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SEEKING THE POSSIBLE:
AN EVALUATION OF AN INTERVENTION WHICH SEEKS TO HELP
TEACHERS LEARN AFRICAN LANGUAGES
USING AN APPROACH WHICH INTEGRATES LANGUAGE AND
CULTURE

FINAL REPORT

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Seeking the possible: An evaluation of an intervention which seeks to help teachers learn African languages using an approach which integrates language and culture

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Introduction

I begin this report with a short account of language policy in education, since it this that either supports or constrains the learning of African languages. The account points to an underlying ambivalence in the policy, which emanates from a tension between the expressed need for 'redress' for African languages and the right to 'choice' in a society where these languages are largely undervalued. This does not provide a particularly supportive environment for learning and teaching African languages. However, there is potential in the policy: possibilities which could be exploited if the will do so were there.

It is against this somewhat negative background, that the report goes on to describe, in a fair amount of detail, the intervention which is the subject of the evaluation. It reveals its missionary origins, its moral sensibility - in particular, the belief that there is a moral obligation on South Africans to learn an African language if they wish to 'belong', and its humanistic orientation. C ontained in this orientation is the belief that transformation - the crossing of linguistic, racial and cultural barriers, the breaking down of stereotypes and prejudices - can be achieved by learning an African language in and through relationships.

I then describe the research methodology - broadly speaking 'interpretive', the procedure followed and the context in which it took place.

The results of the research are then summarised. Firstly, the reasons why participants engaged in this particular venture, then the claims that were made for the intervention, and thereafter concerns which were expressed.

Finally, there is a discussion of the results and recommendations with regard to teacher education. The discussion links policy and the broader linguistic context to the successes and failures of the intervention. It also explores the tensions between a humanistic ideology, the actualities of schools and classrooms, and a society in which values are increasingly those of the marketplace. In order to make recommendations, it seeks out possibilities in policy which are - or have the potential to be - realised through the intervention.

I now turn to the intervention in question. It is a language programme which was launched with great optimism by a small NGO in the first year of this decade, a time when there were high hopes for a 'multilingual' language policy, which was still in the making. This programme worked with the idea that people are resources, individuals are repositories of knowledge about language and culture that can be shared with others (cf Alexander 1995; Thornton 1998). It is this idea that informs the name of the organisation: 'Transfer of African Language Knowledge' or TALK for short.

In this report, I intend to examine TALK's approach to language/culture learning in operation in schools. I begin by looking at language policy relating to schools and to teacher education, for it is this that facilitates or constrains their work.

Language policy

The South African Constitution, adopted in 1996, gives people certain rights amongst which are language rights. For the first time, nine of South Africa's indigenous African languages are given official status, and the constitution speaks of the need to respect and develop these languages, which were discriminated against in the past. Every person has the constitutional right to basic education in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable.

There are, however, inherent tensions in the constitution between the need for redress for languages which have been denied official status in the past, the right to individual 'choice' in a society in which these languages have been undervalued, and issues of practicality in the context of economic constraints.

These tensions have played themselves out in educational language policy. The nineties have been a decade of policy making. In the first half of the decade, discussion documents emphasized the state's role in affirming African languages and promoting more equitable language policies in schools. At the national level, a policy of 'additive bilingualism' was justified in the following terms:

> *The South African education system has been largely characterised by deficit models of language education which assume that a choice must be made of a 'target language' at the expense of learners' home languages. This has effectively ensured the exclusion of African languages as vehicles of learning in all but the early years of education. This discussion document strongly recommends that additive bilingual models should be a central feature of education policy. Such models recognise learners' home languages as powerful tools of cognitive development. These languages, in fully bilingual systems, are maintained as languages of learning at all levels of the education system. Further languages are added at no loss to the home language(s). Two or more languages are perceived and used as languages of learning throughout the learner's school career. (Department of Education 1995: 13).*

The national government's Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG 1996: 124) drew up language-in-education policy goals which included the following: to promote multilingualism; to promote the use of students' primary languages as languages of learning and teaching; and to encourage the acquisition by all South African students of at least two but preferably three South African languages.

At the provincial level, there was strong advocacy for multilingual education and the teaching and learning of African languages (Gauteng Language in Education Task Team 1995; Eastern Cape Language Working Group 1995). The draft document for the Eastern Cape spoke of the need to actively promote previously disadvantaged languages if the constitution were "to *have any sort of practical reality"* and proposed that children should

"be required to learn three languages (Language Working Group 1995: 3). In such a situation teachers would be expected to use more than one language of teaching (1995: 5), requiring the introduction of language development courses in teacher training institutions *"so that the province has an adequate supply of multilingual teachers"* (1995:10).

There was much debate about these issues. Arguments on the grounds of redress and equity were countered by those which expressed concerns about economic factors and civil liberties. As legislation was tabled and entered into the statute books the position that African languages - the languages of the majority of children - should be promoted on both educational and ethical grounds, was whittled away to some degree.

In July 1997, the Minister of Education announced a 'new language policy in general and further education' intended, in his words, *"to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged"* (Bengu 1997: 1). The policy, which draws together sections of the National Education Policy Act (1996) and the South African Schools Act (1996), gives support - in principle - to multilingualism and describes it as *"a defining characteristic of being South African ".* However, multilingualism is redefined to mean the learning of more than one language, and it need not include an African language. The reasons for this redefinition are expressed as follows:

> *This position that multilingualism in South Africa should mean a learner offering more than two languages was strongly argued by significant constituencies, who argued further, that learners who offer English and Afrikaans should be obliged to offer a historically disadvantaged language. We take the view that there should be no obligation in this regard, but learners should be encouraged in this direction.*

Responsibility for realising this policy and, to a large extent, that of determining the language or languages of learning and teaching, is devolved to the school. School governing bodies are required, in terms of the South African Schools' Act, to announce their schools' language policies and to state how they will promote multilingualism through a variety of measures. In drawing up this policy, governing bodies must conform to certain broad norms and standards (Bengu 1997: 2) and, in the case of Gauteng, the policy must be approved by the MEC for Education (Gauteng School Education Act 1995).

The implementation, then, of the state's very broad policy guidelines becomes a matter for civil society. On the one hand, this can be seen as a democratic process, one which opens up possibilities for schools to move in the direction of multilingualism. On the other hand, it can allow schools to remain as they are, since a school can continue to offer only English and Afrikaans and still meet the requirements of the norms and standards. Unless 'encouragement' towards multilingualism is given some concrete form by the state in terms of inducements and sanctions, and a process is put in place to educate schools and their governing bodies about this issue, it seems likely that the status quo will be maintained.

If, however, one accepts the state's policy goals with regard to multilingualism at face value, they have implications for the capacities required of teachers, especially those in previously white, coloured and Indian schools. In these schools, as the Department of

Education has pointed out, there is often a mismatch between the language competences of teachers and students (1995: 17).

It has been a long-standing requirement that South African teachers be communicatively competent in two official languages, but the teachers in question are generally bilingual in English and Afrikaans whereas their students are increasingly speakers of African languages. Highlighting this problem in a discussion document, the Department of Education called for an in depth investigation into the language requirements for employment in education (1995: 17). Professor Doug Young, until recently Dean of the School of Education at the University of Cape Town, has argued that these requirements should be raised and more rigorously enforced (1995: 108).

However, recent documents on the new norms and standards for teacher education (Technical Committee on the Revision of Norms and Standards for Teacher Education: 1997; 1998), which are likely to determine the nature of pre- and in-service teacher education in future, do not indicate any changes to the current bilingualism requirement. Reference is made to the part played by *"communicative competence"* in all aspects of teachers' roles (1998: 49) and of the need for teachers to be able to *"mediate learning"* by *"using a second official language to explain, describe and discuss key concepts in conversational style"* (1998: 50) but no reference is made to ensuring a match between teachers' and learners' competences in this regard.

