Continuities or Change?: A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis of Documented Language Policies of Selected Universities in South Africa

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Abstract—**In line with the requirements of Department of Higher Education and Training's language policy framework, universities in South Africa have crafted language policies that commit to promote multilingualism and contribute to the transformation of higher education. This article is an analysis of previous and current revised language policies of North-West University and Stellenbosch University in South Africa. By focusing on the wording and framing of language policy provisions in the past and present policy documents, we show that language policies of the two institutions have been characterised by continuities than change. Through a theorisation of language policy as a function of ideologies, practices and management, the article exposes how the institutions' language policies perpetuate the marginalisation and exclusion of indigenous language as languages of instruction and continue to legitimatise Afrikaans and English in varying degrees. While the language policies of the two institutions are full of promise to foster inclusive multilingual education, the wording of the policy provisions betrays the fallacy of this promise by the inclusion of caveats and conditions to be met for indigenous African languages to be used in teaching and learning. The article however notes the positive steps taken by the two historically Afrikaans medium universities to commit to multilingual education by the inclusion of African languages as potential languages of instruction. We conclude that further policy revisions are imperative to eliminate vague and escapist terminology that militates against the implementation and realisation of multilingualism as envisaged in the language policies of the two universities.**

Index Terms—**language policy, ideologies, South African Universities, African languages, multilingualism**

I. INTRODUCTION

Consistent with the language provisions in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and various other pieces of legislation in education, South African universities have crafted institutional language policies that seek to, among other things, transform language use in universities and eliminate the language barrier in accessing university education (Drummond, 2016; Thamaga-Chitja & Mbatha, 2012). The language policy of South Africa is spelt out in several legal documents such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) Act (Act 59 of 1996); and the National Language Policy Framework (Department of Arts and Culture 2003). The documented language policy recognises as official, a total of 11 languages including English and Afrikaans. Read together, these language policy documents undertake to promote multilingualism and diversity by according 'parity of esteem' to the 11 languages. To this end, the 11 languages are supposed to enjoy equitable functional and institutional status (Docrat, 2020; Docrat & Kaschula, 2015; Drummond, 2016; Ndhlovu, 2008). To complement these legal provisions and to contribute to the transformation of post-Apartheid South Africa, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (DHET 2002 as amended in 2020) also commits to promote and entrench multilingualism by foregrounding previously disadvantaged African languages as Languages of Instruction (LOIs) in higher education institutions. The DHET policy acknowledges how language has posed a barrier of access to higher education because teaching and learning have been conducted in English and Afrikaans while the majority of learners are previously disadvantaged speakers of African languages (Drummond, 2016). As a response to these policy pronouncements, universities in South Africa enacted language policies that seek to contribute to this transformation drive (Rudwick, 2018). Although the South African language policy has been applauded as one of the most progressive, inclusive and transformative in the world (Docrat, 2020), scholars have argued that some of the language provisions are idealistic as far as they have remained unimplemented, thereby perpetuating a status quo which has resulted in English and Afrikaans retaining the defacto status of being the twin official languages (Drummond, 2016; Ndhlovu, 2008). This has further precipitated the decline of African languages in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa (Ndhlovu, 2008). Given the foregoing, university language policies have not been exempt from similar criticisms and have often been perceived as a reproduction of the macro

language policies and practices at the state level (Antia & van der Merwe, 2019; Drummond, 2016; Madadzhe, 2019). The mismatch and contradiction between policy and practice has often been cited as a point of weakness for many institutional language policies. As it is with the documented national language policy, institutional policies have been criticised for being awash with various caveats (Docrat & Kaschula, 2015; Drummond, 2016; Kaschula, 2016) and escape clauses (Bamgbose, 1991) that insulate authorities from accountability and implementation imperatives (Kaschula, 2016). This misnomer has therefore meant that universities have to continuously review their language policies to align them with the prevailing language demands through space and time (Antia & van der Merwe, 2019).

