

BLACK LINGUISTICS

Language, society, and politics in Africa and
the Americas

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Foreword by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

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To our forebearer, Mark Hanna Watkins, Linguistic
Anthropologist, and to Uncle I.J. Makoni Sr, for his moral
and material support throughout Sinfree's academic career.

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to disinvention of multilingualism and the Constitution

Makoni

the political significance of the analytical
language in the South African Constitution.
Intellectually progressive and politically
it attaches to human rights and its
the African context. In giving official
Africa has charted a course in opposition
example Malawi and Namibia, whose
official language. In fact, the Malawian
attaching proficiency in English as a pre-
e, however, that the South African
languages as neatly divided, "bounded
units" (Makoni 1998a; Nuttall and
cognitively disadvantaging to the very
re, I will argue that the South African
self-serving amnesia by encouraging
and material contexts in which the so-
or "cobbled together" as Brutt-Griffler

Constitution, which forms the basis of
in 1996. The Founding Provisions are:
primacy of the Constitution, Citizenship,

public are Sepedi, Sesotho, Sets-
ga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele,

- 2 Recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. *
- 3(a) The national government and provincial governments may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages. *
- 3(b) Municipalities must take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents.
- 4 The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must regulate and monitor their use of official languages. Without detracting from provisions of subsection (2), all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably.

(Chapter One, Founding Provisions, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: 4)

The language provisions continue:

- 5 A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must—
 - (a) promote and create conditions for the development and use of—
 - (i) all official languages;
 - (ii) the Khoi, Nama, and San languages;
 - (iii) sign language;
 - (b) promote and ensure respect for—
 - (i) all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu, and Urdu;
 - (ii) Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

(Chapter One, Founding Provisions, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: 4-5)

The Bill of Rights in the final version of the Constitution protects the rights of individuals to "use the language of their choice." Sections (30) and (31) state that individuals have the right "to receive education in the official languages or language of their choice where that is practicable." Section (35) provides for the right of an accused person to be tried in a language that he/she understands or,

findings interpreted. The Founding Pro-
 "take practical and positive measures
 of the "indigenous" languages. The
 State to "ensure respect for all lan-
 South Africa"—e.g. Hindi, Gujarati,
 languages used for "religious pur-
 te!

on which the country's national lan-
 separate languages as official, nine of
 makes these languages separate and
 ey become separate and indigenous,
 tances? These are crucial questions
 sociolinguistics (e.g. Phillipson 1992;
 the existence of separate indigenous
 ematic, and an uncontested sociolin-
 matter addressed only in endnotes to
 uth Africa (Hornberger 2002).

guages to prepare them for their new
 of various sectors of government, the
 guage Board (PANSALB). The archi-
 ware that "the new Constitutional
 elegant and contradictory," as Albie
 a key role in the construction of the
 The extent of the inelegance, contra-
 en explored, nor even recognized by

ne discourse that constructs African
 esis in colonial thinking, namely in an
 s the sociohistorical contexts in which
 undu 1992; Harries 1995; Makoni
 e related notions of "narration" and
 90) have been productively deployed
 s of ethnicity, national identity, and
 guments about "invention," "narra-
 vincingly demonstrate that ethnicity
 l legal systems, are a product of col-
 matically out there in African space.
 c issues have been slow to exploit the
 "invention" and related concepts. If
 of colonial ideology, it is logical to ask
 uch as so-called "African languages."
 In this chapter, I seek to examine
 of invention as it applies to African
 ecause it shows how languages are

constituted historically and thus allows for the possibility of languages being
 deconstituted. The issue is also of current interest because it reflects the extent to
 which some of the contemporary problems with implementability of language
 policies in Africa are situated in the conceptualizations and ways of thinking
 about African languages.