Nevertheless, the norms and standards do make reference to the importance of respect for learners and their different life experiences (1998: 33-4); the need to be able to mediate learning in multilingual classes (1998: 49, 52); the need to understand and take account of socio-cultural, racial, language and gender differences (1988: 49-52); and the need for teachers to understand the contexts in which they are working (1998: 52). In this they hold out possibilities for change.

In general, South Africa's language policy sends out - perhaps unintentionally - contradictory messages. This is mirrored, later in the report, by the contradictions experienced by teachers in relation to the learning of African languages: desire and an acknowledged need, on the one hand, but lack of determination, lack of contextual support, on the other. It can be summed up by saying, 'African languages are valued but they are not valued.'

In such a situation, it becomes very important that where schools choose to pursue goals relating to multilingualism and multiculturalism, they are actively supported and encouraged by the Education Department. As far as I have been able to observe in this investigation, there has been some incidental, personal support from the MEC for Education in Gauteng, but nothing public and no structural support of any nature.

In the next section, I describe the origins of the approach to language learning which TALK uses. My intention is to communicate its philosophy and method in order, later, to discuss what potential it contains to develop the capacities referred to by the Technical Committee.

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Learning language/culture through relationships in the community

The approach to African language learning used by TALK has its origins in the work of two American missionaries, Tom and Betty Sue Brewster, and associated linguists such as Donald Larson and William Smalley who have been involved in preparing missionaries for fieldwork (Brewster & Brewster 1976, 1981, 1986; Larson & Smalley 1984).

The worldview of these linguists and the language which expresses it is that of the committed Christian. Their discourse is steeped in beliefs about service to others; the value of selflessness, humility and non-material things; the equality of all persons in the eyes of god; and the importance of human relationships. Learning the languages of the people they encounter in their Christian mission in often remote corners of the world, is a way of living out these beliefs.   Language learning is an integral part of their ministry and ultimately of carrying out god's work.

There is thus a strong moral core to their work, even that which is directed at a general readership and which is not explicitly Christian in its orientation (Brewster & Brewster 1976; Larson & Smalley 1984). For example, Larson and Smalley describe the dilemma of the 'alien' in a foreign country as a moral choice:

> *... will he coexist indefinitely without ever becoming a member of this new community, or will he submit and seek to acquire the perspective of its members? Will he retire into an alien ghetto protected by imported surroundings, and choose his friends only from those who will move into his world, or will he learn to understand and participate in a new way of life? (1984. 3)*

There is clearly a 'right' choice here, and it lies at the core of these linguists' approach. To learn a new language as an adult, one must be prepared psychologically to take on the

childlike role of learner in the new community, and to allow cultural insiders to dealienate' you. This is especially difficult for the individual who occupies the role of *"educated foreigner who has come to help 'these people '"* (Brewster & Brewster 1976: 7). However, it is only by rejecting this perception of self and reaching out, that a learner will become, in the Brewsters' words, a 'belonger', a cultural insider', and will achieve functional bilingualism.

In South Africa, a multilingual country, there is much opportunity to learn languages in the community, as part of one's daily life. In fact, people - often illiterate adults - are doing it all the time.   However, there are some people who do not. If one accepts the perspective I am describing, there are two factors which account for this.   The first is that those with economic power in the society - most, but not all, speakers of English and Afrikaans - can and do quite happily live out their lives in a privileged cultural and linguistic ghetto.   The second is that this separation,   which was legislated under apartheid, has become internalised, it has become a way of life which makes citizens of the same country alien to each other.

Spatial metaphors of closeness and distance recurred throughout the interviews I carried out in the process of the evaluation.   People talked, on the one hand, of feeling or being strangers, and on the other of feeling or being at home, of belonging.   At a school in

Lenasia, the principal - a man, I would think, in his fifties - talked about growing up in a part of the country where people spoke Setswana. He had learnt a little of the language in his father's shop. Describing the situation then and now, he said *"There was still a distance, but there was a closer link and we saw them more as people, whereas at the moment we just see them as a group, as a race. "* In a separate interview, the deputy principal spoke of her love of Afrikaans, which she thought *"a beautiful language "*. Describing how she learnt it, she said *"With English and Afrikaans, you grew up with the language. You weren't isolated from them ... I really learnt Afrikaans when I lived on the platteland. "*

Anneleen Louw, a South African missionary, describes how physical isolation can have an internal dimension:

> *... we lived in a "white island" community and we only left this "island" to take the gospel message to the "other" people. Then we would return to the comfort of our home, our language and our people. Deep in my heart I was always glad I could bring the gospel to the Sotho people, but I was also glad it was not necessary for me to become too deeply involved with them* (Louw 1986: 210).

She explains how this way of life results in deep, unconscious prejudices, and how an encounter with the Brewsters in the early eighties brought her and her husband face to face with theirs. She goes on to describe how using the Brewsters' method of language learning they overcame these prejudices by learning SeSwati in a rural Swazi community:

> *For us, prejudice was a result of the established way of contact between the races, and of the education we received at home and at school. This background made prejudice a part of us and we were even blind to the fact that we were prejudiced.*
>
> *Personally I was unaware of the racial prejudice that ruled my life. But learning the language through relationships has freed me, and enabled me to both receive and give acceptance in our new black community (Louw 1986: 215).*

So, the conundrum: isolation and prejudice constrain language learning, but language learning breaks down isolation and prejudice.

The Brewsters' method can be described in technical terms as a set of steps or activities, but to employ them is to embark, in a deep sense, on a life change. The method mimics the way in which often uneducated multilingual people around the world learn languages in communities, but it also employs insights from linguistics, psychology and anthropology, and tools such as the tape recorder. One can identify an underlying set of principles in their general approach, which holds that:

- language is learned rather than taught;
- language learning is a social experience rather than an academic activity - a language is learned from the people who speak the language;
- the learner must assume the role of a learner, someone who as yet knows nothing but who needs and wants to learn from native speakers;

- language is best learned by 'learning it a little and using it a lot' with native speakers for real communicative purposes and in order to establish relationships;
- language learning requires strong motivation which sustains disciplined, consistent practice and use, and self-evaluation of language needs and progress.

Learners are trained in the method. They are taught how to find a helper - a native speaker who understands some English and will help them learn the target language. They are taught how to get language texts from their helpers, how to audio-record, listen to and practise them using a variety of drills, and how to put them to use in the community. They are taught how to go about learning the pronunciation and structures of the language, and how to learn about the target culture. They are taught how to assess their own language needs and evaluate their progress.

The Brewsters' approach can thus be located methodologically within the field of learner training or 'learning how to learn' (see e.g. Oxford 1990).

TALK has adapted the Brewsters' approach for use mainly in schools, businesses and courses for the general public. They have streamlined and recontextualised the method and the materials, and packaged them into short courses. The schools' courses consist of eight weekly two-hour sessions in which learners are taught how to learn a language in a community, and one day's 'immersion' in the community, in which they put into practice what they have learnt. In most high school courses teachers learn from their students, whereas in primary schools they are usually assisted by TALK helpers. The courses are followed up with a workshop run by another NGO, ELTIC (English Language Teaching Information Centre), on teaching effectively in multilingual contexts. Over twenty such courses have been run in Gauteng schools.

Humanistic psychology is strongly but implicitly present in TALK's approach. The focus is away from teaching and towards learning. The 'teacher' is redefined as a facilitator, who communicates empathetically and establishes real relationships with learners. The learner is treated as a 'whole person' and his or her emotional needs are often prioritised over cognitive ones. TALK has incorporated a counselling-learning dimension from Lifeline to help learners through the emotional difficulties of learning an African language/culture. Learners are encouraged to reflect on and share their feelings about language/culture learning. In all these aspects, TALK shares much with 'counselling-learning'/'community language learning' approaches (see e.g. Curran 1976).

