assessment of the chances of success. The core of their argument is stated as follows:

The creation of new terminologies entails the deliberate and conscious use of word-formation patterns or methods such as borrowing, compounding, derivation, loan translation or calquing, semantic shift, blending, clipping, etc. Although these methods are universal, every language has its own identity and preferences. Thus, for some languages principles are laid down to give guidance to planners regarding the use of the various word-formation patterns ... *In South Africa, not much research has been done so far to establish guiding principles and procedures for the development of new terminology for the African languages.*

Such principles should give guidance on the choice of the word-formation patterns and also on their actual use ... (Finlayson and Madiba 2002:14. Emphasis added).

In the present context, it is unnecessary to discuss their particular positions on the pertinent issues except to point out that they place much store by the development and use of Human Language Technologies for the purpose of accelerating the intellectualisation of the African languages. They also express the hope that recent political developments around the promotion of NEPAD will benefit the process of intellectualisation²⁰.

Partly because of their concentration on South Africa itself and partly because they take the development of new terminology and registers in the domains of science and technology as the criteria for measuring the level of intellectualisation of the African languages, Finlayson and Madiba omit consideration of the considerable and significant contribution which creative writing and journalism are quietly making towards the intellectualisation of African languages on the continent. In a 1995 paper, Karin Barber shows conclusively that in countries to the north of South Africa, specifically in West and East Africa, there have been major advances in this respect. Her case study of Yoruba is especially informative²¹ and, although one has to bear in mind that the actual base from which she calculates is extremely slender when compared with those of other English-orientated countries, it is none the less of some significance to record the fact that plus-minus 50% of the literature published on the African continent is written in one or other African language (Barber 1995:9). In this regard, she is scathing about the myopia of most post-colonial literary criticism, which limits its definition of "African literature" to those works which are written in English or French. She condemns the fatal equation of "African languages" with "orality", which is based on the assumption that the category "literature" is occupied exclusively by European languages in Africa.

Barber's analysis is extremely important and suggestive for the simple reason that she recommends that we cease mistaking hegemony for dominance, i.e., that the actually existing literature

in African (or Indian, or any other indigenous) languages be taken into account when we survey and assess the multilingual landscapes in which we operate. English, in other words, should be seen as an additional, a different code or register, depending on the context. As she phrases it:

... I would urge, for literatures in Africa, as does Aijaz Ahmad for literatures in India, an approach to anglophone writing that places it in the context of all the other forms of cultural production going on within a specific social formation. In Africa and India, English, and writing in English, co-exists with other languages and writings, and is deployed by specific strata of the population for specific purposes.... Writing in English can be understood more richly if we abandon the picture of the colonial language as an all-enveloping blanket of repression, and the indigenous languages as stifled, silenced sites of muted authenticity and resistance. Instead, we should perhaps see English as one available register among others, in specific scenes of cultural production. (Barber 1995:25)

The importance of this insight from the point of view of the intellectualisation project, is twofold. In the first instance, she implies clearly that this functional distribution of languages should not be viewed as the kind of diglossic situation which inevitably leads to the Static Maintenance Syndrome, to which I referred earlier. To put it differently, all the relevant languages are seen as being capable of being used and as actually being used or being adapted to be used in all the relevant domains. This is especially important in respect of those which the Philippine scholars refer to as the “controlling domains of language” such as government administration, science, technology, industry, secondary and tertiary education and the professions of law, medicine, engineering, accountancy, etc. (see Sibayan and Gonzalez 1995:110). This is, incidentally, the position which we have adopted in South Africa (see National Language Policy and Plan).