Different languages were invented out of what was one language through a
 process marred by "faulty transcriptions and mishearings," mediated through
 partial competence in African languages, and motivated by an overly sharp sep-
 aration between language structure and language use (Campbell-Makini 2000)
 reinforced by the use of different orthographic systems. Initiatives for rendering
 African speech ("languages") in written form resulted in "an exaggerated multi-
 ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-tribal picture of African colonies [that] has been
 painted through misinterpretation and inadequate study on the part of the early
 missionaries and manipulation for administrative convenience on the part of
 colonial governments" (Chimhundu 1992: 88). For example, the speech of the
 Sotho and Tswana, whose languages are productively conceptualized as a con-
 tinuum, were defined as separate languages. The Xhosa and Zulu peoples,
 whose languages are closely related, were defined as speaking different languages
 because of the rivalry between the different missionaries working with these two
 groups. Setswana, Sesotho, and Sepedi, three of the languages officially recog-
 nized within the South African Constitution, are very similar grammatically,
 morphologically, and lexically. The differences between these three languages
 are mainly in the area of phonology. These related speech forms were codified
 as separate languages because of missionary politics.

In some cases even the names given to some of the African speech forms were
 invented by Europeans. The most telling example is the name "Shona," a lan-
 guage spoken in Southern Africa, mainly in Zimbabwe. (However, because of
 massive migration from the north, it is also spoken in parts of South Africa as
 well, for example by the Tswana people.) Prior to European colonialism, the
 Shona peoples did not have a collective term to refer to themselves. In 1931, the
 name "Shona" was used for the purpose of facilitating administrative classifica-
 tion. The recommendation did not come from Shona language users themselves,
 but from a committee of missionaries who subsequently commissioned a lan-
 guage expert, Clement Doke, Professor of Linguistics at the University of
 Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, to design an orthographic system
 for Shona—in spite of his lack of knowledge about the language.

It has been widely felt that the name Shona is inaccurate and unwor-
 thy, that it is not the true name of any of the peoples whom we propose
 to group under the term "Shona-speaking people," and further, it lies
 under strong suspicion of being a name given in contempt by enemies
 of the tribes. It is pretty certainly a foreign name, and as such is very
 likely to be uncomplimentary like the name "kaffir."

(Southern Rhodesia 1929: 25)

standard grammar was subsequently
 and a vocabulary was created "of
 ible which shall include words from
 gely drawn from missionary converts
 ." The famous laboratory assistants
 wa, and Paul Malanga, converts to
 Rhodesia 1929). In this context,
 g under the banner of objective sci-
 ng utilized to serve the interests and
 ministrators (Campbell-Makini 2000;
 s that has served colonialism well;
 e also had their history marred by

quires a certain kind of consciousness
 an be standardized entities and that
 It is a linguistic consciousness that
 education, a consciousness which is
 of most peoples with limited or no
 t they speak as "human language."
 e an oddity, it would have been the
 impossibility of discussing ethnicity

uch tools of social control as forms
 tilingualism designed to reverse the
 n only Afrikaans and English were
 he linguistic differences within each
 e." In African language communi-
 es between the official "standard"
 is actually used and spoken—as is
 liarily African, however, is that the
 guage used in practice "constitutes
 tle movement across the divide. A
 rely valued, and language must be

se African languages were not con-
 nt the communicative practices of
 een language praxis and standard
 ard," particularly in written form,
 the nineteenth century. In the case
 e of the disjuncture is so great that
 ther tongue education. Standard
 languages in the homes and play-
 y in urban areas. A majority of
 tandardized versions of the official

African languages and urban argots which draw heavily and freely on English, Afrikaans, and "non-official" African languages. The extent to which they draw on Afrikaans and English, however, varies depending on the social status and gender of the speaker. Women's speech draws more heavily on English as a marker of femininity, social class, and urbanity while male speech relies more heavily on Afrikaans, which is a marker of male urbanity (Cook 2002).

The African languages listed in the South African Constitution and those frequently cited in the literature on African sociolinguistics reinforce the boundaries which were arbitrarily drawn by missionaries and subsequently awarded academic credibility through grammatical descriptions of Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, and other "indigenous" South African languages. The framers of the South African Constitution have, unwittingly, perpetrated the misclassification of old and given it renewed credibility. The legacy of misclassification will be felt well into the twenty-first century unless serious sociolinguistic and political efforts are made to contain the mistakes of history.