In its classes, TALK sticks fairly closely to the Brewsters' basic principles but adopts a more experiential approach to teaching their method incorporating dancing, singing and role-play. Classes have two facilitators - one who is a native speaker and another who has learned it as a second language - which enables them to model the Brewsters' method and their philosophy. There are also equal numbers of helpers and learners in the class. This, coupled with the emphasis on building relationships, enables a cross-cultural community to emerge in the classroom. This community is a safe place in which learners can try out the method. (For a description of the approach in action in a school see the Appendix to this report and Johanson 1996).

The goals of the TALK approach to language/culture learning are not explicitly Christian; rather its mission lies in the desire to foster better relationships between different language groups. It is described thus in its publicity materials:

> *TALK's mission is to provide a methodology for anyone to learn an African language through building relationships with mother-tongue speakers of the target language. It also aims to promote increased understanding through direct contact between members of different language groups.*
>
> *Its vision is to become a national organisation, promoting unity and understanding among South Africans through the learning of African languages, and through cultural exchange.*

There is a strong belief, from a humanistic rather than a critical perspective, in the transformatory potential of the method of language/culture learning, both at the individual and at the societal level. The belief that second language learning can develop cross-cultural understanding and improve the social cohesion of our society is, incidentally, supported by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in its 'Language plan for South Africa' (1997: 28).

Although TALK is not explicitly Christian, it does share a discourse with the missionary linguists. To enter the world of TALK, is to enter a world in which human relationships are prioritised; in which people are not judged by their status; in which simplicity and frugality are always evident; and in which being African and speaking African languages is highly valued. Meetings often begin and end with singing, dancing and prayers. Food is often shared. There is a tangible sense of ubuntu.

This has created a unity of purpose amongst the quite large number of facilitators and helpers now associated with TALK, which has enabled them, thus far, to weather difficult times.

Having described the origins of TALK's approach to language learning in some detail, I now turn to the goals of the research.

Goals of the research

My primary goal was to understand TALK's approach to language/culture learning and what it could offer to prospective learners of African languages, especially teachers who wanted to learn these languages.

In pursuit of this goal, I first tried to find out what had motivated the teachers in the study to learn an African language, and what had motivated helpers to become involved in the TALK courses. I also tried to find out what all those involved believed they had achieved, and I endeavoured to unearth any concerns they might have about the courses. I intend, in future, to use this knowledge to focus on particular aspects of the project's work in order to take the research further.

An additional goal of this report is to explore the potential of TALK's approach to realise some of the goals of the proposed new norms and standards in teacher education.

I will now describe the methodology I used to achieve these goals, beginning with the approach to evaluation.

Research methodology - Approach to evaluation

I was concerned to research TALK from the inside out, that is to understand TALK from an insider's perspective but with the critical distance of an outsider. For this reason I chose a social constructivist approach to evaluation (Guba & Lincoln 1989).

Using this approach, an evaluator first identifies 'stakeholder groups', that is people who have an interest vested in the matter under investigation. She interviews members of each stakeholder group and asks them about claims, concerns and issues. Once these are established, the evaluator takes the claims, concerns and issues raised by each stakeholder group to all other groups for comment, refutation or agreement. Those aspects which cannot be resolved become the focus of subsequent research.

Because of my desire to understand TALK's work from the inside, the research also had an ethnographic dimension to it. I spent considerable time at the TALK offices chatting informally to staff, attending meetings, examining materials and other documentation, and observing classes and workshops.

I will now describe, step by step, the procedures I followed in carrying out the research.

Research procedures

In July 1997, I met with the four core TALK staff (who are also course facilitators) to identify stakeholders and plan the evaluation.

The evaluation of schools' courses was identified as one component of the broader evaluation of TALK's work. Three school courses were selected as sites for the evaluation. They were selected to provide as much variety as possible in terms of:

- the nature of the school itself (i.e. primary/secondary, ethnic and linguistic background of school community, dual/single medium);

- perceived success of course (i.e. more or less successful);

- whether the principal was involved in the course;

- whether they used their own or TALK helpers;

- the year in which the courses were run (i.e. more or less recent).

Since the main goal of TALK is to train learners in a method which will enable them to embark on independent, long-term African language/culture learning, it was necessary to

interview participants in both recent and distant courses to establish how long learning practices were sustained.

The following stakeholders were identified with regard to each course: initiators (i.e. those persons at the school who initiated the course), learners, facilitators and helpers. In August and September 1997, I visited the schools and interviewed initiators, learners and school helpers. Facilitators and TALK helpers were also interviewed either in the TALK offices

or at their homes. All interviews were carried out in English, which may have inhibited some interviewees. During this time I also observed a course in progress in a fourth school.

In all, four facilitators were interviewed, three of whom had been involved in more than one of the courses. Five initiators, thirteen learners (excluding initiators who were also learners), five TALK helpers, eight student helpers and two teacher helpers were interviewed. Three learners who had dropped out of a course were included in the interviews.

Constructions - written interpretations of the claims, concerns and issues - were drawn up for each group of stakeholders involved in each school course, and these were taken back to each interviewee for confirmation. These constructions were then shared with all other stakeholders, and they provided the basis on which an agenda for a stakeholder's meeting in each school was drawn up. The purpose of these meetings was to establish where consensus could be reached in each school regarding claims, concerns and issues, and where differences of opinion still existed. These meetings were held in September 1997.

Subsequently a complete report for the evaluation in each school was drawn up, and sent to the school concerned for comment. The information in these three reports was used to draw up an Interim Evaluation of the TALK schools programmes, which has provided the data for this report (Murray 1998).

I will now describe the three schools which were selected as sites for the evaluation.

Sites of the evaluation

School 1 is a primary school - formerly for Indian children - situated in a prosperous part of Lenasia. It has good buildings and resources and attractive surroundings. The language of learning and teaching is English; Afrikaans and Zulu are taught as second and third languages respectively.

School 2 is a high school - formerly for coloured students - situated in a township on the East Rand, to which people had been removed from various different places during the apartheid era. The school is overcrowded, short of space and furniture. It is dual medium, with separate classes for students studying in English and Afrikaans. An African language is not taught in the school either as a first, second or third language.

School 3 is a high school - formerly for white students - situated in the suburbs of small industrial town on the East Rand, fairly near the town centre. The school is well-resourced with pleasant surroundings and a boarding hostel. The language of learning and teaching is

English, and Afrikaans is taught as a subject. An African language is not taught in the school.

The teachers in all three schools are either bi- or multilingual. At School 1 they speak mainly English at home, but most can speak Afrikaans and have some knowledge of an Indian language such as Tamil or Hindi. At School 2, teachers are bilingual in Afrikaans and English and teach in both languages. A few are quite fluent in an African language and two acted as helpers. At both Schools 1 and 2, some teachers spoke of having parents, and sometimes spouses, who could speak African languages fluently and they expressed regret that they could not do so. At School 3, teachers are bilingual in English and Afrikaans, and many speak Afrikaans at home. Some learnt African languages at school or college but can remember very little of them. The school has a multilingual and multicultural history; it has always had numbers of students from Portuguese, Greek and Italian speaking families.

All three schools have recently experienced changes in the linguistic and ethnic mix of their student bodies, with increasing numbers of African language speakers enrolling. This has happened at the same time as class sizes have increased, and in the case of the two high schools, there has been a rapid increase in overall student numbers. In the case of School 3, this has enabled the institution to survive; in the case of School 2 it has resulted in serious overcrowding.

At School 2, African language speakers have entered the English medium classes. Consequently, in Afrikaans medium classes students are learning through their home language, whereas in English medium classes most are learning through a second or third language. Students learning in English now outnumber those in Afrikaans medium classes.

