

ARTICLE

## Towards the Intellectualisation of Indigenous African Languages Through University Language Policies in South Africa

Liqhwa Siziba 

*School of Languages, North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, 1900, South Africa*

### ABSTRACT

Although the use of African languages as Languages of Teaching and Learning (LoTLs) at various academic levels and in various fields of knowledge has been gaining momentum, it is yet to be effectively implemented in some South African universities. Failure to implement the use of African languages as LoTLs has often been attributed to their lack of intellectualisation. Deploying Ruiz's notion of language as a resource, this paper conducts a comparative analysis of language policies of two South African universities to establish how they enable the intellectualisation of indigenous African languages. Through a content analysis of the two universities' recently revised language policies, the paper discusses the respective institutions' commitment to the cause of language intellectualisation concerning African languages that have been selected for development as LoTLs. Universities that seek to implement the use of African languages as LoTLs need to come up with language policies that explicitly spell out their intellectualisation plans. The paper further argues that universities need not focus on language status planning only, but also on corpus planning to successfully implement the use of African languages as LoTLs.

**Keywords:** Institutional language policies; Intellectualisation of African languages; Language as a resource; Language of teaching and learning; Terminology development

### 1. Introduction

The implementation of African languages as LoTLs in various academic disciplines is yet to

record significant success at some universities in South Africa. Despite increasing calls to use the learners' first languages (L1s) to provide instruction in various fields of knowledge, such efforts have not

**\*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:**

Liqhwa Siziba, School of Languages, North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, 1900, South Africa; Email: [Liqhwa.Siziba@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Liqhwa.Siziba@nwu.ac.za)

**ARTICLE INFO**

Received: 26 February 2024 | Revised: 20 April 2024 | Accepted: 5 May 2024 | Published Online: 2 July 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i3.6543>

**CITATION**

Siziba L., 2024. Towards the intellectualisation of indigenous African languages through university language policies in South Africa. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 6(3): 198–212. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i3.6543>

**COPYRIGHT**

Copyright © 2024 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

yielded the desired results (Khumalo and Nkomo, 2022; Makalela and McCabe, 2013; Zungu, 2021). It is now evident that learners understand better when taught in their first language (L1). It is also important to note that “acquiring more than one language becomes something to be envied and sought after rather than a necessary evil” (Bamgbose, 2000). Learners tend to develop cognitive advantages when taught in their L1s in situations where a second language (L2) is used as the main LoTL. However, African languages have not been fully accepted or used as LoTLs mainly due to the negative attitudes of learners, instructors and even parents towards them (Khumalo and Moodley, 2023). These attitudes stem from perceptions of African languages as terminologically ill-equipped to facilitate the generation and transmission of knowledge in different disciplines (Dyers and Abongdia, 2015; Madadzhe, 2019; van der Merwe, 2022). Consequently, calls for the intellectualisation of African languages have been increasing. These calls revolve around the need to promote and support the development of adequate terminologies for use in teaching, learning and research. There is a need for a systematic and well-organised way of intellectualising indigenous African languages and such efforts should be initiated through relevant policies, strategic centres and departments within universities. One way of fostering the intellectualisation of African languages is through university language policies (Maseko and Siziba, 2023). It is for this reason that this paper focuses on how university language policies serve as potential enablers of the intellectualisation of African languages in South Africa. The main thrust of the paper is to analyse how the language policies of two South African universities (hereafter, University A and University B) endeavour to facilitate the intellectualisation of Sesotho and Setswana as well as isiZulu respectively. These language policies are publicly available for scrutiny through the respective university websites (see links in references). The paper therefore sought to answer the following research questions:

- How do the language policies of University A

and University B enable the intellectualisation of African languages?

- What are the challenges and opportunities presented by university language policies towards African language intellectualisation?

## 2. Literature review

University language policies are important documents that guide and direct the course of action regarding languages and language use (Maseko and Siziba, 2023). According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), “a language policy is a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system”. It spells out how language(s) should be used within an establishment or a system. Language policies are thus adopted to solve communication problems in multilingual settings and to increase social and economic opportunities for those whose languages have been marginalised. In South African institutions of higher learning, multilingualism is usually overshadowed by a few dominant languages. English and Afrikaans often assume the de facto status of being languages of instruction (Madadzhe, 2019; Makalela and McCabe, 2013). As a result, non-dominant African languages are deprived of social and economic opportunities. The language policy directive from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2020) was partly meant to address this anomaly and restore social and economic value for African languages. A worthwhile language policy would ideally strive to uphold and promote multilingualism and redress the historical linguistic inequalities created by colonialism and apartheid. The language policies of University A and University B acknowledge this fact and thus commit to promoting multilingualism by mainstreaming previously marginalised African languages into teaching and learning. This is in line with various key national documents and policies that seek to promote and entrench diversity and multiculturalism. Section 29(2) of the Bill of Rights stipulates that “everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of