Drawing on the theorisations of language policy as a function of language ideologies, language practices and language management (Spolsky, 2004, 2009), this paper analyses language policies of the North-West University (NWU) and Stellenbosch University (SU) (publicly available on the institutions' websites) to show how the previous and current language policies of the two institutions are characterised by continuities and inheritance (Makalela & McCabe, 2013) rather than change. The chosen cases are interesting in the sense that, while both are Historically White Universities (HWU), their initial language policy responses were informed by different ideologies and dispositions towards multilingualism and multilingual education. In this paper, HWU is a designation for those universities that previously enrolled white students only (Makalela & McCabe, 2013). It is also used as a synonym for Afrikaans medium universities, usually contrasted with Historically Black English Medium Universities (Mwaniki, 2012). NWU and SU recently published their revised language policies. Given the criticism and scepticism previously levelled on most university language policies concerning their commitment to transformation and inclusion (Drummond, 2016; Makalela & McCabe, 2013; Pillay & Yu, 2015) the present paper is a critical analysis of both the previous and recently revised language policies of NWU and SU to reveal the extent of changes that have occurred in the policy provisions and their implications for the success of multilingualism, and in particular, the inclusion of indigenous African languages in teaching and learning. For NWU, significant steps to include Sesotho and Setswana in the curriculum as languages of Instruction (LOIs) have been noted in the previous policy while the previous SU language policies seemed to foreground Afrikaans as an academic language (Antia & Dyers, 2016; Leibowitz, 2015; Leibowitz & van Deventer, 2007) with English and isiXhosa being embraced to give a semblance of transformation and inclusion (Docrat, 2020; Rudwick, 2018). However, there is still a lot of work that remains to be done, even for NWU as it is with other institutions across the country for the implementation of African languages as media of instruction. For most parts, the mismatch between the documented policies and actual practices is mediated by the absence of broad-based considerations of the sociolinguistic, economic and political factors (Maseko, 2021). These factors engender language ideologies that inform the preference for Afrikaans and English in the university business at large, consequently diminishing the intended transformative educational outcomes for African language-speaking learners (Maseko, 2021; Thamaga-Chitja & Mbatha, 2012).

Methodologically, this article deploys content analysis to identify and make sense of the changes and continuities characteristic of the previous and current revised language policies of NWU and SU. In particular, we pay attention to the wording of the policy provisions to draw conclusions regarding their commitment to realise the promise of inclusive multilingualism by the two institutions. Although documented language policies do not always translate to conforming practices (Spolsky, 2004), the wording and framing of provisions are important as they reveal the underlying dispositions and ideologies of those in authority towards multilingualism, inclusion, and ultimately, the transformation of the higher education sector in South Africa.

While this article focuses on the language policies of the named institutions, we are certainly not averse to the fact that mechanics of language policy and macro-level language ideologies have implications for language policies and practices in universities. We therefore follow up in the next session, with a cursory discussion of the politics of language policy in South Africa in order to locate the paper in its broader context.

II. THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The language policy of South Africa is anchored on several documents among which are, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the PANSALB Act (Act 59 of 1996); and the National Language Policy Framework (Department of Arts and Culture 2003) the Use of Official Languages Act (2012) and various other pronouncements on language use at different levels of education and the judiciary services (Docrat, 2020). The language policy of South Africa, a product of multipronged efforts from various stakeholders under the stewardship of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) has received rave reviews as the most democratic and inclusive document in the world (Ndhlovu, 2008). In line with the founding values and ideals of the South African Constitution, the language policy seeks to promote national unity within the country's linguistic and cultural diversity, to entrench democracy and foster the protection of language rights, to promote respect for, and tolerance towards linguistic and cultural diversity, to promote multilingualism, to contribute to the elaboration and modernisation of African languages and to promote national economic development broadly (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003). While the language policy provisions promise to treat all languages equitably by affording them 'parity of esteem' (Docrat & Kaschula, 2015), visible language practices have tended to betray the fallacy of this promise (Drummond, 2016; Mwaniki, 2012). Concerning section 6 of the Constitution, the linguistic provisions have been criticised for being contradictory, messy and non-committal insofar as they are practically unimplementable to achieve the envisaged 'parity of esteem' especially with respect to

historically underprivileged African languages (Docrat, 2020; Docrat & Kaschula, 2015; Drummond, 2016; Makalela & McCabe, 2013; Ndhlovu, 2008). While the Constitution identifies 11 official languages, among which nine are indigenous African languages, language policy and practices in official spaces continue to ameliorate and legitimise English and Afrikaans. This has resulted in African languages remaining peripheral and marginalised. Consequently, there have been frequent protestations from speakers of African languages on the marginality of their languages in post-apartheid South Africa. Ndhlovu (2008) suggests that the argument for the inclusion of African languages in mainstream and official domains is only a strategy employed by pro-English elites to challenge the resurgence of Afrikaans. He, therefore, questions the sincerity of the constitutional provisions on languages given this observation. Similar concerns have been expressed by other scholars (Docrat & Kaschula, 2015; Drummond, 2016; Kaschula, 2016).