In Schools I and 3, different forms of 'bridging' have been implemented to assist African children in learning English and in adjusting to this language as a medium of instruction.

A Zulu course was held at School 1 in 1997, using TALK helpers. Nine learners signed up for the course and eight completed it. The principal was both an initiator and a learner.

A course was held at School 2 in 1996. All but two of the learners - who learnt Xhosa were learning Zulu. The school used their own helpers, two of whom were teachers. The principal was not involved. Twenty-four learners started the course of whom seventeen had dropped out by the end; one of the learners who completed the course was the school secretary.

A Zulu course was held at School 3 in 1995. The principal was both the initiator and a learner. The school used their own student helpers plus one TALK helper who was paired with the principal. Fourteen learners started the course and twelve completed it.

I will end this description of the research methodology with a few words about how I have written up and presented the results.

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Presentation of results

In writing up the results of the research for this report, I have tried to capture the main achievements of the TALK courses in question (claims) and describe perceived weaknesses (concerns).   The issues which emerged have been incorporated into the discussion.

I have presented the various claims and concerns as general statements which were reached by   means of the several stages of discussion described in the research procedure, However, although generalisations are useful, they are by their nature reductionist, and I have chosen to complement them by including the particular views of a variety of participants, wherever possible in their own words.

The generalisations and the quotations used are all a matter of public record.   They form part of the various constructions produced in the research, which stakeholders have had an opportunity to discuss and comment on.

I now turn to the results themselves.

Results

I begin by reporting on the reasons stakeholders gave for participating in the TALK courses.

Reasons for participating in the TALK courses

A common reason for participation given by initiators and learners in all three contexts was the increasing number of African language speakers in their schools, the communication difficulties this presented and the frustration it created for both teachers and students. In School 2 this was said to slow down progress in English medium classes, causing students to fall behind those in Afrikaans medium classes.

The initiator in School 2 described a personal experience which had given her some insight into the frustration experienced by these students.   She described her feelings of *"helplessness"* at SADTU meetings when discussion switched to an African language and she could not understand what was said: *"Gosh, now I have some idea of how a black child feels in my class.   You really feel out of it, you feel like 'I don't belong'. I think that was the first thing that motivated me to become part of this. "*

Student helpers at both high schools confirmed that this was a problem, though those at School 3 felt it was mainly limited to the junior secondary classes.   They referred to new students in the school who *"keep on holding back"* because they are uncomfortable using English and have difficulty understanding their teachers. They felt it would be helpful in such circumstances if teachers could codeswitch. It was felt this could be achieved if teachers followed the example of their students: "I *think it is good for them to learn our languages because we scholars, we hear a little bit of Afrikaans, but they can't hear what we are saying in our languages, "* Another helper said, "I *want her to know my language.*

It's important that people must learn Zulu.

                                    if people are talking about me in Sotho ... I'm not very fluent but I try. "

One of the teacher helpers corroborated the view that a knowledge of an African language enables teachers to communicate and form a better relationship with their students: *"If it seems they don't understand in English, I try to explain it in Zulu to them or in Xhosa for that matter ... I can assure you and guarantee you that it actually betters the relationship with them. They feel free and if they struggle with this or that word, they say it in Zulu or Xhosa ... They accept you now not only as their teacher, but in some way or another as a friend also. "*

At School 1, the primary school, initiators said that an additional reason for introducing TALK in the school was a desire to show respect for the language and culture of their African pupils, and build a close and trusting relationship with them. One initiator felt that apartheid had isolated teachers *"in a little compartment"* causing them to develop negative stereotypes. He hoped to *"really break the barrier with the children, get to know them better. "* Similar affective reasons were also expressed by student helpers at the high schools. One said, *"We Africans, we actually feel if you can meet a person who speaks your own home language, you actually feel comfortable, you feel at home with that person. "*

In contrast to these positive affective reasons, initiators and learners at the two high schools were additionally motivated by the desire to overcome discipline problems created when students have access to a language which teachers do not understand. A learner at School 3 said, *"It's always there, they're comfortable speaking their own languages. The problem is that discipline in the classroom, you can't control what's being said because you don't understand and that's the problem that I have. "*

The problem seemed to be most serious at School 2, where an initiator described the situation in the following terms: *"They use their language as a weapon against us. "* All the student helpers interviewed at this school said they had participated in the course because they wanted to help their teachers overcome this problem. One said, *"Most of the time students speak Zulu, Tswana or Sotho in class. Sometimes they swear at teachers. They don't understand. "* Another described her feelings about this, "I *don't like it when pupils are swearing in Zulu because she doesn't understand what's going on. It's a shame. "* One helper described the class of a teacher in the school who does speak Zulu, *"If they talk about him, he replies in Zulu and they laugh. It's nice. There's better discipline. They won't swear. "*

Finally, at School 2 there was an awareness that it might soon become a requirement that teachers speak an African language. At this school many teachers are studying for further qualifications in order to improve their status and salaries. One learner commented that if this were no longer rewarded, attention might turn to the learning of African languages should this became a requirement. The school secretary was motivated by the fact that businesses now frequently expect job applicants to speak Zulu.

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I will now describe the main achievements which participants claimed for the TALK courses which were run in the three schools.

Claim 1: TALK developed cross-cultural understanding

A claim confirmed in all three contexts, and agreed upon at all stakeholder meetings, was that TALK developed cross-cultural understanding.   This seemed to be experienced most profoundly at School 3, where the principal put into practice what she had learned. She described, for example, how it had helped her to deal appropriately with the death of a student at her school:

> *As soon as my first student had died, the first thing I did was phone TALK, and said 'What's the right thing to do?' J [a facilitator] said to me, 'Go and do this. ' My children supported me incredibly. I went to the house. I didn't know what to say, I didn't know what to do and they knew. They took me and they led the bible reading*

> *I said, 'No, the students will talk.' When I was sitting here, I realised I'd insulted them without realising it, because I'm not that kind of person, I don't like to put myself in the forefront, I'd rather the children and the choir, they did those things.   Now I know that I'm expected to speak, expected as the principal to say those things.   And now I go - and I've got another funeral tomorrow - I call my children together, we collect money, I organise a bus.*

She described the procedure at the cemetry and ended by saying "... *to me a funeral is private and family, but they want you as the principal, you must be at the family's home, around the table."*

The principal explained how the TALK course, and especially the day spent in a township, had given her the confidence to behave in the way she had. She said,   *"TALK definitely assisted me.   I don't think I would have gone to a funeral in the township or been as relaxed as I was at the first one, if I hadn't spent the whole day in [the township]. "*   She felt that the cultural understanding she'had acquired had been more important than language learning, *"It doesn't matter that I can't speak Zulu, I can understand so much more about black culture, that was the transfer that occurred. "*

Learners at this school confirmed the eye-opening nature of the township outing and its value as a learning experience.   All stakeholders involved in this school course agreed that more was learnt about culture than language in the course.

At School 1 all stakeholders experienced an interchange, a sharing of cultural knowledge, and it was felt that this contributed to breaking down stereotypes.   An initiator said, *"What I liked about TALK was it wasn't just the language, it was the culture ... because if you understand people's culture, you begin to see people in a different way. I think we share a lot of values and thoughts, but you know people categorise others. "*

A TALK helper expressed his enjoyment of this aspect of the School 1 course,   *"Oh it was good because my learner he was open coming to cultural discussions, he was really open*

... He learnt a lot from our culture and we learnt a lot from their culture too. " Another said, *"I'm keen again to help another learner who's Indian. "* And another described how it changed her perception of Indian South Africans, "I thought they were one kind. I didn't know they were different, they were Tamil and that, so I learnt a lot." The facilitators agreed with these perceptions; the interchange had challenged some of their own stereotypes, for example, one facilitator was surprised to learn that the school respected other people's religions.