Misclassification overlooks the great diversity within each of the distinct language labels, as can be easily illustrated through the case of one of the languages officially recognized in the South African Constitution: Xhosa. As with many other languages, Xhosa has several spoken varieties. It is said to be made up of such varieties as Ngqika, Thembu, Hlubi, Bhaca, Bomvana, Mpondo, Mpondomise, and others (Satyo 2000). Speakers of Hlubi and Bhaca from the Eastern Cape may experience problems with the standard Xhosa represented in textbooks. The written representation of African speech forms has historically run parallel to, but rarely intersected with, the daily language practices of most speakers of those languages. In fact, there seems to be a deliberate effort on the part of some speakers, particularly the youth, to distance themselves from the standard (Satyo 2001), which is rarely anybody's mother tongue.

There is such great diversity within some of the African language "boxes" that no dialect has successfully served as a standard. This should not be construed as an argument against the role of standard languages. Rather, it is an argument against the processes which formed the basis of the standardization of these languages in the first place. The selection of a specific dialect to serve as the basis of the standard language, the conventional procedure in most communities (Pennycook 1994), has been unsuccessful in the case of most African languages. The problem is so acute that it undermines any serious effort toward mother tongue education. For example, non-standard Zulu is so radically different from what is characterized as "Zulu" in urban settings that speakers who sociolinguistically feel affiliated with Zulu ethnically, or are administratively classified as "Zulu," may feel alienated, and their linguistic creativity may be stifled by the language assigned to them as their "mother tongue." The situation is not peculiar to Zulu. Cook (2002) provides evidence which suggests that most students from Tswana-speaking homes usually require remedial instruction in the form of the language assigned to them. This state of affairs results from the fact that the "mother tongue" assigned to students for educational purposes may not correspond with

the language in which the learners are bilingual and multidialectal, proficient in rural and urban argots, but not in the reified standard language. For example, the standard language as the written basis of most language education has remained unchanged since 1937.

They can mean very different things when used for the real world. It is a relative concept depending on whether one is talking institutionally or informally. Because of the disjuncture between the mother tongue, mother tongue education, and the language because the speakers are acquired by the dominant society. As a result of misclassification, it may only disadvantage the very people it is intended to help. Lacking the necessary educational support and resources, the implications that they were learning in a

gap between classification of mother tongue education based on institutional criteria has not been met by the native speaker (Davies 1999). It is the underlying conceptions of mother tongue, mother tongue education. Shifting images of mother tongue education whose direction we have to reverently

languages created in historically dubious circumstances. Their African linguistic apprentices are not always successful facts and become permanent socio-cultural landscape is imagined. The image is of language boxes and linguistic "things," counter to the lived and living experiential speech forms. According to Satyo (2001), the urban centers in South Africa is strongly identified with urban youth, somewhat akin to the urban Xhosa youth is a form of language education. Innovative strategies for harmonizing these youth build a pan-ethnic, urban language forms sharply contrast with standard languages which the forms seek to convey. The language and is used to evoke a sense of urban identity in rural areas by speakers emphasize an urban identity, as aptly captured in the title of Cook's "Urban setting" (2002). Cook demonstrates the concept of an urban identity, or who emulate the language forms associated with

urbanity. It is speech which is thought of not as "a language," but as linguistic forms with a "range of expressive inventories that not only enable people to communicate with each other, but allow people to communicate something about themselves to the world" (Cook 2002: 110).