In line with the devolved South African political governance system, the language policy management structure is similarly decentralised. The language policy empowers different levels of government to make localised decisions regarding language use. To this end, language policy decisions are made at either the national, provincial or local government levels (Ndhlovu, 2008). This provides opportunities for robust participation of local communities and encourages bottom-up agency in language policy decisions. However, the opportunities presented by the devolution of language policy decisions for the historically marginalised languages have thus far been missed because English and Afrikaans have remained the dominant languages of communication in education, government and business generally (Docrat, 2020; Makalela & McCabe, 2013; Ndhlovu, 2008). According to Docrat and Kaschula (2015), the constitutional provisions in section 6(1) and 6(2) which seek to cement the equality of languages by obligating the government to prioritise historically marginalised African languages are undone by the lack of clarity regarding implementation. For example, section 6(3) fails to categorically articulate how this equality is to be achieved and leaves room for variations in the implementation of these provisions. Section 6(3) (a) states that "the national government and provincial governments may use any particular two official languages for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population" (Republic of South Africa, 1996). A critical appraisal of the above provisions shows that they leave room for multiple interpretations and variations in implementation. The wording of these provisions is not categorical and exposes them to discretionary implementation (Docrat, 2020; Docrat & Kaschula, 2015; Drummond, 2016) since issues of 'practicality', 'expense' and 'regional circumstances' are subjective. This has resulted in the perpetuation of the status quo (Drummond, 2016; Makalela & McCabe, 2013; Mkhize & Balfour, 2017). Further, "this flexibility has resulted in a default situation where English and Afrikaans are adopted as the two official languages alongside another of the official languages" (Docrat & Kaschula, 2015, p. 1). Akin to most language policies in other African countries, some sections of the South African language policy are characterised by vagueness and the use of escapist terminology (Bamgbose 1991). As a result, "actual patterns of language use in […] South Africa […] show that these rosy ideals have remained a far cry from comprehensive and implementable policy frameworks"(Ndhlovu, 2008, p. 62).

For the purposes of this paper, a cursory discussion of the language policy provisions in the South African Constitution was imperative to locate the study within the broader context of language planning and language policy in South Africa. In this section, we have argued that while the language policy of South Africa has been described as progressive, transformative and democratic among other superlatives, the pronouncements made in the policy documents have not been implemented to the satisfaction of, especially the speakers of historically marginalised African languages. Language practices continue to ameliorate English and Afrikaans in varying degrees, to the detriment of African languages. In the next section, we discuss the paper's theoretical underpinnings.

III. LANGUAGE POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: AT THE INTERSECTION OF IDEOLOGIES, PRACTICES AND MANAGEMENT

At all levels of society, language policy is underpinned by a set of three interrelated components, identified as; language ideologies, language practices and language management (Spolsky, 2004, 2009). In this article, we draw on this theorisation of language policy to make sense of the past and recently revised language policies of NWU and SU. Relatedly, we interrogate the language ideologies behind the two institutions' documented language policies to understand how they are linked to broader national and societal language ideologies and concomitantly reflected in the institutions' commitment to embracing multilingualism by infusing African languages into teaching, learning and the conducting of university business at large. Language ideologies are the beliefs shared by speakers about appropriate language practices. These beliefs oftentimes form consensual behaviours and assign values and prestige to various aspects of the language(s) used in a community (Spolsky, 2004). Ideologies are "what people think should be done" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14) about language. Language ideologies, therefore, refer to "a shared body of common-sense notions about the nature of language in the world, including cultural assumptions about language, the nature and purpose of communication" (Tollefson, 2000, p. 43). In this thinking, language ideologies imply that in a multilingual setting, different languages are valued differently depending on the beliefs speakers hold about them (Razfar, 2005; Spolsky, 2009). These beliefs are never innocent nor neutral but are always situated within specific social, historical and political contexts and contestations (Kiramba, 2018; Razfar, 2005). Ideologies can either reproduce or challenge systems of social difference by classifying and ranking speakers who use certain languages or language varieties (Bourdieu, 1991). For example, the 'legitimate language' ideology is inextricably associated with players in the politics

of state formation and is usually reproduced in educational institutions which are capable of imposing the 'legitimate language' to normalise their political domination (Bourdieu, 1991).

