FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2nd SEMESTER 2019

ASSIGNMENT 1

LANGUAGE POLICY & PLANNING
(LPP821S)
TUTORIAL FEEDBACK: LANGUAGE POLICY & PLANNING

Assignment 1

With particular reference to the Language Policy for Schools in Namibia, discuss Haugen’s Language planning processes models. Present your own analysis of the implementation of the policy in Namibia (approximately 1500 words)

Dear students

Thank you for submitting your first assignment and I believe you got the results by now. An important observation that I made was that most of you do not read your tutorial letter in full. In the assignment, I provided a hint that the assignment was based on Unit 2 of your study guide, meaning that the answer to the assignment was in this Unit.

The question required you to discuss the different types of language planning, as espoused by Haugen and these include the 3 main types: status, corpus and acquisition planning. Most of you got this right, to some extent, while others, instead of describing these main types, went on to describe the different stages of language planning: selection, codification, elaboration, etc. these are the stages, not the types and if you check again, you will realise that these stages fall within the main type mentioned earlier, e.g. under status planning, selection and implementation are the stages, and so forth. So, if you just described the stages, selection, codification, etc, you would not get a good mark, while those who described the main types and the stages within those types would get a good mark.

In addition to identifying the main types as described by Haugen, you were then required to contextualise these types of language planning in the Namibian context: how have status, corpus and acquisition planning been implemented in Namibia. Now, the common error was
that some of you would describe the first part of the question only, but fail to explain the Namibian context. Again, you would not get a good mark because of the partial answer to the question.

So, you were supposed to explain the different types, and go further to explain how the type of planning has been implemented in Namibia. Let’s look at these examples:

**Status planning:** If several languages are spoken within a country, it is usually necessary to choose a language or languages as norm(s) for official, educational, and other purposes. This is achieved through status language planning, which “deals with giving a language the status of an official language, national language, language of religion or medium of instruction” (Mkhize et al., 2002:252).

- Bourdieu (1991): status planning regulates the power relationship between languages and their respective speakers in the linguistic market place.

- Crystal (2008:268): “status planning deals with the standing of one language in relation to others… is more concerned with the social and political implications of choosing a language, and with such matters as language attitudes, national identity, international use, and minority”

-Therefore, the status language planners are usually government officials, politicians or government bodies.

If a language is declared ‘official’ in a country, that language will assume the functions of the language of education, government, commerce and the court of law and on the other hand, “the other languages not chosen for official purposes will assume a relatively lower status in terms of functions that they can perform in that society” (Mkhize et al., 2002:252).

**In Namibia:** the language policy adopted English as an official language and a national language at the same time, while African languages, Afrikaans and German are given the status of local languages with an equal possibility of being developed as national languages (Haacke, 1996).

-This led to what Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) called “linguicism”- an ideology according to which the language of the politically or economically dominant group or class is given a higher social status than indigenous languages. ‘Linguicism’ is evident in the Namibian situation, whereby the African languages have a relatively low status, as compared to English, the official language.
-African languages are only used as media of instruction from Grade 1-3, taught as subjects from Grade 4 to 12, and then used as media of instruction in functional literacy classes (Legere, 1996:53). They are also taught as subjects at tertiary institutions, even though this is not ideal, as some of them are not taught there at all.

In 1996, among 10 major Namibian African languages, only three were taught as subjects at the University of Namibia (Legere, 1996). In response to this, Kamwangamalu (2000:59) argues, “the lack of bold initiatives to promote African languages ensure that African languages are only associated with their traditional role as vehicles for cultural heritage; while English is associated with the institutions such as government, and administration, the courts, banking etc.”.

-Given the low status of African languages in Namibia and other African countries, English remains the main medium of instruction, despite the fact that it is failing to stimulate the required literacy among learners (Kamwangamwalu, 1997).

**Corpus Planning**: involves attempts to define or reform the standard language by changing or introducing forms in spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar”.

