National language and terminology policies – a South African perspective

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Outline of talk:

- Introduction
- Language policy and implications
- National Language Body participation in terminology development
- National terminology office
- Private initiatives
- Conclusion
Introduction

The language policy of a country influences terminology development.

The language policy of a country determines the number of languages to be developed:

- Eastern Africa: One official language (Kiswahili), various national languages
- Namibia: One official language (English), 16 national languages
- South Africa: 11 official languages (with special emphasis also on development of South African Sign Language and Khoe and San languages)

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Language Policy and Planning


“… the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages”.

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The language policy promotes the **equitable use** of the official languages.

It accommodates **linguistic diversity**.

It provides a **regulatory framework** to facilitate the effective implementation of the constitutional obligations concerning multilingualism.

National Treasury concluded that it is possible to implement a multilingual language policy. The **expenditure** is relatively small compared to overall departmental budgets.

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Government documents “shall be made available in all 11 official languages”.

In cases where this is not feasible, national government departments “shall publish documents simultaneously in at least 6 official languages”:

- Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English
- One from the Nguni group; one from Sotho group.

Result to aim for: enhanced communication between government and citizens.
Terminology as a discipline is

- governed by the language policy of the country;

- at the service of the language policy of the reigning government, e.g. monolingual, bilingual or multilingual.

South African situation:

- previous dispensation: bilingual technical dictionaries

- present dispensation: multilingual term lists
Establishment of the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB)

- PanSALB was established to give effect to the letter and spirit of Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
- PanSALB is a constitutional body established in terms of the PanSALB Act (Act No 59 of 1995 as amended in 1999).
- The Board was established to promote multilingualism and develop the official South African languages, including South African Sign Language (SASL) and the Khoe and San languages.
PanSALB created advisory structures to assist it in achieving its mandate:

**Mandate:**
- to promote multilingualism
- to develop languages, and
- to protect language rights

**Structures:**
- Provincial Language Committees (PLCs) = 9
- National Language Bodies (NLBs) = 13
- National Lexicography Units (NLUs) = 11
9 Provincial Language Committees (PLCs)
- Assist Provinces with language policy formulation, and implementation

13 National Language Bodies (NLBs)
- Standardisation (e.g. spelling and orthography rules)
- Terminology development
- Dictionary needs (general and special purpose)
- Literature and Media
- Research
- Education

11 National Lexicography Units (NLUs)
- Compilation of comprehensive monolingual, and other types of dictionaries (i.e. translation dictionaries; etymological dictionaries; technical dictionaries; etc.)
The PLCs are provincial structures, each taking care of the languages of a specific Province.

The NLBs and NLUs are national structures.

The language specific NLB and the NLU take care of:
- the particular language or language group
- the official language of the majority of the speakers of the language residing in the geolinguistic area;
- developmental issues regarding the language;
- promotion and preservation of the language.
PLCs keep in contact with NLBs and NLUs in order to:

- make them aware of all the language needs that impact negatively or positively in terms of
  - language policy
  - language practice
  - language implementation, and
- the promotion of multilingualism in a Province
PanSALB’s National Language Bodies (NLBs) take care of:

- Standardisation (e.g. Spelling and Orthography)
- Terminology Development
- Dictionaries (General and Special Purposes)
- Literature and Media
- Dialects
- Research
- Education

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The Technical Committees (TCs) for Terminology Development -

- Verify terms
- Authenticate terms
- Standardise and stabilise terms
- Popularise terms
- Advise compilers of technical dictionaries (i.e. private initiatives)
- Advise terminologists and terminology offices
- Co-operate, collaborate and communicate with stakeholders

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National Language Bodies
PanSALB structures
(verify, authenticate terms)

Terminology Coordination Section
(national term bank)

Trained decentralized collaborators

Stakeholders
(subject specialists, language practitioners...)