Language practices refer to the regular and predictable behaviours of choosing a language or languages among a set of alternatives by members of a community for use in specific domains (Ren & Hu, 2013). They are "the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 5). In terms of language policy in universities, language practices are the language choices and decisions that universities make for teaching and learning and conducting business. They are what universities actually do, rather than what they believe must be done (Ren & Hu, 2013; Spolsky, 2004). On the other hand, language management as one component of language policy refers to the explicit efforts by someone or a group that has, or claims to have authority over the participants in a named domain to impose, modify, adapt or influence the language practices of the less powerful in that domain (Spolsky, 2009). In this study, language management therefore denotes the nuanced interventions deployed by university authorities as 'language managers' to influence language ideologies and practices of students, staff and other stakeholders.

The three components of language policy discussed above influence each other in reciprocal ways (Ren & Hu, 2013). For example, although language ideologies do not constitute practices, they influence language practices in that languages which are valued by society are also legitimated in high domains such as education. Conversely, those that are devalued by society are condemned to marginality. This means that even if documented university language policies may proclaim African languages as languages of instruction, broader societal language ideologies may still valorise English or Afrikaans, resulting in contradictory practices in the university systems.

Studies have shown that despite the seemingly progressive nature of South African language policy, complemented in higher education by the language policy provisions in the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2002, as amended in 2020) which seek to generously promote multilingualism in institutions, language practices are still skewed towards the use of English and Afrikaans in varying degrees (Antia & van der Merwe, 2019; Drummond, 2016; Dyers & Abongdia, 2015; Makalela & McCabe, 2013; Pillay & Yu, 2015). In other contexts, studies suggest that language ideologies are central to the reproduction of inequalities or their contestations, especially in education (Dyers & Abongdia, 2015; Kiramba, 2018).

In South African universities, language policy pronouncements intersect with the general government's ideology of inclusion, transformation and the drive towards embracing cultural diversity as a redress to the inequalities occasioned by the country's colonial and apartheid history. The language policy framework for higher education thus spells out the need for institutional language policies and practices to address these historical imbalances and social injustices created by this historical period (Dyers & Abongdia, 2015; Mwaniki, 2012; van der Merwe, 2022). It acknowledges that "language has been and continues to be a barrier to access and success in higher education" (DHET, 2002, p. 4) because the majority of learners are not proficient in English or Afrikaans. Therefore as a starting point, inclusion is the rallying ideology that seeks to promote multilingualism by propelling African languages to the position of being LOIs in higher learning institutions (Thamaga-Chitja & Mbatha, 2012). The foregoing however reveals that language practices in higher learning institutions tend to contradict these explicit ideologies by perpetuating the inheritance situation where colonial languages continue to dominate as LOIs (Makalela & McCabe, 2013; Pillay & Yu, 2015). The political and economic power that resides within the speakers of English and Afrikaans is implicated in these practices. Therefore, the contentious factors related to the history of language status, legitimacy, authority, and power mediate language practices in most institutions (Dyers & Abongdia, 2015; Razfar, 2005). Commenting on language practices in the broader South African context, Ndhlovu observes that,

> unlike in the apartheid era where racial or ethnic difference was the underpinning ideology of linguistic imperialism and cultural domination, the hidden language policy of post-apartheid South Africa is premised on perceived social or political class differences. The ruling political elites and the intellectuals appear to have an insatiable appetite for the English language to a point where the African official languages have been essentialised as identity markers for the less educated subaltern (Ndhlovu, 2008, p. 65).

The above notwithstanding, the language policy for higher education acknowledges that a move to full multilingualism is not going to be easy, and that the country might have to contend with the status quo for some time until African languages have developed enough to be used in higher education (Drummond, 2016). This disposition does not inspire confidence in African languages, as it reads like a veiled capitulation to the dominance of colonial languages and an admission that African languages are below standard. Although some language policy scholars paint a bleak picture regarding the implementation of multilingual education in universities, notable strides have been made in some institutions such as the University of Kwazulu Natal (UKZN). The implementation of isiZulu as an additional LOI and a compulsory language course across all curricula is a laudable positive step in that regard (Kamwendo et al., 2014; Kaschula, 2016; Pillay & Yu, 2015). Other universities are also following closely, with various efforts at using indigenous languages being visible at Rhodes University, the University of Limpopo and the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Madadzhe, 2019). At Rhodes University, students enrolled for Journalism must pass isiXhosa as a language subject while the University of Limpopo offers a course in Multilingual Studies in both English and Northern Sotho. UNISA has also begun offering its programmes in both English and African languages including translating some of its courses from English into African languages (Madadzhe, 2019).

