

ENGLISH IN NAMIBIA AND 'INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION'

BRIAN HARLECH-JONES

Academy for Tertiary Education
Windhoek

Three major language groups are represented among the inhabitants of Namibia: Bantu, Khoisan and Germanic. The 1981 census showed the following numbers of speakers in the first two groups (percentage of total population given in brackets):

TABLE 1

<u>BANTU LANGUAGES.</u>			<u>KHOISAN LANGUAGES</u>		
Ovambo	505774	(49,01%)	Damara	76169	(7,38%)
Kavango	94640	(9,17%)	Nama	48539	(4,70%)
Caprivi	38594	(3,74%)	Bushman	29441	(2,85%)
Herero	76293	(7,39%)			
Tswana	6706	(0,65%)			
	<hr/>			<hr/>	
	72 2007	(69,97%)		174 149	(14,94%)
	<hr/>			<hr/>	

These figures are gross generalisations, since the Ovambo, Kavango and Caprivi counts are both linguistically and regionally based, and include speakers of a variety of dialects as well as a number of smaller, related languages. Nama and Damara, although listed separately, are dialectally very close to each other. Nevertheless, the figures will serve as approximate indicators.

Three Germanic languages are represented in Namibia: Afrikaans, English and German. The first two are official languages, as in

South Africa. Afrikaans has by far the largest number of speakers, with the Baster (2,5% of total population) and Coloured (4%) groups being almost entirely Afrikaans-speaking, and probably about 50 000 Whites as well. Thus Afrikaans-speakers comprise about 9% or 10% of the total population. There are probably about 20 000 German-speakers, and about 10 000 English-speakers (i.e. about 1% of the population). The total White population was shown as 75 946 in the 1981 census (7,36% of the total), down from an estimated 110 000 in the mid-seventies. There is evidence that it has decreased even further in the interim.

External bodies claim that the 1981 census, which showed total population at just over a million, was a deliberate under-representation of the true situation, and some estimates place the present population at one and a half million. Any increase on the 1981 census figure would reflect a greater numerical superiority of speakers of Bantu languages.

At present, political organization is a close replica of the South African 'Bantustan' system, with ethnic authorities established for each of the groups listed in the table above, as well as for the Baster, Coloured and White groups.

It is generally accepted that Afrikaans is the lingua franca of the territory. It predominates almost universally in the civil service and on the 'shop-floor' levels in commerce and industry, and it is a widespread complaint of those who favour the use of English that it is very difficult to get service in that language, particularly in civil service departments, although English is nominally an official language. Some commentators have estimated that up to 50% of Namibia's economically active manpower is employed in the civil service or in parastatal organizations; thus this sector plays a decisive role in spreading and maintaining Afrikaans as a lingua franca. There is no doubt that this is a cornerstone of South Africa's 'neo-colonialist' policy, aimed at keeping an independent Namibia closely under its influence.

Education has been the second major factor in affecting the spread of Afrikaans as a lingua franca. White pupils have, ever since the beginning of the period of South African control, been provided with centrally controlled educational facilities equivalent to those enjoyed by their counterparts in South Africa, with Afrikaans, English and German as mediums of instruction. However, Black and Coloured education has undergone three phases of control:

1. Under various missionary bodies, with co-ordination by the Administration of South West Africa and minimal government subsidy (1919 to 1968);

2. Under the Department of Bantu Education and the Department of Coloured and Nama Affairs (1968 to 1978);
3. Under the respective ethnic authorities and, for Black pupils in the 'central' areas, under the S.W.A. Department of National Education (1979 to the present).

During the first two periods, Afrikaans was taught as the 'first' second language and often used throughout as a medium of instruction, because of the lack of vernacular text books and the insufficient training of teachers. English was introduced as a subject in Standard 2, by which stage the huge majority of pupils, eighty percent or more, had routinely dropped out. In the northern areas, Owamboland and Kavango, where the Finnish missionary authorities provided almost all the education, neither English nor Afrikaans were taught as subjects nor used as mediums until the sixties, so that until twenty years ago or even more recently, pupils in these heavily populated areas (60% or more of the total population) had little contact with either Afrikaans or English.