their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable” (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The eleven official languages (now 12 including sign language) of South Africa are Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, Siswati, Sepedi (also known as Sesotho sa Leboa), Sesotho, Setswana, Tshivenda and Xitsonga (Potgieter and Anthonissen, 2017). These official languages are thereby suitable for use as languages of instruction. Operationalising this bill calls for the intellectualisation of all official languages of South Africa. However, because most language policies neither spell out implementation plans nor focus on the corpus planning activities, their operationalisation has been problematic. It is important to note that “in order to better understand language planning activities carried out at universities, a distinction should be made between the main language policy activities: language acquisition, corpus planning and status planning activities” (Siiner, 2016). The “universities’ language policies can include all three activities: choice of language of instruction, development of the national language as academic language and the choice of corporate or administrative language(s) for in-house communication” (Siiner, 2016). A university language policy that is clear on these dimensions would enable the intellectualisation and use of African languages as LoTLs. Many language policies fail when it comes to implementation because they put more emphasis on status planning and ignore corpus planning (Khumalo and Nkomo, 2022). A good language policy would also be clear on the corpus planning dimension.

Language policies at universities in South Africa have not yielded much-desired intellectualisation. Banda (2006) observes that “there has been a preoccupation with the mother tongue debate, rather than with establishing how African languages can be harnessed into an integrated multilingual teaching programme”. Beukes (2009) also notes that language policy intentions are not usually honoured. Webb (1999) predicted earlier that the sociopolitical and economic standing of English and the low valuation of indigenous African languages would negatively

impact on language policies in South Africa. There is need for a shift in the way language policies are designed by emphasising the intellectualisation of African languages and implementation strategies. Mutasa (2015) recommends that “universities should formulate clear implementation plans with timeframes”. The implementation plans and the timeframes would compel a hands-on approach by responsible authorities for fear of failure to fulfil their responsibilities. Mutasa (2015) concludes that “by advancing or implementing some of the stipulations in their language policies, and by formulating clear and watertight development and implementation plans subject to realistic timeframes”, they are more likely to achieve their desired goals. Failure to implement language policies in South African universities has impeded the development of African languages. The level of development of these languages should have reached a higher level of intellectualisation by now, yet current debates on language policy still pivot on their implementation as LoTLs. According to Grin, language policies have tended to focus on three aspects:

*[...]a legal one, in which language policy often takes the form of enunciation of language rights in given contexts; a culturalist one, in which languages are mostly seen as manifestations of culture, confining policy to a set of measures affecting corpus or, at best, support for literary creation or publication; and an educational one, focusing on language teaching (Grin, 2006).*

While the above is important in language policy enunciation, economic dimensions of language planning must also be considered. Grin (2006) observes that “economics is not often thought of as a discipline relevant to language”. This means that the economic value should also be attached to language policy implementation where language users should be able to reap benefits from the use of African languages.

The intellectualisation of African languages should not be taken as a radical move to do away with the English language as it is perceived by

most sections of society. It should be viewed as indispensable in the endeavour to widen the pool of languages to be taught or used for instruction. An ideal language policy would acknowledge and uphold the coexistence of languages regardless of the level of preference by other language users within the linguistic ecology. Jeyifo (2018) calls for the acceptance of English as an African language since it has been in existence on the continent for more than two decades. Ramanathan (2005) acknowledges the coexistence of English with African languages in the continent but questions its dominance and suggests that language policies should advocate for language equity.

Some of the reasons why African languages have a low status include language development status and defective language planning (Bamgbose, 2011). The low status accorded to African languages is based on the perception that, unlike English, they are not adequately developed to cope with modern-day terminologies of various fields of knowledge (Bamgbose, 2011). Bamgbose (2011) also argues that although it is true language use in new functional domains should be accompanied by language development efforts, the view that some languages are inherently incapable of expressing concepts adequately is misleading. This implies that all languages, including African languages, have the potential to be used as LoTLs in education. The arguments advanced in this paper resonate with Bamgbose's (2011) view that the use of African languages in unaccustomed domains should not wait for intellectualisation to be accomplished first, but both processes should take place simultaneously. It is further noted that "experience has shown that while expanding vocabulary by creating terminology, competing terms emerge through the actual use of a language by different stakeholders, such as teachers, writers, and media practitioners" (Bamgbose, 2011). The expectation therefore is for an ideal language policy to contain implementation plans that spell out how African languages will be intellectualised through use. It would rather be unfathomable that a language would be intellectualised outside of

its use because the gaps in language can only be identified through usage. Usage would yield terms and linguists will only come in to standardise terms that are already in use through the use of frequency counts from corpora.

Defective language planning entails that proper procedures from the initial stage to implementation are not followed. According to Bamgbose (2011), "proper language planning should ensure that all languages have a definite status and specified roles in a multilingual setting". The absence of a language policy or lack of implementation in a university is also another dimension of defective language planning. Bamgbose (2011) points out that "sometimes, by the vagueness of the policy or its lack of feasibility, one can tell that the policy should not be taken seriously". Defective university language policies can be avoided by the enunciation of clear, implementable, realistic procedures that address prevailing realities within the linguistic ecology of an institution. It has been noted that "even when there is a genuine policy in favour of indigenous languages, failure to indicate implementation steps and procedures as well as adequate provision of funds may stultify the policy" (Bamgbose, 2011). One essential feature of an ideal language policy of a university is its clarity on the implementation process.