Language Bureaux
Private Initiatives
Primary, secondary & tertiary institutions
NLUs

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National and International Collaboration

Terminology Coordinator

CLTAL
CEPTSA
SAAWK projects
HANSARD
Private initiatives
Subject committees
Linguists
Pansalb
NLBs
NLUs
PLCs

Compilers of terminology lists or technical dictionaries

NATIONAL TERMBANK
managed by
Terminology Coordination Section (TCS)
National Language Service (NLS)
Department of Arts and Culture (DAC)

Advisory bodies

External bodies making use of terminology

International liaison, e.g. Infoterm, TermNet, IOUTN, WBIT, IFTB, ISO TC/37, Danterm, etc

National liaison: Government, Provincial and local Departments; HLT virtual network, ...

Industry
e.g. Sasol
Afrilex
Prolingua
SATI
ALASA
Escom
SABS
SABC
SAB
MNET
News Media
e.g. papers
Tertiary Institutions
SANDF
NEC
NGOs
Statutory bodies
Private sector

KEY

Bodies already using and providing terminology to National Termbank
Possible interaction in future
International and national liaison

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Terminology management

The mission of a national terminology office is inter alia to assist with the development and modernisation of the terminology of all official or natural (indigenous) languages of a country.

The aim is to promote, in the interest of the community, scientific and technical communication by rendering a terminological and terminographical service on behalf of and for the use of the relevant language groups.

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The objectives are to support the reigning government in the formulation, planning, development, implementation, maintenance and management of national policy and strategies concerning technical languages (language for special purposes) in order to promote communication and to develop official and/or natural languages into functional languages to be used in all spheres of life.
A national terminology office should render a terminology service by way of conceptualisation, creation, documentation and standardisation of terminologies; develop structures and facilities to meet the requirements of the indigenous language communities; facilitate and coordinate terminology development; develop, manage and maintain a computerized information-oriented terminological database (terminology management system (TMS)); disseminate terminological information.
Terminology Management (cont.)

- A national terminology office has the infrastructure and resources to execute its task.
- Language practitioners are appointed to serve the official or natural (indigenous) languages.
- Terminologists and terminographers perform a specialized service when recording terms and compiling dictionaries.
- Terminology is managed by means of computer-based programs.
- A terminology service is provided to subject and language communities.
Terminology flow:

Client

SD&R

SL = En

Science

Humanities

Technical

NLS

Printing & Publishing

10 x TLs

Af  Zu  Xh  Nr  Ss
Ts  Ve  St  Ns  Tn

Subject specialists

Language Practitioners

NLBs

Subject specialists

Language Practitioners

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The compilation of a terminology list is a time-consuming task

A task that needs commitment and devotion from
- subject specialists
- trained terminologists
- language practitioners, linguists
- Members of NLBs, PLCs, NLUs

End-result:
- enhancement of subject area
- better or exact communication
- development of languages into functional languages

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Terminology dissemination:

- Direct queries to national term bank (e.g. Intranet, TCS homepage (flat files))
- Indirect queries to national term bank via e-mail, telephone or fax
- Online dictionaries (NLUs); Internet; CD ROM; HLT
- Publications (term lists, technical dictionaries)
- Documents containing terms: text books, dissertations, manuals, journals, brochures, etc.
- Mass communication media (radio, press, TV…)

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Conclusion

- The language policy of a country influences terminology development since it determines *which languages* to be developed.

- Specialised communication has a *central axle* or *hub* in terminology.

- Terminology is a *strategic resource* and has an important role in a country – especially in a multilingual country.

- Availability of multilingual polythematic terminology is an *indicator of development.*

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Effective economic, scientific and technical communication skills of the citizens of a country are developed through the use of correct terminology.

Standardised terminology contributes to quality of translations, interpreting and subject related communication.

Streamlined translation and interpreting services provide competitive advantages.

Although terminological and terminographical activities are not always cost-effective, they are of invaluable political, cultural, social, historical, functional, academic and scientific importance.

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A national terminology office serves the whole country.

It should adhere to language policies and to sound terminological and terminographical principles and procedures.

Terminology work is team work and there should be collaboration with subject specialists, academics, linguists, language practitioners, media, national and international terminology organizations, standardizing bodies.

The terminology practice of any country will enhance communication in various domains and will develop official (and national) languages into functional languages.
THANK YOU!

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