At School 2, those learners who completed the course claimed it made them more sensitive to cultural issues. An initiator said, *"They covered the basics, not just language but people's thinking and habits, which was very interesting. I've learned a lot about how so called black people think and do things."* Facilitators expressed the view that because these particular learners were "so *much closer to black culture ",* they learned different things from the average white learner, often things specifically related to cross-cultural issues in the classroom. The student helpers enjoyed the discussions, and one of the teacher helpers described how important understanding of culture was: *"These kids, if you treat them with the necessary respect, will always respect you ... this forms part of their culture ... Seeing that I know at least something about their culture, I tend to point out certain factors to them and link those with their culture ... I refer to ibanembeko now and then, to have respect for your fellow students and seniors for that matter. "*

The outing to a student helper's house in the township was enjoyed by all, *though* some of the things which would have been exciting for learners from other social backgrounds, like riding in a taxi, were not new. There were very open discussions about culture during the day. Despite the success of the outing, one of the facilitators remembers that when learners walked with their helpers around the township using their Zulu, it wasn't *"really a smooth thing"* - there were some tensions. An initiator recalled that it was marred by a drunken man who asked what *"amaboesman"* were doing in the township. However, she went on to say, *"the hosts were nice people and I didn't feel like I was in a stranger's house. "*

Claim 2: TALK developed empathy in teachers for African students learning in English

At all three schools teachers claimed that their experience of learning an African language made them empathetic to their African students' difficulties studying through the medium of English, and this was confirmed at stakeholder meetings. For example, the initiator at School 3 said, *"We felt so vulnerable in this whole set up, and that shocked us, that's how our children feel. "* And a learner at School 2, *"After the course, most of the teachers understood the children and had more patience with them because you know how it is to learn a new language."* This was not a one-way process; a student helper said of her teacher's difficulties in learning Zulu, "You *get the idea that I am not alone, there are other people who also have difficulties even though they are older than you. "*

This had at least one practical outcome. At School 3, this enhanced understanding of students' language difficulties, supported by discussion with the ELTIC facilitator, led to a relaxation of the 'English only' language policy which was in place in 1995.

At the two high schools, where student helpers were used, frequent mention was made of the close relationships which resulted. For example, at School 3 a helper said of her learner, "She wasn't just my biology teacher any more. She was someone I could talk to ... I felt free with them. " According to the principal, this had an influence on the whole school: "TALK brought a warmth of understanding and empathy into the school community. "

The combined impact of a deepened understanding of students' culture and empathy gained through the experience of language learning is expressed in the words of an initiator at School 2:

"If I had to write a test, you would say TALK was a flop, but I don't think it was. I think that I have learned a lot, gained a lot. Although I can't converse, my compassion towards these kids has deepened, also in terms of why they do things, now I understand. "

Claim 3: Most participants liked the method of language learning and put it into practice for the duration of the course

It was confirmed at stakeholder meetings that learners who completed the course liked the method of language learning and found that, in principle, it worked. As a learner at School 3 put it, *"It makes sense. Get a sentence that you want to know how to say. Get them to write it down. Get them to say it on the tape. Learn the sentence. It's very user-friendly because you're going to learn the sentences that you can use. The methodology is good, but whether you actually implement it is another question. "*

Learners put the method into practice, with varying degrees of effort, for the duration of the course. It gave some learners confidence to start picking up an African language in a way that they had never done before.

It is difficult to quantify how many learners continued to use the method after the end of the course since, even among facilitators, there was not complete agreement as to what this would entail. Two learners continued to make considerable progress with their language learning, although they did not carry on using the tapes which provide the listening and drill component central to the Brewsters' approach. These learners both had some prior knowledge of an African language, and both had continued exposure to African languages and reasons for using them. One lives in an area where there are many Zulu speaking people she can talk to every day. She has begun to use Zulu in the school office and was proud of the fact that she was recently able to have a telephone conversation with a parent in Zulu. The other lives in the school hostel where she has plenty of interaction with African students.

Several other learners described sporadic use of the method. One of the intiators put the method into practice when the occasion demanded, for example, when the premier of the province visited the school. Learners continued to use the language they had learned during the course, for example, in the supermarket, at the petrol station and in the classroom. It was common for learners to greet facilitators in Zulu at the stakeholder meetings.

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Claim 4: Learners' albeit limited use of Zulu had positive affects on relationships both inside and outside the classroom

Although learners did not acquire much Zulu during the short course, they received positive feedback when they used it. For example, the Principal at School 3 reported the positive response from students when she made the announcement of the new head boy - the first African headboy in the school's history - in Zulu. A learner described responses to her use of Zulu outside the school: *"Whenever I go to Spar, the people working there, they say 'Sawubona, Fikile.' 'Sawubona, unjani?' I just know these few words, but they like me because I always greet them in their language ... the attitude towards you immediately changes, even if you can only greet them in their own language. "*

Claim 5: TALK raised consciousness about the value of African languages

Clearly, participation in an African language course indicates prior value placed on such languages. At School 2, for example, students took pleasure in using and mixing their languages - *"making flavours"* one called it. However, TALK seems to have enhanced their value: *"TALK made me more aware of the need to use my own language to help others to learn,"* said one student helper. The training he received has enabled him to help fellow students who want to learn Zulu.

I will now turn to the concerns, the major disappointment being that learners did not acquire a great deal of Zulu because they did not carry on using the method consistently after the end of the course.

Concern 1: There was disappointment that learners did not learn more Zulu; most learners did not continue with the method after completion of the course

Learners expressed general disappointment that they did not learn more Zulu and that they failed to continue with the method in any consistent way after completion of the course. This was view was confirmed at all three stakeholder meetings.

Although learners recognised the need to learn an African language, motivation was a problem. A learner at School I said, *"There is a real need, definitely. I'll be honest with you, I haven't really made the effort, except for the occasional word here and there in greeting. "* Another said, *"I want to know, but I've neglected it. I haven't made the effort ... They did as much as they could. They have done their share in starting us off. "*

The main factor standing in their way seemed to be time, or rather the lack of it. As one learner put it, *"It's an excellent course but teachers do not have time to carry on. "* Teachers have many other demands on their time: *"Especially now in teaching, our workload is so heavy. You can't believe it, it's not like four or five years ago. Big classes, few teachers, and those few teachers must do everything that was done in the past, so you are absolutely always busy. "* One learner felt that it didn't become a priority:

didn't channel them effectively into TALK. I think you've got to be helluva determined, it's got to become a priority. "

Facilitators were very familiar with these concerns, especially those related to time. One said, *"It's universal. There's hardly a single learner who doesn't say that. "* Although they do their best to sustain learners' motivation, she felt it was largely beyond their control; it was "*dependent on people from above"* who do not see value in the teaching of African languages.

Time and motivation were not the only reasons advanced for failure to make progress. The initiator at School 1 felt that although teachers are in an environment where they could apply the method, the social isolation of apartheid has created attitudinal barriers which are hard to cross. Confirming this view, a facilitator said "I think this problem applies to most courses. Although people associate with black people, they normally do it on their own terms, especially in a school where black children are being accepted into the school, they sort of have to accept the school as it is and they have to do the adjustment. And the teachers themselves live a very contained life within their own community. They have domestic workers or whatever, but it's not often that they discuss something or learn from a black person. "

Some learners did not feel ready by the end of the course to survive on their own. One said, he didn't feel *"good enough yet"* and that he felt *"all alone",* another that there was no-one to evaluate him any more. At two stakeholder meetings it was agreed that the course was too short and there was a need for follow-up courses.