An ideal university language policy ought to clearly outline corpus planning initiatives. Liddicoat and Bryant (2002) note that the "intellectualisation of a language involves the development of new linguistic resources for discussing and disseminating conceptual material at high levels of abstraction." According to Khumalo (2017), this involves "a carefully planned process of hastening the cultivation and growth of indigenous African languages so that they effectively function in all higher domains as languages of teaching and learning, research, science and technology." An intellectualised language will be able to handle all communication at different levels of academic disciplines (Alexander, 2007). The intellectualisation of African languages would extend their use to higher domains in the academic arena

and beyond (Bamgbose, 2011). Intellectualisation is a process of modernising languages so that they can be used to communicate knowledge in a variety of academic fields and in other specialised areas where specific terminology is used. Alexander (2003) argues that all official languages of South Africa should be used in all areas of education and in the same way as English and Afrikaans. The most effective way to implement the use of African languages as LoTLs is to begin by intellectualising them and this would happen if institutions of learning have enabling language policies.

The intellectualisation of African languages is an overdue expectation at institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Kaschula and Maseko (2014) point out that “at this point in our history the intellectualisation of African languages is an imperative if we are to develop the education system appropriately.” The intellectualisation of African languages is mainly concerned with terminology development. The challenge related to the use of African languages as LoTLs has largely been blamed on a lack of terminology. The lack of terminologies in African languages hinders the use of these languages in specialised fields of knowledge (Huyssteen, 1997; Nhongo and Tshotsho, 2020). Bamgbose (2015) argues that it cannot be possible for indigenous African languages to be used in the teaching of science if there is no terminology already worked out to be used in such academic contexts. Equipping African languages to become languages of academic discourse requires the creation of terminologies (Khumalo and Nkomo, 2022). Alberts (2010) concurs that terminology development plays a critical role in language development. Liddicoat and Bryant (2002) note that a key component in the intellectualisation of a language is the development of academic discourse at various levels of education. This is mainly done through terminology development. Despite these observations, Khumalo and Nkomo (2022) argue that “the use of African languages as academic languages in the country’s universities, remains handicapped by terminological problems.” Universities therefore need to craft language policies that spell out strategies

for intellectualising these languages for use across different academic disciplines.

While strides have been made towards the intellectualisation of some indigenous African languages, it is difficult to measure the impact of such efforts in higher education. For example, although Dlodlo (1999) developed Nguni terminology for use in teaching physics in Zimbabwe, there is no confirmation of where these terms have been applied in teaching and learning. The same goes for Shona medical terms published by Madzimbamuto (2012). There is so far no proof of their usage in any practical situation. There is a need for an inquiry into why some of these terminology compilations fail to find their way into academic discourses. Nhongo and Tshotsho (2020) point out that these newly created specialised subject field terms fail to enter the functional space in the academic contexts because they require learners to possess higher levels of cognition to understand them. They are also more complex than the usual English ones because of the strategies that are used in their creation. Such terms are more prescriptive since those who create them rarely consult the language users but rely on their intuition. The ideas advanced in this paper support Bamgbose’s (2011) argument that the creation of discipline-specific terminologies should come through language use. This will guard against the idea of creating terms first in African languages and then expecting them to learn the terms and then concepts signified by those terms. Therefore, it is the expectation that an ideal language policy would provide for a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach to terminology development.

The intellectualisation of indigenous African languages is a process that can also effectively take place through the compilation of specialised dictionaries (Khumalo and Nkomo, 2022). The art and craft of dictionary making is an important part of corpus planning that contributes significantly to the intellectualisation of African languages although the process has its challenges. As they rightly note:

*The limited availability of specialised texts in African languages hampers the development*

*and deployment of advanced electronic corpora and its applications to improve the execution of terminological and lexicographical tasks, while also enhancing the quality of the products (Khumalo and Nkomo, 2022).*

Although specialised dictionary compilation can be an effective means of intellectualising African languages, the challenge is that to compile properly acceptable dictionaries that reflect languages as they are used in practical academic contexts, a corpus has to be utilised. A specialised corpus can only be compiled when a language has been used in a specific context whether in written or oral form or both. But in circumstances where a language has not been used in these contexts, it is difficult to produce a corpus. This results in dictionary compilers relying on their intuition to decide which words and definitions are to be added to the dictionary. This leads to problems of acceptability.

Chabata (2013), Nkomo and Wababa (2013) and, Prinsloo and Zondi (2020) also identify lexicography as key in the intellectualisation of African languages. Apart from dictionary making, Kaschula and Maseko (2014) also identify translation as one of the methods of intellectualisation of African languages. Translators, interpreters, writers and church leaders also play an important part in the intellectualisation of African languages through term creation (Kaschula and Maseko, 2014). However, as a means of intellectualising African languages, translation is problematic because translators of learning material tend to use their knowledge and understanding of concepts and language used. Thus, the final product may not be acceptable to the end user. Alexander (2005) notes that creative writing and journalism also aid in the intellectualisation of African languages. Whilst the contribution towards intellectualisation through the production of artistic works and journalism is appreciated from a general perspective, this paper advocates for the intellectualisation of African languages through term harvesting in these specialised fields of knowledge. This means that terms created through translation and, the production of journalistic and artistic works can be harvested

for the creation of corpora and contribute to the intellectualisation of African languages.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