This approach is significant also for the reason that it brings into view the usefulness of Nancy Hornberger's model or framework of the continua of biliteracy as an instrument for assessing the status and the market value of different languages and varieties within a given multilingual setting. The tension between "peaceful co-existence" of, and competition between, languages which is registered in the continua schema makes it possible to plot over time how the marginalised and low-status languages are changing their position and their utility. According to Hornberger – and this is undoubtedly of the greatest importance for all multilingual societies – the relations of power which are reflected in the relative positions and uses of languages in such societies are constantly changing and it makes sense, therefore, to see the situation in terms of intersecting or nesting continua at both the micro- and the macro- levels²². In her most recent review of the model of the continua, she places much more emphasis on the power relations which find expression within the model and stresses the fundamental possibility of transforming these relations.

We are not suggesting that particular biliterate actors and practices at the traditionally powerful ends of the continua (e.g. policies which promote written, monolingual, decontextualized, standardized texts) are immutably fixed points of power to be accessed or resisted, but rather that though those actors and practices may currently be privileged, they need not be. Indeed, we are suggesting that the very nature and definition of what is powerful biliteracy is open to transformation through what actors – educators, researchers, community members and policy makers – do in their everyday practices. (Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000:3)

This, in a nutshell, is what this paper is intended to convey to all relevant potential and actual actors. My core proposition is that until and unless we are able to use the indigenous languages of South Africa, among other things, as languages of tuition at tertiary level, our educational system will continue to be skewed in favour of an English-knowing elite. We have to initiate a

counter-hegemonic trend in the distribution of symbolic power and cultural capital implicit in the prevailing language dispensation in South Africa's higher education system. And, let us have no illusions, this is a historic challenge, one which we may not be able to meet adequately. To paraphrase Sibayan (1999:448), we are called upon to initiate the secular process by which the African languages will gradually displace English in the controlling domains of language or, at the very least, share those domains with it. Speaking for myself, I can say that I am prepared to be one of those who are willing to shoulder this task. I say this because I know that if we do not do so, we are by default entrenching the present class system which, to paraphrase President Mbeki, favours the perpetuation of a society divided into two nations, even if there is a sprinkling of blacks within the ranks of the rich nation and a sprinkling of whites in the poor nation.

The changing political climate in Africa

An important development of relevance to my argument is taking place at the moment in regard to the African Union, i.e., the evolution of an African Academy of Languages. The initiative started in Mali in 1999-2000 when the then minister of education, Professor Samassecou, put forward the idea of an Academy of African languages, which was accepted by the President of Mali, and in 2000-2001 eventually also by the OAU Secretariat in Addis Ababa. It was then proposed that this Academy should become a specialised agency of the African Union, much as UNESCO is such an agency of the UNO. This would mean, of course, that there will be resources put at the disposal of the Academy, which, clearly, is a very important issue. This proposal was subsequently discussed thoroughly by a combination of government and quasi-government language planning agencies in South Africa, and it was decided that provided there is a genuine process of consultation with all language stakeholders, particularly with departments of African languages at the universities and technikons in South Africa and elsewhere, the proposal could be agreed to. It was decided, therefore, to advise the Deputy

Minister of Arts and Culture and, through her, the President, to accept in principle that an African Academy of Languages – which, for reasons of our own democratic traditions, we preferred to call a Commission on African languages – should become a specialised agency of the African Union but subject to a process of thorough consultation in all the sub-regions of the continent. We suggested that we should give ourselves two to three years in order to do this before this academy or commission would start functioning.

It is obviously important to be aware of this development because it is a reason for departments of African languages, in the context of the African Union and of the symbolism of the African renaissance, to know that there is this path forward, and that it is a continental, not simply a national or domestic, path. At this stage, the objectives of this academy have been formulated very generally and almost antiseptically. According to its as-yet-unpublished draft Constitution, the academy will, among other things, :

... promote African languages, ... promote cross-border languages, ... promote African languages at all levels of education, ... propagate African languages at an international level, ... analyse language policies in Africa, ... promote a scientific and democratic culture, ... enhance harmonious economic, social and cultural development of African countries and use African languages as factors of integration, solidarity, observance of values and mutual understanding for the advancement of peace and prevention of conflicts ...