IV. A SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC APPRAISAL OF LANGUAGE POLICIES

A. A Critical Overview of Past and Current NWU Language Policies

The previous language policy of NWU which was approved and adopted in November 2018 has recently been revised and adopted in June 2022 in line with policy stipulations. In this section, we provide a critical comparative analysis of the two versions of the policy documents to expose the nature of changes that have occurred and their implications to the implementation of multilingual education. While both the 2018 and the 2022 language policies of NWU commit to respond to the multilingual realities of the university's three campuses, the 2022 revised policy sets off by making explicit reference to an expanded set of legal frameworks, statutes and documents forming the basis for its interpretation and application. In this regard, Section 1 of the language policy (NWU, 2022, p. 1) cites the following expanded list of documents as being central:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- The Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997
- The Statute of the North-West University
- The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2013
- Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020)
- National Curriculum Statement: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grade R–12 (2010)
- Pan South African Language Board Act, 59 of 1995
- National Development Plan (NDP)
- Relevant policies and rules as provided by the University Council

The previous 2018 language policy makes explicit reference only to the first three documents in this updated list. The drive to foster functional multilingualism in the University's three campuses (Mafikeng, Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom) remains the guiding principle of the revised language policy of NWU. In the policy, functional multilingualism means that "the choice of a particular language in a particular situation is determined by the situation or context in which it is used" (NWU, 2022, p.1). Both the 2018 and the revised 2022 language policies are alive to the multilingual realities of South Africa and the marginalised status of African languages in South African higher education institutions. They, therefore, foreground the intellectualisation of African languages as a central concern in their articulation. According to NWU (2022, p. 1), intellectualisation of African languages refers to,

> a language planning programme whereby the university's African languages of choice are developed and implemented to be languages for administrative, teaching and research purposes, but in particular to measures designed to ensure the scholarly use of the languages in such a way that it fosters the academic self-respect and values regardless of language preferences

Both policy documents purport to give effect to the use of Afrikaans, English, Setswana and Sesotho "as the university's languages of choice" (NWU, 2018, p.1) in teaching and learning as well as in public communication and administration (NWU, 2022). The inclusion of Sesotho and Setswana as potential languages of instruction alongside Afrikaans and English in the policy is a laudable move which, if implemented, could contribute to the intellectualisation of African languages agenda. To this end, several sections of the revised language policy reflect this commitment. Section 5 of the 2022 revised policy purports to place the four languages on an equal footing, where the four languages are identified as the languages of choice that should be "acquired, learned and developed" (NWU, 2022, p.1). However, a close reading of both the 2018 and the revised 2022 language policy reveals that the commitment to develop Setswana and Sesotho is likely to be hampered by certain caveats and conditions in the provisions. For example, sub-section 5.4 states that the two languages are to be developed "without the diminishment of the use of English and Afrikaans" (NWU, 2022, p. 2). Effectively, this caveat ensures a safe space for English and Afrikaans in the university. Conversely, it diminishes the use of Setswana and Sesotho which are to be used and developed for international partnerships only when "it is practicable". While the foregoing is well motivated, given their limited international reach, it would seem that the underlying intention is to protect and further legitimise Afrikaans and English. Notably, there is no explicitly corresponding proclamation to protect Setswana and Sesotho in the local university spaces. Moreover, the principle of "functional multilingualism" is ill-defined in the policy. This poses a prohibiting barrier to the development and use of Setswana and Sesotho in the core business of the institution. It is likely to restrict their use to contexts outside the classroom and precipitate the further entrenchment of English as the compromise default language of instruction ostensibly to accommodate learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The "functional multilingualism" and the "where practicable" caveats can also be used as escape clauses and alibis by university authorities and a recourse to inaction and non-implementation of policy provisions (Docrat & Kaschula, 2015; Drummond, 2016).