In 1981, the Owambo ethnic authority decided to implement English as a medium of instruction, and in 1984 the Damara authority began a phasing-in of English, dependent upon the supply of suitably trained teachers. Thus authorities representing about 60% of the country's population (possibly more) are now committed to the use of English as a medium of instruction, in place of Afrikaans.

Nevertheless, the universal use of Afrikaans as 'first' second language, and as a predominant medium of instruction in the past, and its widespread use at present, have obviously had great influence on the linguistic situation. The future effects of opposed decisions by ethnic authorities will have to be awaited.

Two other aspects of education should be mentioned as having effects on language use in Namibia. Firstly, there is a very large drop-out rate amongst Black pupils; figures for 1981 showed that nearly 72% had left school by the end of Standard 2, and 80% by the end of Standard 3.¹⁾ Because the vernaculars are used as mediums in the early years wherever possible, and reading and writing in the second language are not taught until Standard 1, it is obvious that the majority of those who leave school have very small acquaintance with English and/or Afrikaans. They are thus educationally and linguistically unequipped to enter the modern sector of employment, and are in addition almost surely doomed to illiteracy, as the local vernaculars have hardly any reading materials. Secondly, Black teachers in Namibia are very badly trained and qualified. The Annual Report of the Department of National Education in Windhoek for 1980 showed that of 5 066

teachers then under its control, 38,7% had attained Standard 6 with a professional qualification, 14,9% had Standard 8 with professional qualification, 14,9% had Standard 8 with professional qualification, and 40% had Standard 8 or less with no professional qualification.²) Such teachers, themselves the products of a poorly facilitated system, are unlikely to be able to teach a second language effectively, or to be able to use it successfully as a medium.

As has already been suggested, language policy is a cornerstone of political policy in Namibia. The South African authorities and those who support them either strive to keep Afrikaans as dominant as possible in as many spheres, or tacitly accept this. Those who are opposed to South African rule and want a 'genuine' independence, as free as possible of the powerful neighbour to the south, actively promote English as the sole official language and thus as the chief medium of education. (The Owambo and Damara authorities, of course, are acting within the South African system but have made it clear that a decision for the use of English as a medium of instruction is necessary for political credibility.) The most comprehensive statement to date on language policy for an independent Namibia has been the publication of the Lusaka-based United Nations Institute for Namibia, *Towards a Language Policy for Namibia* (1981), which states in the foreword, 'The aim of introducing English is to introduce an official language that will steer people away from linguo-tribal affiliations and differences and create conditions conducive to national unity in the realm of language'. (Foreword by Hage G. Geingob, Director of UNIN)³) A recent event of significance was the staging of a conference, 'English Language Programme for Namibians', in Lusaka from 19 to 27 October 1983, organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat, and attended inter alia by various United Nations personnel concerned with Namibia, representatives of ministry of education officials in southern African countries, the British Council, the Commission of the European Communities, SWAPO, and the World University Service.

Describing language policy in sub-Saharan Africa, John Spencer says: 'The degree to which the languages of Africa were encouraged and utilised, therefore, was always limited, and the metropolitan language dominated the educational, administrative and mercantile colonial structures, irrespective of any concern shown for the vernaculars'.⁴) In this respect, therefore, Namibia shares the common African experience; the situation is unique only in that there is a widespread movement to replace the dominant colonial language, Afrikaans, with another, English. Although English is the co-official language of the colonising power, it has not been perceived as an 'instrument of oppression' because it has for so long been relegated and discouraged; its attractions in the Namibian situation are partly summed up in the words of Joshua Fishman: '... in much of the Third World and elsewhere in general,

the image of English may be ethnically or ideologically quite neutral, so that it may be related much more to appreciably generalized, de-ethnicized and de-ideologized process variables ... than to ethnicity or ideology viewed as particularly English or American.'⁵) By 'process variables' Fishman refers to such states as modernization, urbanization, technological know-how, consumerism, etc; that is, states with regard to which the acquisition of language is part of the process or an *instrument* of reaching the desired goal.