Despite the fact that most learners failed to carry on using the method consistently, they believed they could if the need arose. One initiator said, *"I still feel confident that it is there ... if I just ... do away with the laziness and get down to it, the method is there. "*

Concern 2: Some learners were unhappy with some aspects of the method

Three learners expressed concerns about the tapes, and even those learners who found them useful stopped using them at the end of the course either because they were inconvenient, or it was difficult to find a helper (School 1), or because *"nobody was checking ".*

One learner found the looped taped *"boring"* and two learners - both English teachers - felt alienated by what they felt to be the *"rote-learning"* aspects of the tape and desired a more cognitive approach. One said, *"That's not how conversation works ... whatever I learnt by repetition I've forgotten by now, because that's not a way to learn by repeating things, it's not a way to learn a language. Chances are that you're not even going to use that exact phrase or sentence as you've learnt it."* This learner was also frustrated by her helper's insistence on correct pronunciation, "I *feel that's not very important. I can speak English but I don't speak it with an English accent, so why do I need to speak Xhosa with a Xhosa accent if the word comes out more or less understandably. "* This learner, and one other who did not specifically refer to the tapes, would have liked a more formal approach to language learning with more attention paid to grammar.

A facilitator responded to these concerns: *"Some find the repetition monotonous because they don't take enough control. "* She went on to say, *"There's a lot to be learnt about the nature of language and you just meet people at different points on these continuums. And even their relationship, ability to interact with the black community - some people come out*

of the course and all they've achieved is that they've got to know a few black people in a way that they've never done before. They might be able to say 'Sawubona' and that's it, but in a way that's quite a move for that particular person, though they may feel dissatisfied because they wanted to learn the language. " One sees here the prioritisation of the 'transformatory' goal; the approach does not really accommodate individuals who want to learn an African language without becoming in any sense a 'belonger'.

Concern 3: Context specific concerns

Unsurprisingly, given the fact that these schools had been selected for their differences, there were some concerns specific to particular contexts.

At School 2, only seven out of twenty-four learners completed the course. There seemed to be numerous reasons for this, all of which were discussed at the stakeholder meeting. In the first instance, it was the largest course TALK had run and the learners had to be separated into two classes.

Furthermore, some learners did not fully realise that they would learn a method, and expected to gain some conversational ability in Zulu simply by attending the classes. In addition, some learners did not feel comfortable with a student as a helper, and there were frequent changes of helpers.

There were number of other factors. Firstly, the principal was not a learner as was the case in the other two schools. Secondly, almost all the teachers were studying part-time at university, which meant they had even less time for language learning. Thirdly, these learners did not personally pay anything, which indicates according to one facilitator, *"a question mark over motivation "*. Fourthly, classes were bigger, resources fewer and discipline more problematic than at the other two schools. Finally, this was the first course TALK had run in a formerly coloured school and, as one facilitator put it, "I *think there were a lot of attitudes and feelings that we were very inexperienced with ... There were all sorts of imponderables, things we didn't know. "*

A concern particular to School 1 was that they did not go on the township outing, usually a highlight of the course. The TALK helpers were disappointed: "You *wonder why. They were so active. I didn't think they would disappoint us about the outing. "* The helpers felt the reasons for this were religious and cultural, but also *"they were scared to come to the township. "*

The initiators and learners confirmed this view in a roundabout way. At the stakeholders' meeting, the principal explained the problems involved in holding any kind of staff outing at his school: *It's a major problem going on an outing ... First of all, one of the worries expressed is what you would have to eat ... and that fear is always at the back of our minds, if I do go anywhere, how do I say no without offence? That was one, the other was - it was not so much a learners' problem as a family problem ... the husband would be upset, the daughter would be upset ... No matter what reassurance you have, it's just the perceptions that are there and it's strongest where females are involved. "* A young male teacher said, "My *mother, she had a cadenza ... she couldn't believe I was going ... but whatever, I would have still went, but just to show it's often very difficult.* The principal added, *"Our own perceptions were I think not so negative ... but this problem you had at*

home. " When interviewed, the helpers were sympathetic. One said, "I *told myself I have to understand their fears. "*

Fear of entering African townships is common. Some of the learners School 3 were said to be a little frightened initially but, according to one, *"When they came back, they said 'Hey, it wasn't so bad. "'* A learner at the stakeholder meeting said, "I *think the best experience for me was to realise I wasn't in any danger ... people are so nice. "*

I will now discuss these results and make some tentative recommendations.

Discussion

The TALK approach would appear to have considerable potential for teachers to learn African languages: all that needs to be taught is the method, which can be done relatively quickly and cheaply; it allows teachers to tailor learning to their own needs and make use of the abundant resources around them; it enables them to learn colloquial forms of African languages - the language of the moment - rather than a fossilised 'standard'; it is designed for adult learners and it is learner-centred and suited to lifelong learning, something which is emphasized in the norms and standards for teacher education (1998: 48, 59).

However, despite the fact that the teachers in this study recognised the need to learn an African language - one went so far as to say *"it should be very high on the list of priorities because then everything else you do will be more effective"* - they were unable to sustain the motivation to get very far in their language learning.

Motivation is widely recognised as an essential condition for language learning (see e.g. Spolsky 1989), but it is especially important with regard to 'learner training' because it has to sustain independent learning (Rees-Miller 1993). In this regard, the Brewsters distinguish between short-term enthusiasm and determination to learn. They acknowledge that it is fairly rare, even among missionaries, for individuals to have sufficient determination without some form of external stimulus. Some missionary agencies apparently make a certain level of proficiency a condition for remaining in a field assignment or for receiving full pay (1976: 2-3).

A problem closely related to motivation is time. Larson and Smalley emphasise in the preface to their book 'Becoming Bilingual': *"For an adult, becoming bilingual takes time, effort and motivation. It is a serious matter"* (1984: v). The TALK faciliators acknowledge that teachers do not have the same kind of time available to them as missionaries and they work around this in their programme. Yet some of the teachers in this study did manage to make time for university studies. Why was it that they were unable to take language learning as seriously? As one student helper describing those who dropped out put it, *"If you want to know the language, then you should sacrifice yourself ... They said this is difficult. They just gave up. "*

Is it that for English and Afrikaans speaking teachers in South Africa it is not really seriously expected of them to learn an African language? As one facilitator put it, *"Society is moving in the opposite direction from TALK, you know, sort of moving towards English, towards a more technological mode of living. "* English is - increasingly so - the language

of upward mobility and of power, particularly economic power.   African languages do now have official status, but as part of a liberal policy dispensation in which little has been done structurally to alter their status.   Alongside this are the racial and class divisions structured through colonialism and apartheid, which make it difficult to establish genuine cross-cultural relationships which are expressed through an African language.

The consequent lack of value placed on African languages in education is illustrated by the fact that at the two high schools in this study, where roughly half of the students are African, African languages have no place at all in the curriculum. The reasons for this are not simple racism or ' linguicism' ; they are a complex mix of economic and attitudinal factors.   The ability to change them is sometimes beyond the means of the school. However, from a practical point of view, this situation serves to further remove teachers' motivation to learn an African language.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that TALK, an NGO, operates on a private basis with schools.   Although the Project raises funds to cover a substantial part of the school courses, the schools are in a sense its customers and since TALK has no official status, it is unable to make serious demands on learners. The facilitators adopt a humanistic response to the problem. Their approach is, in their own words, *"to be very accepting of guilt ... to try to make them [the learners] comfortable with the feeling that they haven't learnt very much. "* Their aim is *"to get them to accept the limitations of their situation, because then they won't give up altogether.   Because if they feel very bad about it then they turn their back on the whole thing. "* There is a good deal of merit in this approach, especially given the psychologically demanding situation in which teachers now find themselves - one which is without any of its old certainties.   However, it also serves to remove any 'facilitative anxiety' from the learning context.