The paper deploys Ruiz's (1984) language as a resource orientation of language planning as its theoretical base. The three orientations of language planning raised by Ruiz (1984) are language as a resource, language as a right and language as a problem. The theory of language as a resource is based on the premise that every language is valued as a priced possession and a quintessential aspect of humanity that is central to achieving social, economic, governmental and educational objectives (Mutasa, 2015). According to Bamgbose (2000), "language is a powerful symbol in society, but its potential is often not fully recognised". The language as a resource orientation is based on the idea that language choices in society are made on purely economic considerations, just as other resources in the national economy are meticulously planned and utilized (Jernudd and Das Gupta, 1971). On the other hand, Bamgbose (2000) believes that there cannot be an exact fit between language as a resource and other kinds of material resources. This idea by Bamgbose (2000) is advanced in this paper as a counterargument to the philosophical thought that the value of language in society should be equated to other resources whose profit can be calculated in monetary terms. Language is considered a resource for its capability to convey valuable knowledge in educational contexts. This inherent quality is a characteristic of all languages regardless of their state or institutional status. The language as a resource orientation assumes that learners have the freedom to make choices regarding languages to access education and share knowledge unfettered by other considerations. The language as a resource theoretical underpinning is important in this paper to explore the dispositions and commitment of the two universities towards the intellectualisation of African languages to enable them to be used as LoTLs.

## 4. Data and methods

In assessing the progress of the intellectualisation of African languages for use as LoTLs in institutions of higher learning, the paper makes a critique of the language policies of two universities in South Africa. A qualitative research approach was used in this paper. Specifically, content analysis was employed to critique the language policies of the two universities. Drisko and Maschi (2016) point out that content analysis is useful in evaluating documents to understand their intended communication against previously documented objectives. The documents consisted of the language policies which were scrutinised to unravel how they facilitate the intellectualisation of African languages and their subsequent use as LoTLs. Krippendorff (2004) notes that analysing texts from the contexts of their uses distinguishes content analysis from other methods of research in that data is not viewed “as representations of physical events but of texts, images, and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings”. In analysing the two language policies, interest was on how the language policies articulate provisions for the use of African languages as LoTLs and how these languages are going to be developed through intellectualisation. The analysis therefore paid attention to the wording of the policy provisions on intellectualisation of African languages to make sense of the two institutions’ commitment towards the development of African languages as LoTLs. While the paper accepts that language policies do not always align with practices, it is also its position that the wording of policy provisions is an important signpost of institutional attitudes and ideologies towards African languages (Maseko and Siziba, 2023). The primary focus is on the content of these language policies relating to corpus planning, a central aspect of language intellectualisation.

The language policies of Universities A and B were selected after scrutinising a baseline survey of the language policies of the 26 public universities of South Africa. The survey indicated that the language policies of A and B were the most articulate and

advanced in terms of enabling the intellectualisation of African languages. The two language policies have clauses that explicitly refer to the intellectualisation of African languages. Since the use of these languages as LoTL has not been reported to have effectively taken place at any university in South Africa, it is prudent to interrogate the language policies of those universities that appear to be setting the pace. The language policy of A mentions Sesotho and Setswana as African languages that are marked for intellectualisation and use as LoTLs while University B commits to developing isiZulu. Document analysis as a research method was thus used to scrutinise the intentions of the two universities regarding their plans towards the intellectualisation and implementation of the use of African languages as LoTLs.

## 5. Results and discussion

The crafting of university language policies derives from The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) and The Language Policy for Higher Education (2002 revised in 2020). The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 states that “subject to the policy determined by the minister, the council, in concurrence with the senate, must determine the language policy of a higher education institution and must publish and make it available on request.” Following up on the Act of 1997 is the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2020) which stipulates that the aim of the policy is to:

*13.1 guide higher education institutions to evolve relevant strategies, policies, implementation plans for strengthening indigenous official languages of South Africa as languages of teaching, learning, research, innovation and science;*

*13.2 provide for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of institutional language policies.*

The main aim for the development of this language policy framework is to promote multilingualism in institutional policies and give direction towards the

intellectualisation and use of African languages as LoTLs. The analysis of the language policies of the two universities mainly centres on their modalities for execution and the implementation of African language intellectualisation and their subsequent use as LoTLs.