Elsewhere, Fishman distinguishes three types of decisions on language policy which have typically been taken by developing nations. Namibia fits the categories under Type A decisions, of which some of the most important factors are: the country has no integrating great tradition (historical, linguistic, etc) at the national level; it is governed by considerations of political integration (that is, by nationism, not nationalism, which Fishman defines as pertaining only to homogenous groups); it will adopt a 'language of wider communication' (which is not a vernacular) as a permanent national symbol; it will set goals of bilingualism which allow vernacular use at local levels and the use of the language of wider communication at national levels; and the country will strive for transition to modernity and new integrations.⁶) It is obvious why Afrikaans is rejected as the future 'language of wider communication' by leaders of the liberation movements and their followers: Afrikaans is inter alia commanded by a local elite which has participated in a system of ethnic government which has been deliberately created to counteract nationism; Afrikaans will always exist as a local language of Namibia, whose maintenance in national prominence will create jealousies and inter-group tensions (as it does now); widespread use of Afrikaans and limited numbers of people competent in English will make it more difficult for the new nation to shake off the neo-colonial shackles of its powerful and nearby neighbour, and thus more difficult to modernize and to pursue independent economic policies.

Thus, although English has status as one of the two official languages of the 'colonial oppressor', it has escaped disapprobation and is judged on its international reputation; in addition, it has so few local speakers (about 1% of the population) that it does not and cannot present a threat to future supra-ethnic integration.

The survey *Aspekte van Taal- en Kommunikasie Aangeleenthede in SWA/Namibië*, published by the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa in 1982, shows a strong orientation towards the use of English as a medium of instruction by most population groups. The following is a summary of the essence of the results of that

survey with respect to desired language medium in education, for the major Bantu language groups:

TABLE 2

Language desired as medium of instruction
(A = Afrikaans; E = English)

POPULATION GROUP	LANGUAGE	LOWER PRIMARY	HIGHER PRIMARY	SECONDARY
Owambos (in Owambo-land)	A	21,2%	19,1%	18,7%
	E	34,5%	59,7%	64,4%
Owambos (outside Owamboland)	A	39,2%	41,7%	33,4%
	E	39,3%	61,4%	67,7%
Hereros (in Herero areas)	A	50,4%	53,0%	42,3%
	E	47,3%	72,4%	82,8%
Herero (outside Herero areas)	A	28,9%	34,6%	38,5%
	E	45,6%	48,4%	61,9%
Kavangos	A	59,7%	58,2%	41,8%
	E	32,9%	52,3%	68,7%

The above table reflects the results for Afrikaans and English only, but the choice was an open one and not exclusive, as shown by the fact that no percentages in the table add up to 100%. Other languages were also chosen, usually the home languages (especially in the lower primary phase), but no language featured anywhere as strongly as Afrikaans and English.

One would thus expect to find a large measure of disaffection regarding the status quo amongst pupils and students, and that is of course the case. In February 1982 I surveyed first-year students in degree and teacher training courses at my own institution, the Academy for Tertiary Education in Windhoek.⁷⁾ Of the total group of 70 students, 54 responded; the following home languages were represented: Afrikaans (13 students), German (2),

Herero (8), Kwangeli (1), Lozi (15), Nama/Damara (11), Tswana (2), Owambo languages (2). In answer to the question, 'Which languages do you think should be the medium of instruction?' the following responses were shown (expressed in percentages):

<u>TABLE 3</u>	MOTHER TONGUE	ENGLISH	AFRIKAANS
in lower primary classes	43	35	41
in higher primary classes	7	65	46
at secondary school	2	92	20
at university	2	92	16

In answer to a further question, 'In which language/s would you like to receive instruction next year (1983)?' the response was 56% for Afrikaans and 56% for English. The answers to the two questions are significant, as they seem to show either strong desire for English as medium of instruction, particularly from the higher primary level upwards, or at least an awareness of, or willingness to accommodate to, a strong swell of opinion towards English amongst the general population. However, as the answer to the second question shows, far fewer students were actually willing to risk, or make the adjustment to, the use of English for themselves. This presumably reflects insecurity regarding their own proficiency in English, which is not surprising when it is reflected that the great majority of our first-year students have attained no more than E or F symbols in English Second Language in the Senior Certificate examination. (Of a sample of 64 first-year students enrolled in degree and teacher training courses in 1984, the following were the symbols for English Second Language in the Senior Certificate: 29 students had F symbols, 23 had E, 5 had C and 2 had B symbols).