Despite the apparent weaknesses in its provisions, the revised NWU language policy is a promising document which recognises and commits to champion multilingualism in all facets of university, including in its conduct of business with external stakeholders. It, therefore, addresses the language question beyond teaching, learning and research by extending the principle of functional multilingualism to language practices involving external stakeholders. Further, as part of language management, the policy commits to entrench and support multilingual pedagogical approaches such as translanguaging to ensure that the university's languages of choice are used as overlapping systems to foster learning. This is particularly important, given the transformative potential of translanguaging and its ability to challenge the

legitimate language and the monolingual ideologies in education (Creese & Blackledge, 2011; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2020; Barros et al., 2021; Burton & Rajendram, 2019). The legitimation of translanguaging by the NWU language policy is therefore a commendable step toward embracing multilingual pedagogies. If comprehensively implemented, translanguaging could create breathing spaces for Sesotho and Setswana in teaching and learning. The concept of breathing spaces implies that opportunities are consciously created to normalise the use of dominant and non-dominant societal languages alongside each other as a legitimate teaching strategy (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017, 2022).

B. A Critical Overview of Past and Current SU Language Policies

The previous language policy of SU was adopted in June 2016 and subsequently revised and approved in December 2021 for implementation in January 2022. The revised language policy also cites several documents to which it relates and is intended to be read with. These are cited by SU (2022, pp. 14-15) as follows:
- Conceptual Framework Document for Academic literacies at Stellenbosch University, 2020
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- Disability Access Policy, 2018
- Higher Education act 101 of 1997, as amended
- Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions, 2020
- Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000
- Uses of Official Languages Act 12 of 2012
- SU Relation: Language committee of Council, 2016
- SU mandate of the Language Planning and Management Advisory Committee (yet to be drafted)

Pertinent to this development in the revised SU language policy is that it also affirms that institutional language policies do not operate in a vacuum but are influenced by language ideologies circulating in the macro spaces beyond it. Like the previous 2016 language policy, it explicitly identifies institutional and government policy documents on which it draws and relates. This is important as an attempt to locate the language policy within the broader national ideologies of transformation and inclusion in post-apartheid South African Society. The net effect of this would be to inspire a more elaborated preamble of the policy that captures a broader essence. Part of the preamble in the 2022 revised language policy reads:

> The Language Policy aims to give effect to section 29(2) of the South African Constitution and to the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020) in relation to language usage in the university's academic, administrative, professional and social contexts. The Policy aims to increase equitable access to SU for all students and staff, promote multilingualism and the appreciation thereof, and facilitate pedagogically sound learning and teaching (SU, 2022, p. 1).

As a departure from the previous policies, the revised policy is generally more elaborated and considered. Central to this elaboration is the explicit mention of the commitment and promise to promote multilingualism in general and the inclusion of isiXhosa as a language of teaching and learning in the university in particular, including the mechanics of operationalisation. This is particularly encouraging, given that isiXhosa, the predominant indigenous language spoken within the precincts of the SU was previously given the briefest treatment in the previous policy documents. A closer look at the previous language policy reveals how its wording was intended to entrench the use of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction at SU. The previous language policies of SU committed to entrenching Afrikaans as a language of teaching and learning on the basis that it "has developed an academic repertoire over decades" (SU, 2016, p. 2). The insinuation here is that; when pitted against indigenous African languages, Afrikaans is miles ahead in terms of intellectualisation. Several sections of the previous policy animate and feed this disposition. In the past, the preference for Afrikaans as the sole LOI at SU was on the grounds that its speakers constituted a majority among students and staff (Leibowitz, 2015; Leibowitz & van Deventer, 2007) and that its long history of standardisation and use in the academy imbued it with a potential to empower a broad and diverse community of people (SU, 2016). However, in the revised 2022 policy, one gets a sense that English and Afrikaans are given primacy in varying degrees. In its treatment of Afrikaans for example, the revised language policy continues to justify foregrounding it as an academic language due to its international flair and appeal:

> Afrikaans is an international language that has developed a substantial academic repertoire across a variety of disciplines to which SU has contributed significantly. Proficiency in Afrikaans also aids internationalisation, as it opens doors for learning and research with some of the University's most solid academic partnerships in the Netherlands and Belgium (SU, 2022, p. 3).