University A selected Sesotho and Setswana while University B chose isiZulu from the list of indigenous official African languages in the constitution of South Africa. Section 5.3 of University A's language policy (2022) states that "within the parameters of the principle of functional multilingualism, employ English, Setswana, Sesotho and Afrikaans as the University's languages of choice". On the other hand, the language policy of University B indicates that "the policy recognises the need to develop and promote proficiency in the official languages, particularly English and isiZulu". (University B, 2014) Section 6(3) of the constitution says that national and provincial governments are to use at least two of the eleven official languages and the choice should be governed by considerations such as costs, demographics, preference and needs (Potgieter and Anthonissen, 2017). The choice of African languages by these two institutions was mainly informed by the dominant languages where the universities are located and the linguistic composition of students. However, University B stresses only one African language, isiZulu which is probably because it is the widely spoken language in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of South Africa where the university is located. This could also align with the DHET imperatives advocating for the selection of at least two official languages for development and use as LoTLs University B thus chose English and isiZulu while University A chose English, Afrikaans, Sesotho and Setswana because of the location of its three campuses where these languages are predominant. The language policy of University B (2014) is clear that "while the university recognises multilingualism, this policy provides specifically for the development of bilingualism in English and isiZulu". However, one would believe that it could have been a noble idea if the university

also added another official South African language that is spoken by students from other provinces since it cannot be possible for all students within the university to come from the KZN province. The idea of promoting isiZulu as the only African language by University B is tantamount to what Banda (2009) refers to as "multiple monolingualisms" within the South African context. Banda (2009) argues that "one of the main drawbacks of current policy is that it is still based on Western and colonial notions of multilingualism, which basically involves multiple monolingualisms". Banda (2009) further observes that the "promotion of multilingualism in South Africa is erroneously seen as a case of promoting 11 monolingual streams of distinctive languages in their equally homogenous speech communities", and what is claimed to be bilingual education is in reality entrenched within the paradigm of linguistic autonomy. One may argue that a policy focusing on a single African language fails effectively promote or reflect true multilingualism and the spirit of co-existence in South Africa. A monolingual mindset is likely to recreate a vicious cycle whereby the chosen language gets legitimated and reinforced as the norm. This monolingual bias contradicts the now popular view of learners as multilinguals who flexibly use their multilingual repertoires to enhance learning (Barros et al. 2021). On the intellectualisation of Sesotho and Setswana, section 5.5 of University A's language policy has it that the university's policy aims to "view the intellectualisation of African languages as a development concept that is given effect in an organised and organic manner." Section 9.2.4.3 of the language policy states that the university has the intention to accommodate the language needs and terminology within the relevant support departments across the university.

The above suggests that the university is geared towards the intellectualisation of Sesotho and Setswana in a systematic manner. Although the language policy of University A touches on the intellectualisation of Sesotho and Setswana, there is a need to give this issue more space in the language policy. This is because most language policies have



been found lacking implementation because they are not articulate on corpus planning. Intellectualisation is a major aspect of corpus planning and therefore there is a need for language policies to concentrate more on corpus planning which is practice-oriented compared to theoretically inclined status planning. The language policy of University A is not as articulate as that of University B which is complemented by a separate document which provides an explication of the university's language policy implementation plans.

As enunciated in its language policy, University B (2014) aims to:

- become a national hub in the development of isiZulu national corpus and the development and standardisation of isiZulu technical terminology and its dissemination;
- promote the intellectualisation of isiZulu as an African language.

University B (2014) also aims to develop “isiZulu for use in all higher education functions” through the compilation of dictionaries and other learning materials. In its implementation plan, University B states that “the university will build an isiZulu national corpus as an important resource for teaching, learning and research which includes writing dictionaries, specialised glossaries and human language technologies”. As pointed out earlier, lexicography is one of the effective ways of intellectualising a language. Khumalo and Nkomo (2022) note that the UKZN has compiled two specialised field dictionaries namely the Illustrated Glossary of Southern African Architectural Terms and a Glossary of Law Terms as well as an isiZulu dictionary of linguistic terms. In its language policy implementation plan, University B makes it clear that it intends to create an isiZulu term bank to store all standardised terms for ease of access by all disciplines. This shows that the university is geared towards the intellectualisation of isiZulu in different fields of knowledge with progress already being noted in architecture, law and linguistics. However, the process of compiling dictionaries at University B could be hampered by a lack of sources of specialised subject field terms to be used in building corpora. For dictionaries to

be user-friendly, acceptable by the users and to be effective, they need to be compiled from corpora. It can only be possible to compile a corpus only when the language has texts or is already being used in that particular field. This is because the compilation of a corpus involves harvesting terms and banking them electronically or manually in a citation file. However, the challenge with the compilation of corpora for specialised subject fields is that African languages are not fully utilised as LoTLs and the terminologies that are in use are still too insignificant. This results in linguists and other specialists in the field creating terms from their knowledge and intuition. The terms that are created through linguists' or specialists' knowledge are rarely accepted by language users. The most acceptable terms are those that are created simultaneously with the use of language and then harvested by the linguists for the compilation of corpora.