The document becomes somewhat sanctimonious after that. None the less, the fundamental principles are sound, and we support them without much reservation. However, when it comes to structure, process and time frames, because of our own experience, we have a very different approach from what appears to be that of the authors of the proposal. At the time of writing, attempts are being made to find points of convergence.

The role of South African scholars

Paradoxically, in spite of the crisis which confronts departments of African languages in southern Africa in terms of vanishing first-language students and catastrophic reductions in the enrolment of students, especially of post-graduate candidates, South Africa continues to be a land of good hope from the point of view of most other African language scholars and linguists in the rest of the continent. One of the most prominent of these is Professor Ayo Bamgbose, the Nigerian doyen of language planning in Africa. Time and again, in various publications, Bamgbose has made the point that the South African constitution, the existence of the Pan South African Language Board, the National Language Service and all the associated organisations, including many NGOs, constitute a shining model for the rest of the continent. But, as he knows, and as we know, it is a model on paper only. We have not got anywhere near to putting it down on the ground in a way that could really serve as a model. I quote from a speech by Professor Abdulaziz of the Department of African Languages at Nairobi University, Kenya, which he delivered at the Second World Congress of African Linguistics, held in Leipzig, Germany, in 1997. With reference to the nine official African, i.e., Bantu, languages of South Africa, he makes the following point:

Whether these languages will in fact develop as effective official languages and languages of modern education, culture and communication, remains to be seen. Adequate funding and provision of well-trained personnel in the various areas of linguistics and applied linguistics would need to be made available. The country has the financial and human resources to implement this policy, if the determination and commitment of the central government, the regional authorities and the speech communities themselves are forthcoming. South African universities have some of the best linguistics and African language departments in Africa. There is vigorous research into and teaching and publication on African languages. There is also a core of highly skilled and

committed scholars of all races who could be involved in this great undertaking. (Abdulaziz 2000:12)

This gives us a good sense of what language scholars from other African countries think of South Africa. It is a sentiment, rightly or wrongly, that does not only apply to the domain of language; the same sense of hope applies to other sectors of society.

Abdulaziz (2000:15), in line with what this paper is advocating, goes on to explain what needs to be done:

... [Scholars] in the linguistics of African languages have a great task in securing and preserving the linguistic heritage of Africa. Special attention needs to be focused on small-group and dying languages that have so far not been described. Equally crucial is to develop to the maximum those languages that could be used as vehicles of communication and knowledge in all spheres of modern life. These include the languages that are now functioning very well as national or official languages at the national and regional levels. For there is need to reduce and where possible eliminate the diglossia prevailing with the use of European languages as languages of education, technology and modernisation. If efforts are not directed towards achieving this goal, then African languages will remain forever underdeveloped. The present European languages could be taught well to serve as second and foreign languages since they are languages in which there is an enormous literature in all spheres of human endeavour.

It follows that what we have to propagate immediately, intensively and continuously, is the rehabilitation of mother-tongue education within the context of a bilingual educational system where the other language in most cases will be English. In other words, mother-tongue education from the pre-school right through to the university with English as a supportive medium, or in some cases, certainly at university level for some time into the future, also as a formative medium. Every African language department at every university or technikon, has got to propagate

and support this particular demand. The failure of post-colonial African states to base their educational systems on the home languages or at the very least on the languages of the immediate community of the child, more than any other policy or practice, explains the fundamental mediocrity of intellectual production on the continent, including South Africa. We have to persuade our communities about the potential of African languages as languages of power and languages of high status. It is our task as language activists and professionals to do this, it is the task of the political, educational and cultural leadership of the country to do this and to be role models in this regard.

We know that we can change people's behaviour. Consider Uganda today: because of a particular approach, which allowed people to go from door to door to explain frankly, candidly and honestly to those who did not know, how AIDS is spread and where it comes from, the result is that people's sexual behaviour in Uganda has changed. The same can be done with mother-tongue education.