From these results, and bearing in mind what was said earlier about teacher training and teacher qualifications, the disturbingly low standard of English teaching in Namibia can be inferred. For most students, the situation can be described as follows: they are survivors of a badly facilitated and poorly financed system which sees only 0,63% of Black pupils survive through to Standards 9 and 10; pupils in the higher classes are likely to be taught by teachers with scholastic qualifications inferior even to their own;

there is very little if any contact with English outside the classroom, and in the classroom it is taught via a usage-based approach by the most tedious and unimaginative methods such as drill, rote learning and chorus and repetition. (My own observations in local schools show that this is, indeed, the case.)

Namibia is a country of vast distances and highly ruralised; between 60% and 70% of the population is concentrated in the northern strip, comprising part of Damaraland, Owamboland, Kavango and the Caprivi, where there is virtually no industry, mining or modern-sector commercial activity. The populations in these areas are largely linguistically homogenous, and thus there is little contact with the languages of wider communication (Afrikaans and English) outside of the schools.

Wallace Lambert, in his studies of bilingualism in Canadian schools, has developed the useful concept of 'Instrumental' versus 'Integrative' motivations in language learning. Lambert says, 'The orientation is *instrumental* in form if, for example, the purposes of language study reflect the more utilitarian values of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation, and is *integrative* if, for example, the student is orientated to learn more about the other cultural community ...'⁹)

Integrative motivation will reflect itself in strong feelings of sympathy towards and identity with the group whose language is being learnt, and favourable orientations towards the language *per se*, expressed for example in convictions that it is a 'beautiful' language, it is a 'cultured' language, it has an intrinsically valuable literature, etc. On the other hand, instrumental motivation will be reflected in what Fishman calls 'process variables' (mentioned earlier), that is, discrete and specific reasons for learning the language: it is a language of science and technology, it is necessary for study success, it is necessary to get employment, to read newspapers and magazines, etc. From the description of English within the linguistic situation in Namibia, it can be inferred that the majority of learners will have strong instrumental motivations, that reasons for acquiring English will be discrete and specific and will arise from political or ideological convictions, themselves instrumental (since no integration with native English-speaking culture is being sought; nor is it feasible). Experience with my students bears this out. At the beginning of this year (1984) we requested our first-year students to write one or two paragraphs on the theme 'My own experiences with English and feelings about English in general'. I made a general survey of the responses of my own class group (65 students) and the following were some of the more significant results:

TABLE 4

REASONS WHY THE STUDENTS DESIRE TO LEARN ENGLISH OR REGARD ENGLISH AS IMPORTANT (THE FIGURES REPRESENT NUMBERS OF STUDENTS)

1. English will be/should be medium in teaching	18
2. It is a medium at universities overseas or in South Africa	21
3. Important in commercial life or language of entrance to professions	17
4. An international language or (less often) a language of general communication	60
5. Will be/should be the official language	11

Only six students expressed a great desire to master English for its own sake, or said that it was a 'beautiful' language; three students said that English was the language of 'learned' people. These expressions are, of course, integrative to some degree, but are vastly outweighed by the instrumental motivations reflected in the table. The small previous contact with English outside of the classroom was reflected by the responses of twenty-seven students, who said that they were afraid to use English (and in some cases chided themselves and others for this), or said specifically that they should speak and read English more often. Many students freely admitted their poor proficiency in English, variously citing poor teaching at school (14 students), the use of Afrikaans as medium or as the 'first language' subject i.e. in Senior Certificate (13 students) and the fact that English was regarded as 'just another subject' (3 students).