-Haacke’s (1996:59): “corpus planning means that changes are made to the language itself; for instance, by standardizing its orthography (spelling), by coining special vocabulary (terminology), by standardizing its pronunciation or even grammar; or by attempting to develop one variety as standard variety”.

-Kamwangamalu (2000:51): “corpus planning attempts to adjust the inequalities between languages by modifying linguistic features so as to compete in a linguistic market place”, e.g. “in Malaysia, where Bahasa Malaysia has become the national language, attempts have been made to construct new vocabulary in areas such as business, education and research” (Richard & Schmidt, 2002:127).

-If a certain language for instance has many dialects e.g. Oshiwambo, the corpus language planners have a daunting task of deciding which dialect should be regarded as the standard dialect and why? Or should all the dialects of the language be considered when an orthography is created?” (Mkhize et al., 2002:253). In this view, Mkhize et al. (2002:253) proposed that “it is important to note that not only linguistic, but also cultural, political and economic factors should be taken into consideration during corpus language planning”.

---

3
In Namibia: after independence, the corpus planning activities for African languages was set out. However,

“the implementation of the suggested activities has not been systematically initiated because there was neither a programme of action, nor a timetable for steps to be taken and allocation of responsibilities...This lack of organizational and concomitant professional involvement in a serious setback for African languages, which are further losing ground compared with English where these professional skills, know-how and expertise have been built up over the years and are also provided by expatriate experts...Apart from a lack of organization and professional involvement, the corpus planning for Namibian Africa languages showed a lack of information and materials on the current orthography for almost all African languages, which is detrimental to language teaching in schools and non-formal education...Teachers and literacy promoters, for instance, are in urgent need of various orthographies and have to be trained in how to write African languages...Besides, the textbooks where the orthography is applied in texts and exercises are not sufficient for them to deduce orthographical conventions”

-The consequence of the above is that most learners in the lower grades cannot write a text correctly, because of lack of competence in orthography and evidently, learners who cannot write their own language will certainly face tremendous problems writing English (Legere, 1996:56).

-Thus, the ‘language planning’ which was done to prepare Namibian African languages to be used as the medium of instructions in schools (from grade 1- 3) was not sufficient.

Acquisition Planning: refers to planning that is directed to how to promote and facilitate acquisition of the new language. “This type of planning is directed towards increasing the number of users; for example, speakers, writers, listeners, or readers” (Cooper, 1989, in Kamwangamalu, 1997:236).

- Cooper (1989) in Mkhize et al. (2002:253): “language acquisition goals may be achieved through programs or types of acquisitions planning designed to improve the incentives to learn, and those designed primarily to create or to improve the incentive to learn, and those designed to create or improve both opportunity and incentive simultaneously”.
Acquisition planning is important because in South Africa, e.g., it is expected that each person should at least be competent in three languages, that is, the language of wider communication, another regional language and the vernacular (Mkhize et al., 2002:272). This implies that there will be a need to learn English, which is the language of wider communication by the majority of the population”.

**In Namibia:** after independence in 1990, the national literacy programme was launched to teach illiterate adults basic language skills in the mother tongue, as well as English (Legere, 1996). This was a laudable achievement because “at independence in 1990, Namibia had an illiteracy rate of more than 60% of the adults” (Legere, 1996:53).

- In addition to the national literacy programme, the government took the initiative of improving teachers’ English teaching skills and supplied a number of teaching and learning materials written in English to schools (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1993b), which were however not enough and hence, despite these efforts from the government, “the use of English in Namibia remains largely restricted to part of business community where it is the language mainly of middle and top management” (Cluver, 1990:66).

- To be competent in second language requires a language policy which would effectively strengthen and facilitate competence in second language and hence, foster academic achievements.

I hope you find this helpful and I am looking forward to your second assignment. For those who came for the vacation school, thanks once again, we had very insightful discussions (*in my view of course*).

All the best.

Dr. Mapudzi