We also have to convince people that the argument about resources is a cover for lack of commitment. The best example in Africa is Somalia, where a poor country, admittedly under the authoritarian government of Said Barre, made Somali into a language of tuition and of training from the cradle to the university, without resorting to English or to any other foreign language. We had the same situation, and it is still the case to a very large extent in a country like Ethiopia where Amharic used to play a similar role. Of course, there are other problems in Ethiopia but that it is not necessarily the case that we must use English or, for that matter, French, is very clear from these, and other, examples.

Immediate steps on the long road of intellectualisation

In conclusion, I should like to stress that both the Pan South African Language Board and its substructures, the provincial language committees, the national language bodies, lexicographic units, as well as the National Language Service of the Department of Arts and Culture, have a very important role to play in conjunction with departments of African languages to make sure that these languages are developed, elaborated and used in all possible functions. It is, moreover, their duty to mediate with government, to make a noise, to put pressure on government, to see to it that a budgetary allocation of much more than the current R30 million is provided for language planning and language development in South Africa.

The following are a few specific recommendations regarding departments of African languages, a kind of agenda for the 21st century. To begin with, it is necessary to restate the position that it is absurd to believe that it is possible to even think of an African renaissance without the development and intellectualisation of African languages. Our hope, I think, comes from the recommendations of the working group of the Department of Education on language policy for higher education in South Africa. As the convenor of the committee that drafted the original recommendations, I should like to refer to a few relevant propositions contained in them²³. First of all, all higher education institutions should participate in facilitating and promoting the goal of the National Language Policy to develop all South African languages in such a manner that they can be used in all high status functions, especially as formal academic languages at higher education level. In the same way that English and Afrikaans are used as formal academic languages at higher education institutions, every official language of South Africa should be developed towards that position. Secondly, in terms of this policy framework, the research and development work required in the case of each of the marginalised official and endangered South African languages will be concentrated in

centres for language development which will be located in designated higher education institutions. The basic idea is that a university or a group of universities would be given the task of developing specific languages such as isiZulu, or isiXhosa, or Sesotho, or Setswana and over a period of 10 to 15 years, steps would be taken to ensure that each of the languages concerned is developed in that particular manner. A step-by-step development and implementation plan should be formulated for each of the relevant languages, such that, among other things, it will be clear when they will be able to be used as languages of tuition in specific disciplines. The decision, however, about when to begin using the languages for specific functions will be the prerogative of the relevant institutional community. In other words, if we take the University of Cape Town as an example, the university authorities will retain the autonomy to decide when exactly, for example, to use isiXhosa, let us say, to teach history or to teach geography in tutorials or in lectures²⁴.

All universities should consider granting relevant candidates, as an elective component of post-graduate assessment of course work in each discipline, the opportunity to translate a key text or part thereof into a relevant African language with or without professional assistance. Very few exercises could vie with this practice in respect of gauging the grasp of a subject by an examination candidate. Consideration should be given to extending this option to all South African languages if it proves to be a useful method of developing the corpus and the formal academic use of these languages. Thesis abstracts could also be made available in more of the African languages. In this way, as was done in Japan, in Turkey and in many other countries, we would exponentially increase the corpus of world literature available in African languages in South Africa. The practical implementation of this crucial strategic move is completely manageable. Essentially, we would need a few focus groups of people with knowledge of the language and knowledge of the subject to decide whether the relevant document is an acceptable translation. However, above all, we need people who have the vision, the courage and the energy to do it.