There are other possibly contributory factors worthy of further investigation.   The first is the nature of schools as institutions and what Segal (1998: 1998) calls the   *"contingent reality of the classroom".*   He points out that stress, anxiety and fear are not accidental features of classrooms. They arise out of the conflictual roles of teachers and students, and they often serve to transform explicitly liberal beliefs into conservative practices.   In the two multilingual high school classes in this study, African languages were part of this reality.   They seemed to be used subversively to undermine the authority of teachers, to the extent that in one school they were described by a teacher as   *"a weapon".*   In this school, it has provoked an authoritarian response - the banning of these languages in the classroom. One wonders whether such situations do not also generate conflictual attitudes on the part of teachers towards learning African languages: on the one hand, a desparate need to do so, but on the other, anxiety and resistance.

Although it is beyond the scope of this investigation, this also suggests the need to review some of the strategies commonly recommended to teachers of multilingual classes who do not speak their learners' languages, for example, encouraging learners to use their own languages for groupwork (e.g. Zafar 1998). Such recommendations need to be re-examined in particular school contexts and reworked in accordance with Segal's

observations.

Sometimes the conflicts around language and identity in the classroom, resurfaced during the 'community outing', at least in the subjective experiences of the participants.   For example, an initiator at School 2 described the tensions in her classroom: Afrikaans speaking herself, she tries always to use English to accommodate her students, but they don't pay attention, especially if the teacher is a woman, *"I'm busy explaining, they're talking in* Zulu, " she said. She finds this behaviour alienating: "I
she said.   On the outing, she described the experience of being asked by a drunken man what *"amaboesman"* were doing in the township, however her *"hosts were nice people and I didn't feel like I was in a stranger's house. "*   Much of the discussion around the meal that day was about African men's likes and dislikes with regard to women.

A facilitator said of this course, "I *think there were a lot of attitudes and feelings that we were very inexperienced with ... There were all sorts of imponderables, things we didn't know. "* TALK has adapted the course since then in several ways, from within a humanistic orientation, to make learners feel more secure and better understood as individuals. From the point of view of classroom pedagogy, this is probably an effective response.   However, there is also need for a different level of analysis - one which better accounts for conflict - in order that facilitators deepen their understanding of the contexts they are working in.

A few learners expressed dissatisfaction with the method itself.   This seemed to arise from a conflict between its underlying philosophy and their own beliefs about language learning. These beliefs expressed themselves in a Chomskyan view which rejects the role of repetition, mimicry, memorization and drills in language learning. It is a view that it is still transmitted in many language teacher education programmes.   However, among applied linguists these views are being reconsidered.   For example, Widdowson (1989 quoted in Celce-Murcia et al 1997: 117) argues:

> *Communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from scratch as and when occasion requires. It is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual standards.*

Given that they have such limited time, it's difficult for facilitators to engage with these contradictions, but they do need to be aware of them.

There were particular contextual factors, for example the involvement of the school principal, the conditions prevailing in the school and so on, which affected motivation and contributed to the success of otherwise of a course.   What this illustrates is that no approach to language learning can be judged effective or ineffective outside of a specific context; that is, no method will will have universal application.   What can beneficially be identified and examined is the factors upon which success is contingent; however, each new context may reveal new factors.

Where the approach was particularly successful was in developing understanding and respect for cultural differences, and informing teachers in an experiential way about their

students' lives. One teacher described the township outing and the meal with a student's family as *"awesome because 1 just saw so much and was flabbergasted by the way many of them live, and we were in one of the better suburbs. "* She went on: *"We walked around, we talked to people, we ate morogo. That was really exciting and it helped me gain a lot of understanding and empathy for my children and where they are coming from, their lifestyles and their situation. "* It was also successful in that the actual experience of language learning, made them aware of its difficulties - not least the emotional ones - and this gave them new respect and empathy for their African students.

In this way, the approach meets several of the requirements of the proposed new norms and standards in teacher education described on page 2 of this report. It achieved most where the principal was strongly committed to the approach and actively involved, and where there was a direct link with school language policy. This points to the need for it to be introduced within a 'whole school' approach to language policy and change.

Some might argue that TALR's approach to change in education, framed as it is within a humanistic discourse, pays too much attention to individual cultural and linguistic differences (possibly reifying them in the process) and too little to broader socio-political processes. I would respond that socio-political analysis is necessary - especially, as I have suggested for analysing the context of courses - but it is often an exclusively cognitive exercise (see Eyber et al 1997: 45). Change is more likely to happen in schools if this is preceded by personal experiences, interactions between people, which unsettle individual beliefs.

Within the approach, notions about culture are constructed through discussion based on individual life experiences; there is a dialectical dimension. For example, in the lesson described in the Appendix, one learner expresses an affiliation with African culture (she describes her initial discomfort in using the principal's first name) whereas another lays claim to a different identity (she describes adult members of her family allowing young children to call them by their first name). Perhaps where the facilitators could be criticised, is in not picking up on this and engaging with the unexamined assumptions - in this case about adult/child relationships - which underlie many practices in schools such as this, and which are in conflict with some African cultural practices. This could take discussion beyond individual experiences and into an examination of institutions.

Recommendations

It is common knowledge that despite the rapidly changing student profile in many previously white, coloured and Indian schools, there has been little change in their language policies. Even in this study of schools where teachers have volunteered to learn African languages, these languages are still not part of the curriculum of the two high schools. In one school the governing body has taken the retrogressive step of banning the use of African languages in the classroom in an effort to restore discipline. Although much has been done in two of the schools to assist learners to adapt to English as a medium of instruction, African languages are accorded little real status.

There is a recognition in these schools that teachers' inability to speak an African language sometimes impedes communication and learning, and affects the relationship between

teachers and learners, especially with regard to issues of respect and discipline in class. The new norms and standards proposed for teacher education refer to 'discipline' as part of 'practical competence': teachers must be able to construct *"an atmosphere in classrooms and schools which is democratic but disciplined and which is sensitive to culture, race and gender differences ... "* (Technical Committee for Norms and Standards in Teacher Education 1998: 56). However, they do not acknowledge the role which the teacher's language competence might play in this regard.

Attitudes in the three schools were open and positive: there were principals and teachers who wanted to learn African languages/cultures and students who wanted to help them do so. This presents a very real 'possibility' for multilingual and multicultural education. Teachers made strides within a short time in gaining insight into their students' cultural and life experiences. They also became more empathetic to learners' difficulties in multilingual classes and in one instance this led to positive changes in the school's language policy. However, there was insufficient contextual support and pressure to sustain learners' motivation to learn an African language. Recommendations, then, must present ways in which contextual support could be built into language learning programmes.

I have divided these recommendations into what I believe is desirable in the long-term and achievable in the short-term.

Long-term

1. Non-African teachers should be encouraged and expected to learn African languages. The results of this research suggest that this will result in improved teaching and learning; in more comfortable relationships with increased respect between teachers and learners; and in better discipline.

   Using an experiential approach which integrates language and culture and grounds language learning in relationships, much can be achieved in this regard within a short time, though for sustained language learning motivation must be accounted for.

   Teacher may argue that it is impossible for them to learn their students' languages since several different African languages are spoken in their classrooms. However, using this approach they could learn - little by little - the lingua franca spoken by their students, from their students.

2. Policies at national, provincial and school level should encourage non-African teachers to learn the languages of the majority of students. It is disturbing, given the multilingual sentiments expressed in policy documents, that there is presently no expectation of teachers in this regard either in pre- or in-service education and training (PRESET/INSET).