On the use of African languages as LoTLs in specific academic disciplines, University B commits to “develop Setswana and Sesotho as languages of communication, engagements and teaching” (University B, 2022). The policy further states that “the development of Setswana and Sesotho, particularly with a view to increasing access and enabling success through the use of these languages, is intended to contribute to student academic success and development”. The development of Setswana and Sesotho as LoTLs appears to be a priority for the university. This is important because the African languages have for a long time been regarded as incapable of use in teaching and learning due to lack of intellectualisation. It is therefore the policy's strength to indicate the intention of the university to develop Setswana and Sesotho as academic languages. Section 9.3.3 of the university A's language policy proclaims:

*A faculty may, subject to the approval of Senate, prescribe a specific language of instruction in selected modules if it is justified on the grounds of being necessary for the realisation of the stated attributes of the graduates of the faculty concerned, and in such cases, this may*

*apply to all campuses (University A, 2022).*

This clause may render University A ambivalent in its approach to the use of Sesotho and Setswana as LoTL. This is because the university is putting a policy within a policy which shows that it is not confident about implementing the use of Sesotho and Setswana as LoTLs. The university removes itself from implementing the policy as a unified organisation and delegates the implementation to faculties. The faculties are the ones that can now use their discretion on whether to implement or not. The delegation of implementation to faculties also sounds problematic in the sense that in an ideal situation, a language should never be prescribed but it should be chosen after a consideration of learners' needs. These weaknesses identified in section 9.3.3 of the language policy are detrimental to the successful intellectualisation of African languages and their use as LoTLs.

Further, University A (2022) states that:

*11.1 Researchers must be encouraged to publish their research results in languages accessible to scholarly peers nationally and internationally.*

*11.4 Doctoral research titles and keywords must be provided in three of the university A's languages of choice.*

Similarly, University B (2014) says "the university will encourage research conducted in and through isiZulu". This is one of the ways in which terms for specialised subject fields can be created where dissertations and other research works are written in African languages. This means that these documents can then be used in the compilation of corpora for specialised lexicographic works.

The language policy of University B (2014) notes that "the university chooses to develop the use of isiZulu as a language of instruction" and also aims to develop isiZulu for use as an instructional language to promote bilingualism. The university thus intends to use isiZulu as a LoTL in the same manner in which English is used thereby promoting bilingualism. University A intends to do the same by including Sesotho and Setswana as

instructional languages without discarding English and Afrikaans. Such a policies recognise the co-existence of languages. What will then become more important is to respect the language choices of the learners. One positive move by University B is that it spells out in its language policy that "the university shall provide language and academic literacy development programmes in English and isiZulu" so that language does not become a barrier of access to education. Section 7.3.2 of the language policy indicates that "the university will expand the introduction of modules in professional degrees (e.g., legal and medical isiZulu) that focus on proficiency in isiZulu and English as a priority to facilitate and enhance bilingual professional/vocational practice." The teaching of isiZulu in the legal and medical fields should not only aim at proficiency in the language but this move should be integrated as a starting point towards the use of isiZulu as a LoTL in different academic disciplines. Section 7.5.2 of the language policy implementation plan indicates that "all students will be offered the opportunity to write examinations in isiZulu, irrespective of whether they have received tuition through the medium of isiZulu." This is a positive move by the university although there might be challenges with mutual understanding of some terminologies between the students and their instructors especially where tuition is not offered in isiZulu and the student chooses to write the examination in the language. However, the terms used in writing the examinations and assignments could help in the development of isiZulu corpora in various fields of knowledge.

The major challenge with institutional language policies has been identified to be a lack of implementation. Language policy implementation needs to be a well-coordinated exercise. Bamgbose (2000) argues that language "policy-making without implementation is[...]a futile exercise, while a proliferation of implementation agencies without coordination is[...]activity without action". Both universities have thus articulated their language policy implementation strategies. The language policy implementation plan of University B

(2014) is modelled along a two-phased approach. This is a clear indication of a well-coordinated exercise. Both the universities' language policies identify support structures that are to be engaged in the implementation of their language policies. The support structures in University A include the Vice-Chancellor, the University Management Committee (UMC), the Senate Committee for Language Planning and Advisory Services (SCLPAS), the Language Directorate, the Faculties, and Departments. University B also has several support structures, and these include the University Language Board (ULB), the University Language Planning and Development Office (ULPDO), the Executive Management Committee (EMC), Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVCs), Deans, Heads of Schools (HOSs) and Heads of Departments (HODs). With these clearly stated support structure bases at both universities, the implementation of the use of African languages as LoTL and their intellectualisation stand greater chances of success. For the successful implementation of their language policies, universities should work with other support structures and organisations from outside. These two universities also aim to collaborate with other stakeholders from outside the institutions in intellectualising and implementing the use of African languages as LoTLs. University A's language policy has it that in developing the terminologies of Setswana and Sesotho, it will consult other institutions through collaborations to avoid discrepancies and maintain uniformity in terminologies. Similarly, University B (2014) also commits that "the university will work in collaboration with other universities to create a platform for the development and study of isiZulu". The university also targets collaborations with the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in the development of terminologies for various academic disciplines.

Apart from having established support structures for the implementation of their language policies, these universities also have strategies embedded in

their language policies for intellectualisation and implementation of the use of African languages as LoTLs. University A endeavours to devise practical mechanisms that enable the implementation of the use of Setswana and Sesotho as LoTLs across its three campuses. It also aims to implement strategies that will cater for terminology needs across all academic departments. University B's language policy states that the institution will extend its provision of isiZulu training and support the development of isiZulu modules at various levels of academic disciplines. There are plans to also conduct tutorials in isiZulu for those students who are interested.