By projecting Afrikaans as a language with the potential to foster internationalisation of the university in knowledge production, a trait that indigenous languages have been claimed to lack (Dyers & Abongdia, 2015; Madadzhe, 2019; van der Merwe, 2022), this ideology adds to its legitimation as an academic language alongside English and subsequently backgrounds isiXhosa within SU language practices. While the 2022 revised language policy commits to the use of Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa as "a means of empowering large and diverse communities" (SU, 2022, p. 3), the provisions on language use in the core business of teaching and learning at SU betrays the sincerity of this commitment. Notably, wherever Afrikaans and English are mentioned, the wording of the provisions is categorical, unambiguous and imperative. On the other hand, where isiXhosa is mentioned, there are always conditions attached to its usage. In sections that address teaching, learning and research, Afrikaans and English are prescribed as primary

languages while isiXhosa is an appendage or an afterthought whose use is conditional and discretionary. The policy provisions under Section 7 and its subsections further entrench the primacy of Afrikaans and English as languages of learning and teaching albeit with variations of contexts under which they should be used. The following animate this point. There is a further explicit commitment to support students to use Afrikaans and English as a way to facilitate learning through consultations, tutorials and practicals. The section also commits to ensuring that all lectures are conveyed "at least in English and summaries or emphasis on content are also given in Afrikaans" (SU, 2022, p. 6). In addition, where lecturers are only proficient in either Afrikaans or English, simultaneous interpretation is to be provided either in English or Afrikaans depending on the language of the lecturer. The policy provisions also entrench the primacy of the two languages by making it imperative that prescribed reading material, module frameworks and study guides are availed in Afrikaans and English (SU, 2022). The foregoing shows that while the previous policies sought to entrench Afrikaans monolingualism at SU, the revised 2022 policy is skewed towards Afrikaans-English bilingualism as a climb down from an Afrikaans-only monolingual ideology.

V. Conditional and Discretionary Implementation of African Languages at NWU and SU: A Case of 'Exclusion by Inclusion?'

What is apparent thus far is that while the language policies of NWU and SU purport to promote multilingualism, a critical reading reveals that the provisions are fraught with caveats and conditions that have to be met before African languages can be used in various domains of the university. On the contrary, Afrikaans and English are not subjected to similar conditional and discretionary implementation. The following curious questions therefore materialise. Could this be a case of 'exclusion by inclusion?' In other words, is the mention of Sesotho and Setswana in the NWU policy and isiXhosa in the SU policy a sincere drive towards inclusion and transformation, or are they simply listed in the policies merely to service public relations and politics rather than as a reflection of a deep-seated commitment to promote and intellectualise them? These are critical questions that language policy scholars and other stakeholders must engage with going forward.

As the paper has unraveled, analyses of the wording of certain sections of the policies tend to expose the insincerity of their commitment. What is likely to happen is that isiXhosa will remain a peripheral language of teaching and learning at SU as long as its usage remains conditional. To further animate this point, the requirement that isiXhosa is used "in some cases [...] for self-directed learning, the further reinforcement of concepts and revision" (SU, 2022, P. 7) suffices. Concerning isiXhosa, further escapist and vague terminology is used in the policy. IsiXhosa is permissible in teaching and learning only when it is "reasonably practicable", when it is "pedagogically sound" or when there is a "pedagogical need" (SU, 2022). The net effect of these caveats and conditions is to subordinate isiXhosa to Afrikaans and English and to present it as subservient to the two at SU. These ideologies relegate isiXhosa to a language of revision rather than a primary language of teaching and learning.

The requirement that the use of isiXhosa be well motivated casts aspersions and doubts on its potential to encode and disseminate scientific knowledge. On the other hand, Afrikaans is legitimised by the policy as a scientific language to be used across the University for teaching, research and symposia among other functions (SU, 2022). These conditions constitute escape clauses whose consequence is to permit discretionary implementation and therefore insulate responsible university authorities from answering 'hard questions' relating to implementation. Terms such as "reasonably practicable", "pedagogically sound" and "pedagogical need" are relative descriptors that leave the policy open to multiple interpretations and provide an escape route from accountability.

A commendable strategy in the NWU policy is the move to establish "flagship programmes" to serve as springboards for "the development and implementation of an African language as language of teaching and learning" (NWU, 2022, p. 1). However promising this innovation, as a language management strategy it remains ill-defined and rudimentarily developed to explain how it is to be operationalised. There is no effort to elaborate on how Setswana and Sesotho are to be used in the flagship programmes. This notwithstanding, the idea is a noble innovation that could mainstream Sesotho and Setswana as academic languages at NWU.