The motivations reflected in the table above are significant not only because of the strong instrumentalism that they reflect, but also for what they do *not* include, that is, desires to use English for social or family intimacies or for communal or religious activities, etc. At the same time, they are a solid beginning to a prescriptive list of functions on the basis of which relevant syllabi could be written and effective teaching materials could be produced. The desire to learn English is strong, but it is discrete and specific.

At present, all departments in Namibia, irrespective of the background of the pupils, use the syllabi of the Cape Province. The English Second Language syllabi and the materials recommended to accompany them, are constructed with the Afrikaans-speaking pupil

in mind, and directed primarily at Westernized, urbanized, middle-class environments in which relatively general contact with native English-speakers and their cultural milieu is assumed. These assumptions, which include a large measure of integrative motivation towards learning (rightly or wrongly), are obviously at great variance with the conditions under which the average Namibian pupil learns English. In the introduction to his *Communicative Syllabus Design* (1978), John Munby shows that post-war developments in language teaching have been concerned more with methodology ('the *how* rather than the *what* to teach') but states that the past decade or so has seen a shift of emphasis towards syllabus design and content. He gives salutary advice in this connection: 'What *system* (if any) is being used to arrive at the specification of the English deemed appropriate for different purposes? If it does not exist, there is clearly a need for a model that takes account of all the potentially significant variables and systematically applies them to achieve an appropriate specification.' In the same context, Munby makes it clear that he is advocating *use-based* syllabi, and not those based on *usage*.⁹⁾

Private organizations in Namibia, such as the Rossing Foundation Centre and the Churches' English Language Project (CELP) of the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN), have been making determined efforts to produce materials and syllabi which are relevant to local conditions, but there has been a notable absence of such efforts on the part of the State systems. The specifications are not difficult to arrive at - Table 4 (above) provides a tentative and incomplete beginning - but because the motivations to learn English in Namibia result from desires for political independence and national integration, efforts to create appropriate syllabi and materials will not be made in the State system while they are at variance with the perceptions of the colonial power.

REFERENCES

1. *Ondersoek na die Onderwys in SWA/Namibië*, Vol. 5, 1983: 60-61
2. *Annual Report of the Department of National Education* (Windhoek) 1980: Table 2.3 (page not numbered)
3. Chamberlain, R. et al, 1981: (v)
4. Spencer, John, 1974: 164
5. Fishman, Joshua A., 1977: 119
6. Fishman, Joshua A., 1972: 192
7. Harlech-Jones, B., 1982: 30

8. Lambert, Wallace E., 1967: 102
9. Munby, John, 1978: 1-2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Advieskomitee vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, 1983, *Onderzoek na die Onderwys in SWA/Namibië*, Volume 5, (Windhoek)
2. Chamberlain, R., A. Diallo and E. John, 1981, *Toward a Language Policy for Namibia* (Lusaka: United Nations' Institute for Namibia)
3. Department of National Education, 1980, *Annual Report* (Windhoek)
4. Fishman, Joshua A., 1972, *Language in Sociocultural Change* (Stanford, Stanford University Press)
5. Fishman, Joshua A., 1977, 'The spread of English as a new perspective for the study of language maintenance and language shift', in Fishman, Joshua, Robert Cooper and Andrew Conrad, *The Spread of English* (Rowley, Mass., Newbury House)
6. Harlech-Jones, B., 1982, 'Language usage and preferences of a group of tertiary students', *Logos* 2/1, July 1982: 27-30
7. Lambert, Wallace E., 1967, 'A social psychology of bilingualism', *Journal of Social Issues*, 23/2: 91-109
8. Munby, John, 1978, *Communicative Syllabus Design* (Cambridge, University Press)
9. Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, 1982, *Aspekte van Taal- en Kommunikasie Aangeleenthede in SWA/Namibië*, Volumes 1-13; (Pretoria)
10. Spencer, John, 1974, 'Colonial language policy in sub-Saharan Africa' in Fishman, Joshua A., *Advances in Language Planning* (The Hague, Mouton)