   Even in popular journals there is no suggestion that teachers need to learn an African language. The latest issue of *The Teacher* (August 1998), for example, has as one of its themes 'multilingual and multicultural education', but absolutely no mention is made of the possibility of teachers learning African languages. In

Philippa Garson's editorial she says, *"In many situations teachers are unable to communicate with their pupils. They can't even tell them to sit down, because they don't understand Xhosa or Zulu!"* The solution offered is to integrate the teaching corps; surely such teachers could also learn how to say *Hlalani phantsi.*

If schools are legally bound to accept learners regardless of their proficiency in the language of learning, and to provide them with the means to learn it, should not teachers be accorded similar rights? Should they not have the right to remain in a school even if they do not speak the home language(s) of their learners, and to be provided with the means to learn these languages?

If the values of the constitution and the sentiments of policy documents are to be realised, courses in African languages for teaching purposes should be part of both PRESET and INSET. Proposals are currently being debated about NGOs registering as service providers in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); forging links with Higher Education Institutions in order to integrate their expertise into large learning programmes; and becoming a more integral part of INSET. If these proposals become policy, it would be possible for teachers engaged in programmes which teach African languages and/or cultures to be rewarded for their efforts. These providers could develop and assess learning outcomes for initial short programme and for higher and higher levels of attainment as learners progress in independent language/culture learning. The groundwork for this has been laid in TALK course materials where levels of attainment are described in some detail (TALK Manual 1996: 32-7).

I believe this might build on the existing motivation of teachers such as those in this study, and provide them with the determination to reach achievable levels of competence.

Short-term

In the short-term, I would recommend the implementation of short courses in African languages/cultures at a number of pilot schools with the explicit support of the Education Department. It should be part of whole school development and should be explicitly linked to the development of the school's language policy and to the teaching of African languages in the school.

The study suggests that the following factors would support the introduction of such courses into schools:

- An analysis of the school context prior to the implementation of a course, and adaptation according to the schools' needs.

- The development of learning and assessment outcomes with learners prior to a course.

- A supportive principal who is actively involved in the venture.

- Whole school involvement
  - courses offered in phases with 8 to 10 teachers involved in each course
  - the principal a participant in the first course
  - support staff, for example the school secretary, involved.

- Additional language learning resources provided in the school - for example, the excellent multimedia courses which are coming onto the market - not as a replacement but as a support for continued independent learning in the community.

- Assessment of students carried out at intervals over a two year period.

The implementation should have a strong research dimension and the programme should be documented over a two year period.

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Appendix: Description of a class in a TALK school's course

A TALK session at School 4
July 1997

The course takes place at a primary school in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. The TALK facilitators have travelled from their offices in Yeoville, picking up helpers who have travelled in by taxi from Soweto, on the way. The session is held in the school staffroom; it is cosy and comfortable.

It is shortly after 2.00 p.m. Teachers gradually drift into the staffroom; they are clearly tired after a long school day. One says, "Oh! I'm so tired", and slumps into a chair. The principal, who is also a learner, comes in - she is lively and energetic.

The class begins. The five learners sit next to their helpers. Two of the helpers are Zulu--speakers who teach at the school; the rest are TALK helpers. One learner is absent and her helper sits alone.

The two facilitators greet the class in Zulu. One speaks Zulu as her home language, the other English. It occurs to the evaluator that they represent the goal of TALK: two South Africans - one black and one white - friends, who easily move in and out of each other's languages.

The class starts with a song; they all stand in a circle except for one learner who remains in her chair - she says she is too tired to stand up. The facilitators and helpers teach a new Zulu song: first they sing and dance, the learners joining in as best they can; then they write the Zulu words on the flipchart, explaining what they mean in English; finally, everyone sings and dances together.

The singing and dancing seems to make everyone forget their tiredness; even the learner who said she was too tired to stand up can't resist joining in. It brings a different way of being into the staffroom - a room which is redolent of white, middle-class South Africa.

Next, the class moves on to 'the circle'. First, learners and helpers sit in pairs in a circle - learners practise the text they have learned that week with their helper. Then, the learners move from helper to helper, practising over and over their texts with speakers of Zulu. This activity too seems to draw the learners in.

A typical text at this stage of a course

Ngifunda isiZulu kodwa angazi okuningi okwamanye.
Angizwanga kahle - ngicela uphinde.
Ngicela usizo lwakho.

[I am learning Zulu but I don't yet know a lot.
I didn't understand. Please repeat. Please can you help.]

After 'the circle', the class moves on to an evaluation of what has happened to the learners since their last class, which is carried out in English. The learners say that they are feeling very tired at this stage of the school year, but they have been continuing to learn Zulu from their pupils; they express appreciation for their helpers who had been encouraging and supportive. Observations are made about their language learning experiences: "I find that Zulu is very expressive", and "I'm learning now to take more note of the body language ... I was observing my brother's helpers in his yard." The facilitators are encouraging about these observations; one says, "There's nothing wrong with eavesdropping."

The principal says it is more difficult for her since she doesn't have so much daily contact with pupils. She compares her situation to that of a teacher: "Mrs A [the reluctant learner described earlier] had two kids, one on either side, to teach her the clicks. The pupils are said to be good teachers: "Kids don't give up on you."

The class then moves on to role-playing. Two helpers - and thereafter two learners - act out asking a stranger for directions in the street. The first interaction is in Zulu and the second in English. Differences are revealed in the way 'asking directions' is performed in the two language communities: the helper greets the stranger and enquires after her health before asking for directions, whereas the learner simply says "Excuse me" and asks the way.

Much discussion arises out of the role play. The African language speakers say that if they were approached in the English way, "We would think we were being used." One says, "If you don't greet, you mustn't ask me." The English/Afrikaans speakers, on the other hand, express the view that if approached in the African way, "We would think we were being conned."

The use of "Sawuboua, sisi" in the role play leads on to a discussion about the word "sisi" and who can be addressed in this way. One of the learners says that he had thought it derogatory. It is explained that "sisi " is used to address a woman roughly the same age as oneself, whereas an older woman - the same age as one's mother - would be addressed as "mama ".

Mrs A recognises the similarity with her own language practices and says, "It's like auntie." The principal takes the opportunity to ask a worker in the kitchen which adjoins the staffroom, how old she is. She proves to be approximately the same age as the principal, who thereafter addresses her as "sisi".

This leads into a discussion about the use of first names and the fact that in African cultures one does not use them as often as English speakers do, and certainly not to address people older than oneself. Mrs A - who happens to be coloured - then describes how "very uncomfortable" she had felt using the principal's first name when she first came to teach at the school. The African teachers agree about this. Mrs A picks up on the similarities

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between their cultural practices and remarks, "In our culture adults can discipline any child" - it proves to be so with the African teachers too.

At this point, another coloured teacher in the group enters the discussion. She describes a recent visit to family members overseas and reports that even very young children in her family are on first name terms with adults.

The discussion then moves on to the subject of traditional cultural practices. A young male teacher asks about the amaXhosa's prohibition on twins, which leads to some discussion about Africans not having baby showers because it tempts fate.

The learners seem to feel that the discussion of cultural issues has been valuable. The principal says, "If there's any criticism of this course, it's too short."

The facilitators then move the class on to practise some difficult sounds: *'hl'* as in *'hlala'* and aspirated and unaspirated pairs of sounds, for example, *'th'/'t'* as in *thatha/tata.* Practical suggestions are made to help the learners pronounce the sounds: "Say 'I' - now blow air, force it, from your stomach"; "Put your hand here [gestures in front of her mouth], you're not allowed to feel any air."

Finally, the learners go off with their helpers to record their new texts, and thereafter the class breaks up. The young male teacher is very keen to tell the facilitators about a cultural day he is planning with his class.

The facilitators have provided a strong but unobtrusive framing of the activities in the class; there has been a clear but almost seamless transition from one stage of the lesson to the next. They have worked together many times before and are able to give a feeling of spontaneity to an educational experience which has a strong underlying structure and direction.