VI. Continuities or Change?

The analyses of language policies of NWU and SU reveal more continuities than change. These continuities are often punctuated by a replication of the linguistic provisions in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the National Language Policy Framework (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003). The revised language policies of NWU and SU still contain caveats that make the implementation of African languages conditional and discretionary. These reproduce escape clauses in the constitution and the language policy framework. Consequently, the wording of the provisions affirms the view that language policies are never innocent of the play of power and that ideologies circulating at the national level often find expression in institutional language policies. Contestations between English, Afrikaans and indigenous African languages continue to characterise language policies of the two institutions under focus in this article. This is not unexpected, however, as it has been shown that language policy is often power inflected and is never neutral and transparent (Maseko, 2021; Shohamy, 2007). This state of affairs is not unique to the NWU and

SU, and certainly not to South Africa generally, but pervades the African continent and the post-colonial states generally.

The wording of the language provisions in the NWU and SU language policies typify and reproduce a deliberate avoidance strategy, deployed by most post-independence African governments to lighten the burden of accountability when implementation fails (Bamgbose 1991; Shohamy 2003). As the foregoing has argued, continuities in most language policies perpetuate the preponderance of Afrikaans and English as languages of teaching and learning at NWU and SU. Similar continuities have been noted in language policies of other South African universities (Antia & van der Merwe, 2019; Drummond, 2016; Makalela & McCabe, 2013) as well as in language policies of other post-colonial African states (Hungwe, 2007; Makoni et al., 2006; Maseko, 2021).

At this point, it is prudent to note that the wording of the language policies of NWU and SU is ideological and legitimates English and Afrikaans in varying degrees. This inheritance situation (Makalela & McCabe, 2013) pervades spaces beyond higher education institutions in South Africa. The inclusion of indigenous languages in university language policies can be viewed as half-hearted, since the policy provisions neither categorically implore their use, nor sanction their neglect. In the absence of provisions for recourse, there is a real danger that African languages will continue to play a subservient role in teaching and learning. The office of the Language Ombud which is advocated for in the language policy of NWU does not appear sufficiently empowered enough to decisively act against violations of the language policies. Despite the central role of the Language Ombud in addressing violations and variations of policy, the NWU language policy accords it peripheral treatment without elaborating on the precise mechanics of reporting violations and channels for recourse. The NWU should nevertheless be commended for the move towards establishing the Language Ombud office.

For SU, the climb-down from its previous stance to promote a monolingual Afrikaans ideology to a commitment to promote multilingualism at SU is a welcome change. Although seemingly cosmetic and intended to give a semblance of inclusion, the visibility and frequent mention of isiXhosa throughout the policy document is particularly encouraging and could signal an important shift by SU towards genuine inclusion of African languages in the curriculum. Dismantling monolingual ideologies in higher education institutions through language policies is never an easy enterprise as it means dismantling the structures and systems responsible for their perpetuation. Language policies are similarly power inflected and reveal contestations between the elite and the subaltern. As such the acknowledgment that a movement towards full multilingualism in higher education institutions will not be easy (DHET, 2002) is not a farfetched assessment of the state of affairs. A continuous review of the university language policies is therefore imperative to incrementally recalibrate the linguistic ecology of universities for the realisation of a transformed higher education system in South Africa.

VII. CONCLUSION

This article analysed the previous and recently revised languages policies of North-West University and Stellenbosch University. The two are Historically White Afrikaans medium universities in South Africa which have recently revised their institutional language policies in line with the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2020). Through a diachronic and synchronic analysis, the article focused on those policy provisions that have implications for the use of previously disadvantaged indigenous African languages to expose the extent of changes that have occurred in the language policy pronouncements of the two universities. By drawing on the theorisations on language policy as responsive to ideologies, practices and management (Spolsky, 2004, 2009), our analyses of the past and revised language policies of NWU and SU reveal a legacy of continuities more than change. Central to these continuities is the perpetuation of Afrikaans and English as the legitimate languages of teaching and learning at the two institutions. Although the policies of the two institutions offer a promise of inclusion, by embracing multilingualism, the wording of certain sections of their policies betrays the sincerity of this promise. In particular, provisions relating to the use of indigenous African languages in the two institutions are left open to multiple interpretations insofar as they are less categorical and imperative. As read from the policy provisions, conditional implementation of African languages as languages of teaching and learning shows that language policies are never innocent of the play of power. The economic and political power that resides in the Afrikaans and English-speaking elite tends to result in the attendant structural inequalities being reproduced in institutional language policies. However, there appears to be a change of attitude towards African languages and their potential to contribute to the transformation of higher education in South Africa as discerned from the two HWU's stances toward the 'multilingualism turn' in higher education. There is however a need for a continuous review of institutional language policies until multilingual education becomes a reality than merely a public relations and political rhetoric.

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