## **6. Conclusion**

Although language policies have been in existence in universities, their implementation is not always guaranteed. The problem of policy implementation is exacerbated by the lack of implementation plans. As a variance from this 'norm' Universities A and B which the paper focused on have included implementation plans in their language policies, with the latter having gone to the extent of crafting a separate document detailing its language policy implementation plans. These implementation plans spell out the strategies for both intellectualisation and the use of African languages as LoTLs. University B has made significant strides in this regard as evidenced by the development and implementation of isiZulu as a LoTL. The production of three specialised dictionaries and the teaching of isiZulu literacy modules by the university illustrates this point. This is not surprising, however, given that university B has been at the forefront of language policy crafting. The inaugural language policy was passed in 2014, almost 10 years ago. Although the language policy of University A holds promise, nothing relating to the intellectualisation and the use of Setswana and Sesotho as LoTLs has become significant since the language policy came into effect much later than that of University B. The other reason for the non-implementation of African

languages as LoTLs could be the misconception that African language intellectualisation is meant to culminate in dislodging English as the language of instruction. However, valuable lessons can be learnt from the language policies of the two universities since they acknowledge the co-existence of African languages with English. If terminologies are to be accepted by the users and also to be user-friendly, holistic strategies from the creation and compilation of such terms need to be adopted as part of African language intellectualisation. One such holistic strategy will be the adoption of the use of corpora for term harvesting. The terms that can be accepted by the users are those that are not created by linguists from their intuition or knowledge of the language but by the learners themselves through usage. Learners need to be given the liberty to use African languages in the manner that they deem ideal for lectures and assessments. Such terms that emerge need to be harvested and put into a corpus where the frequency count for each term will then be used to identify and select those that are used most often. Terms created by linguists may neither be user-friendly nor acceptable because they result in cognitive challenges. This creates non-acceptability and resistance. Such terms will be created to be learnt simultaneously with concepts instead of being created by the learners in their communication during the learning process. This paper was limited to the analysis of the language policies of only two universities to understand how they facilitate and enable the intellectualisation of their chosen indigenous African languages. Future studies could therefore consider analysing more language policies to reveal possible nuances across institutions.

## Author Contributions

The author, Liqhwa Siziba was responsible for the conception of the article, data gathering, data analysis and the writing of the article.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Funding

This research received no external funding

## Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings in this article are available in the article

## References

- Alberts, M., 1997. Legal terminology in African languages. *Lexikos*. 7, 179–191.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5788/7-1-979>
- Alexander, N., 2003. The African renaissance and the use of African languages in tertiary education. PRAESA: Cape Town.
- Alexander, N., 2005. The intellectualisation of African languages. PRAESA/University of Cape Town.
- Alexander, N., 2007. The role of African universities in the intellectualisation of African languages. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. 5(1), 29–44.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57054/jhea.v5i1.1641>
- Bamgbose, A., 2000. Language and Exclusion: The Consequences of Language Policies in Africa. Lit Verlag Munster: Münster.
- Bamgbose, A., 2000. Language planning in West Africa. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 141, 101–117.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2000.141.101>
- Bamgbose, A., 2011. African languages today: The challenge of and prospects for empowerment under globalisation. 40th Annual Conference on African Linguistics; 2011. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. p. 1–14.
- Bamgbose, A., 2015. African language dilemma in African renaissance and development. *Current Research in African Linguistics: Papers in Honour of Oladele Awobuluyi*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle. pp.10–26.
- Banda, F., 2009. Critical perspectives on language

- planning and policy in Africa: Accounting for the notion of multilingualism. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*. 38, 1–11.
- Barros S., Domke L.M., Symons C., et al., 2021. Challenging monolingual ways of looking at multilingualism: Insights for curriculum development in teacher preparation. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. 20(4), 239–254.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2020.1753196>
- Beukes, A.M., 2009. Language policy incongruity and African languages in post-apartheid South Africa. *Language Matters*. 40(1), 35–55.
- Chabata, E., 2013. The language factor in the development of Africa: A case for the compilation of specialised dictionaries in indigenous African languages. *South African Journal of African Languages*. 33(1), 51–58.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2989/02572117.2013.793940>
- Dlodlo, T.S., 1999. Science nomenclature in Africa: Physics in Nguni. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*. 36(3), 321–331.  
DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1098-2736\(199903\)36:3<321::AID-TEA6>3.0.CO;2-8](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2736(199903)36:3<321::AID-TEA6>3.0.CO;2-8)
- Drisko, J.W., Maschi, T., 2016. *Content Analysis*. Oxford University Press: USA.
- Dyers, C., Abongdia, J.F., 2015. Ideology, policy and implementation: Comparative perspectives from two African universities. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics*. 43, 1–21.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5774/43-0-157>
- Eastman, C., 1983. *Language Planning: An Introduction* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Chandler and Sharp: CA.
- Grin, F., 2006. Economic considerations in language policy. *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*. Blackwell Publishing. 77–94.
- Huyssteen L.V., 1997. Problems regarding term creation in the South African languages, with special reference to Zulu. *South African Journal of African Languages*. 19(3), 179–187.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.1999.10587395>
- Jeyifo, B., 2018. English is an African language – Ka Dupe! (for and against Ngugi). *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. 30(2), 133–147.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2016.1264295>
- Kaplan, R.B., Baldauf, R.B., 1997. *Language Planning from Practice to Theory*. Multilingual Matters.
- Kaschula, R.H., Maseko, P., 2014. The intellectualisation of African languages, multilingualism and education: A research-based approach. *Alternation*. 13, 8–35.
- Khumalo, L., 2017. Intellectualisation through terminology development. *Lexikos*. 27, 252–264.
- Khumalo, C., Moodley, M., 2023. Exploring teachers' perceptions of the relevance of African languages in the digital space. *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*. 11(1), 774–790.
- Khumalo, L., Nkomo, D., 2022. The intellectualisation of African language through terminology and lexicography: Methodological reflections with special reference to lexicographic products of the University of Kwazulu-Natal. *Lexikos*. 32(2), 133–157.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5788/32-2-1700>
- Krippendorff, K., 2004. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. SAGE Publications: London.
- Language in education policy, 1997. Available from: [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/languageeducationpolicy19971.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/languageeducationpolicy19971.pdf) (cited 24 May 2023).
- Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions, 2020. Available from:

- <https://www.studocu.com/en-za/document/university-of-fort-hare/human-right-law/language-policy-framework-for-higher-education-institutions-2020/49034120> (cited 13 August 2023).
- Language policy of the NWU, 2022. Available from: [https://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/i-governance-management/policy/2022/LanguagePolicy/2P\\_2.5\\_2022\\_e1.pdf](https://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/i-governance-management/policy/2022/LanguagePolicy/2P_2.5_2022_e1.pdf) (cited 8 February 2024).
- Liddicoat, A.J., Bryant, P., 2002. Intellectualisation: A current issue in language planning. *Current Issues in Language Planning*. 3(1), 1–4.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664200208668033>
- Madadzhe, R.N., 2019. Using African languages at universities in South Africa: The struggle continues. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5842/58-0-843>
- Makalela, L., McCabe, R., 2013. Monolingualism in a historically black South African university: A case of inheritance. *Linguistics and Education*. 24(4), 406–414.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2013.09.004>
- Maseko, B., Siziba, L., 2023. Continuities or change? A synchronic and diachronic analysis of documented language policies of selected universities in South Africa. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*. 14(2), 304–313.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1402.05>
- Madzimbamuto, F.D., 2012. Developing anatomical terms in an African language. *Issues in Medicine*. 102(3), 1–4.
- Mutasa, D.E., 2015. Language policy implementation in South African universities vis-à-vis the speakers of indigenous African languages' perception. *Perlinguam: A Journal of Language Learning*. 31(1), 46–59.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5785/31-1-631>
- Nhongo, R., Tshotsho B.P., 2020. Is terminology the real problem in failure to implement STEM education in African languages? *Translanguaging as an intervention strategy. Multicultural Education*. 4(4), 78–89.
- Nkomo, D., Wababa, Z., 2013. IsiXhosa lexicography: Past, present and future. *Lexikos*. 23(1), 348–370.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5788/23-1-1219>
- Potgieter, A., Anthonissen, C., 2017. Language-in-education policies: Managing the multilingualism of learners in the 21st century. In: Kaschula, R. (ed). *Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication: A South African Perspective*. Wits University Press: Johannesburg, South Africa. pp. 131–156.
- Prinsloo, D.J., Zondi, N., 2020. From postcolonial African language lexicography to globally competitive e-lexicography in Africa. In: Kaschula, R.H., Wolff, H.E. (eds). *The Transformative Power of Language: From Postcolonial to Knowledge Societies in Africa*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. pp. 259–274.
- Probyn, M., 2005. Language and the struggle to learn: The intersection of classroom realities, language policy, and neo-colonial and globalisation discourses in South African Schools. In: Lin A., Martin, P.W. (eds). *Decolonisation, Globalisation: Language-in-Education Policy and Practice*. Multilingual Matters: Bristol, UK. pp. 153–171.
- Ramanathan, V., 2005. Rethinking language planning and policy from the ground up: Refashioning institutional realities and human lives. *Current Issues in Language Planning*. 6(2), 89–101.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664200508668275>
- Republic of South Africa, 1996. *Bill of Rights*. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa.
- Siiner, M., 2016. University administrators as forced language policy agents: An institutional ethnography of parallel language strategy and practices at the University of Copenhagen. *Current Issues in*

- Language Planning. 17(3–4), 441–458.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2016.1204058>
- University of KwaZulu Natal., 2014. Language policy of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Available from: <https://ulpdo.ukzn.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/UKZN-Language-Policy.pdf> (cited 10 May 2024).
- Van der Merwe, C., 2022. Re-considering orientations in South African language policies. *Bandung*. 9(1–2), 279–299.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/21983534-09010011>
- Webb, V., 1999. Multilingualism in democratic South Africa: The overestimation of language policy. *International Journal of Educational Development*. 19, 351–366.  
DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(99\)00033-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(99)00033-4)
- Zungu, T.G., 2021. Intellectualisation of IsiZulu at the University of KwaZulu-Natal through the development of isiZulu terminology and the implementation of the doctoral rule. *Alternation*. 38,637–657.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2021/sp38a27>