The other important task is the standardisation of orthography in all the languages so that we have the same orthographic convention for all the languages, especially for cross-border languages. We still have the situation in Sesotho, for example, where spelling in South Africa is very different from that in Lesotho itself. Very often, people are unable to read text emanating from the neighbouring country. I have been impressed with the beginnings of a very important project undertaken by Professor Kwesi Prah of the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) at Plumstead, Cape Town. One of their most recent publications is a little book called *A Unified Standard Orthography for South-Central African Languages with Specific Reference to Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia*. One of the complaints Professor Prah has, is that for very peculiar reasons, South African scholars of the African languages are not very keen to participate in this harmonisation of orthographies that he and his colleagues in all parts of the continent are driving forward.

Translation and the culture of reading

In South Africa, we have to move on all fronts and at all levels of the social formation. This is, naturally, most pertinent in the domain of education. Because of the work which has been done by Finlayson and Madiba, I shall refrain here from discussing any of the many technical and professional facets of the process of intellectualisation. I should like to end off this paper by drawing attention to the importance of the culture of reading in African languages and to the need for a large-scale programme of translation.

The intellectualisation of languages has to do in the first instance with their written or printed forms. No amount of investment in making languages more visible through the printed word will help unless a culture of reading takes root in these languages. This means that a heavy responsibility devolves on to pre- and primary-school as well as adult educators in both using the indigenous languages as languages of tuition and in encouraging their learners to read and write their home

languages. Since teachers who operate at these levels are seldom equipped with the advanced tools of linguistic science, it is necessary that they work in close co-operation with trainers and practitioners who operate at the tertiary level. It is essential that academic scholars, journalists and writers in general ensure that the African languages become more visible, that appropriate texts are available at all levels and that there is a constant stream of translations from other languages and between African languages of fiction and non-fiction, popular and scholarly literature. Only if this strategy succeeds within the next 50 years or so will we be able to re-establish the balance between foreign, former colonial languages and the indigenous languages of Africa. Only then will one of the pillars of any kind of democratic system be established and consolidated.

Let me also stress in conclusion what ought to be a superfluous proposition but unfortunately is not. *Nothing will happen unless the government and the private sector make the knowing of African languages worthwhile.* There are some sectors in which the government has no option. For example, it is going to become necessary for every single civil servant in this country to know an African language, unless we want to pretend that we are not an African country. It is a reprehensible fact that the tendency to promote and entrench a unilingual civil service in post-apartheid South Africa is being given free rein in many ministries and departments. Part of the reason for this is the all-too human instinct to follow the path of least resistance or to obey the dictates of what we might call the principle of convenience. A large part of the reason, however, springs from an a-historical, uninformed, knee-jerk prejudice against Afrikaans. This absurdity has the fatal consequence that the other African languages are sacrificed on the altar of a quixotic struggle against "the language of the oppressor". Few practices of the post-apartheid dispensation are more counter-productive in economic, political and cultural terms. Big Business is even more short-sighted. However, in this case, I have no doubt that economic imperatives, i.e., the instrumental value of the African languages, will ultimately persuade the captains of industry to

change their unprofitable and self-defeating approach to language policy. We have a very long road to walk and we have to begin with the most difficult task, i.e., taking the first steps. With reference to the situation in the Philippines, Joshua Fishman (1999:vii), in acknowledging the contribution of Professor Bonifacio Sibayan, wrote recently that

[a]lthough Filipino is the national language of the Philippines it is not the exclusive official language. Both English and the local (regional) languages exercise significant roles in the linguistic economy of the Philippines. Although not everyone is satisfied that Filipino has received all the honor, respect and implementation that is its due, and that may yet come, the result has been a societal allocation of languages to functions that has led to few headlines and to no bloodshed or bitter animosities. Such slow and peaceful arrangements on behalf of languages which were even locally unrecognised two or three generations ago require much labor, wisdom, expertise and folk intuition. They do not fall from the sky themselves

As we embark on the long road towards the intellectualisation of the African languages, we should remember these words.

Notes

1. This is a revised and expanded version of a paper originally delivered at the International Symposium *Social production of knowledge through diversity of expressive modes, multiple literacies and bi(multi)lingual relationships* held at the J.P. Naik Centre for Education and Development, Indian Institute of Education, Pune, 05-07 March 2003.
2. From a methodological point of view, this is a pivotal issue. Do we treat categories such as “ethnicity”, “race”, etc., as questions or as answers? (See Posel 1999:26) The following statement by Castells (1997:52), with all its flaws and assumptions, reveals the tightrope on which sociologists move in their interminable attempts to refine the analysis of social identities:

The attributes that reinforce national identity in this historical period vary, although, in all cases, they presuppose the sharing of history over time. However, *I would make the hypothesis that language, and particularly a fully developed language, is a fundamental attribute of self-recognition, and of the establishment of an invisible national boundary less arbitrary than territoriality, and less exclusive than ethnicity.* (Emphasis in the original)
3. See Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:91-96). The analytical coordinates of this debate have to be defined very carefully. Otherwise, it may become as irrelevant as the intense debate that was waged by avowed Marxist scholars in the 1920s and the 1930s on the subject of whether language “belonged” to the realm of the “superstructure” or of the “economic base”. That debate, as is well known, had the Mephistophelian consequence of both contributing immensely to a thriving Soviet linguistics practice and resulting in the social and professional isolation and even in the

physical extermination of so-called dissidents and deviationists. To quote Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:96):

To me it seems important that serious consideration to the study of the possible causal relationships will not be curtailed by accusations of essentialism, romanticism, fundamentalism, neo-Darwinism, or any of the other -isms which might prevent serious and solid scholars from entering the field. The issues are too important to be waved away by thoughtless labelling before they have been thoroughly studied. And the interest, and action, have to grow faster than the threats to the planet.

May (2002:3), however, points to the danger that language loss may be contemplated with equanimity precisely through the emphasis on the analogy with the loss of biological diversity.

4. Charles Darwin (1913:137), citing an essay by Lyell, which dated from 1863, as early as 1871 pointed out the "parallelism" between the development of different languages and distinct species. His discussion of this question, incidentally, serves to underline May's caveat (see note 3 above).
5. It is plausible and justifiable to speculate that it is this need for co-operation that originally led to the activation of the genetic software in the brain of the genus "homo" which Pinker calls "the language instinct".
6. This raises the question of the rights of immigrant and regional or other demographic minorities. In this context, I shall refrain from discussing the matter. The literature on the subject is rich and varied. See as one of the most recent publications in this domain Extra and Gorter 2001. Also, May 2002.
7. In the case of our own continent, Africa, we could almost add the category "continental". The assertion is certainly true of most of sub-Saharan Africa.
8. See Alexander 2000.

9. The development of information and technology systems has increasingly eliminated the differences in production and skills capacities between different parts of the world. Unequal exchange (“globalisation”) is the only reason why such differences continue to skew the balance in favour of the powerful North.
10. In our context, I have often quoted the following gem delivered by one of the leading lights of the South African oppressed at the beginning of the 20th century. Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, in 1902, in reference to the language question in the evolving Union of South Africa, had this to say among other things:

The question naturally arises which is to be the national language. Shall it be the degraded forms of a literary language, a vulgar patois; or shall it be that language which Macaulay says is “In force, in richness, in aptitude for all the highest purposes of the poet, the philosopher, and the orator inferior to the tongue of Greece alone?” Shall it be the language of the “Kombuis” [kitchen, NA] or the language of Tennyson? That is, shall it be the Taal [Afrikaans, NA] or English? (Cited in Alexander 1989:29.)
11. “Bilingual” is used as a term of convenience and in order not to complicate the argument in detail. In reality, the term implies multilingual systems in countries such as ours where, in some parts, all 11 official languages are used regularly and widely.
12. I shall deal with these concepts only briefly in this paper. They are discussed in detail in a forthcoming publication.
13. Writing in the Indian context, Pattanayak (1998:25) formulates this phenomenon most elegantly:

The argument whether a language has to be developed to be used or used to be developed goes on ad infinitum (sic). In the meantime English the super colonial language, goes on introducing [being introduced, NA] into newer domains. Its intrusion is then cited as the

reason for further support.

14. "There is a definite social relation between men [sic], that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (Marx 1983:77).
15. This is a typical view, one which I am repeatedly asked to respond to. The irony of the fact that in most cases, the terms referred to are not "English" in their immediate origin escapes those who make the point.
16. Ngugi's views about the cultural and political impact of the hegemony of the colonial languages have been attacked for alleged "linguistic determinism", i.e., as deriving from a (very) strong definition of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see Mazrui and Mazrui 1998:53-55). In my view, a careful reading of Ngugi's work as well as his professional practice refutes this construction.
17. In the Philippines debate, Sibayan (1999:448-450) distinguishes between what he calls "popular modernisation" and "intellectual modernisation". The former refers to the fact that the local languages are kept up to date for purposes of the electronic and popular print media. It is in the latter respect that the role of the tertiary institutions becomes critical. Their task can be said to be that of enhancing the inter-translatability of the African languages in as many of "the controlling domains of language" as possible.
18. My colleague, Carole Bloch, taught me this simple but profound insight.
19. The term "intellectualisation" should, of course, not be understood in terms of some spurious elitist project. We follow the definition used by Garvin (1973:43, cited in Finlayson and Madiba 2002:1) to mean the conscious development of "... more accurate and detailed means of expression, especially in the domains of modern life, that is to say in the spheres of science and technology, of government and politics, of higher education, of

contemporary culture, etc.” Philippine linguists and sociolinguists, who have been among the most prolific scholars of this subject, go back to the Prague School’s innovative work. They cite “Havranek’s paradigm” as their source. Intellectualisation is, thus, understood as the adaptation of a language “... to the goal of making possible precise and rigorous, if necessary, abstract statements; in other words, a tendency towards increasingly more definite yet abstract expression. This tendency affects primarily the lexical, and in part the grammatical, structure” (Cruz 1995:83; Llamzon 2001:17). In his introduction to the seminal work of Halliday and Martin (1993), Allan Luke underlines their basic understanding that “... the languages and discourses of science indeed have characteristic features that have evolved to do various forms of cognitive and semiotic work which the ‘common-sense’ language of everyday life cannot: including, for instance, the representation of technicality and abstraction.”

20. I share their optimism in this regard. In spite of the political dangers inherent in the emergence of a new “Africanism” in the wake of globalisation (see the analysis of counter-hegemonic social movements above) it is clear that, among other things, traditional knowledge and cultural practices, including indigenous languages, stand to benefit from the focus on what is supposed to be peculiarly African. At the most recent summit meeting of the African Union, it was resolved to add Kiswahili to the list of official languages of the AU, next to English, French, Arabic and Portuguese!
21. I cite the following in order to indicate the texture of her analysis of modern Yoruba literature:

What is more remarkable is the conviction that real, living, creative use of Yoruba is to be found not in the academy or in abstracted “traditions” but in the

contemporary world of the motorpark and market. It is not a single language replete with value (“the tribal language”; “the African mother-tongue”) but a multiplicity of registers, each of which must be attended to and internalized if the complexity and variety of present day speech is to be captured... (Barber 1995:22)

22. In terms of Hornberger’s original overarching scheme of nine nesting continua, the situation which we are examining would be viewed within the dimension of the “contexts of biliteracy”. (See Hornberger 1989:273-275.)
23. The final draft framework for language policy in higher education was released for public comment in November 2002.
24. The experience of the University of the Philippines will stand us in good stead in the implementation of this strategy. See, among others, Llamzon 2001. That experience also serves as a warning that we have to reckon with a very long process of “planned evolution”. Sibayan (1999) believes that we have to think in terms of a unit of 90 to 100 years!

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