The pan-ethnic, urban, hybridized linguistic forms contain lexical items which are an "embodiment" of linguistic information drawn from different languages. These pan-ethnic varieties are excellent examples of "lexical pastiche" which try to capture the nuances of social relationships by exploiting the social, historical, and political associations of words (Myers-Scotton 1993; Childs 1997; Satyo 2001). For example:

- 1 *Tsotsitaal* is a combination of *utsotsi*, Xhosa for "criminal," as in most other Bantu languages, and *taal* from Afrikaans, referring to a language. Thus, *tsotsitaal* literally refers to "speaking the language of criminals."
- 2 *Imkasi* means "Black township"; the word is a recycled form of the Afrikaans word *lokasie*, with a Xhosa prefix.
- 3 *Abantwana ijive* refers to treating girls like children (unlike boys who are taken seriously), from Xhosa *abantwana*, which means "children," and *ijive*, meaning lacking in seriousness, probably from the English word *jive*, itself thought to be derived from West African Wolof, *jev*, entering English through the speech of American slaves. The implication of *abantwana ijive* is that all one can do with girls is engage in trivial matters.

Such linguistic forms and the processes that generate these forms reflect language harmonization developing organically from the grassroots, with neither respect for nor allegiance to typological distinctions characteristic of most linguistically inclined discourses about African speech. But the phenomenon is not peculiar to Southern Africa; linguists have drawn attention to its existence in other parts of Africa, for example in Central Africa. Goyvaerts (1996) presents language data from this region reflecting words comprised of constituents from four different languages: Swahili, Lingala, English, and French—e.g. *Mi iouink ki ndozala* (I am on my way to the market); *mi*, from Swahili *mimi*, *gouink*, from English *go/going*, *ki*, from French *qui*, and *ndozala*, from Lingala *zando*, market.

The version of multilingualism implicit in the South African Constitution is one best described as plural monolingualism: a variant and an extension of monolingualism. Instead of South Africans being encouraged to be multilingual, the policy could actually end up making each citizen merely competent in his/her own language. That is, since all the country's languages are officially recognized, all one need do is become competent in the standard version of his/her own language. The South African language policy should have specified only two or three African languages as official languages, a decision which would have been relatively easy to arrive at through a reconceptualization of "language." However, to propose official status for nine so-called "indigenous" African languages is to reaffirm the separateness of Black South African ethnic

paration, linguistically and ethnically, nment is, paradoxically, proposing a n government could not successfully ed areas, the most well-known being Six in Cape Town, the apartheid gov- mately unsuccessful—lengths to keep

s in industrialized areas led to an ke different Bantu languages in gs, and other situations. The folly arate was exposed as a shameful as nothing to be gained for the exclusive spaces]. Apartheid suc- whites, because an overwhelming eparation. The honesty of the capegoat for what the English- and supported.

(Maake 1994: 113)

the South African national language messiness") is a direct consequence of promote. The policy itself is, in effect, vailing sociolinguistic condition. Con- nial scholars alike (e.g. Desai 1994; tional language policy, I contend that lem posed by implementation because ic realities which any language policy rest that a productive way out of this se is to institute a program to *disinvent* g the notions of language and ethnicity cy is founded. Notions about language ution are founded on "boxed" notions ceable to eighteenth-century German g, constructions of race, and concept- d indivisible. According to German icity were indistinguishable, with lan- index of social identity. According to ritory, you would, for instance, be said y. That is, because you were affiliated u were, as a result, considered to be a e who feels affiliated with Zulu ethn- contradiction within the framework of German Romanticist thought.

The disinvention proposal calls attention to the importance of reflecting on our tools of analysis and on the significant realization that linguists and non-linguists may be using terms differently. For example, one possible way of conceptualizing African speech forms is to think of them as constituting a continuum "stretching across Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean" (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985). The notion of a language continuum does not deny that there are differences among language forms at the extreme ends of the continuum, for example Yoruba on the West Coast and Xhosa in the South. However, a conceptualization of African speech forms as comprising a continuum suggests that the notion of "African lingua franca" may be best envisaged not as a

single language but as a multilayered and partially connected chain, that offers a choice of varieties and registers in the speakers' immediate environment, and a steadily diminishing set of options to be employed in more distant interactions, albeit a set that is always liable to be reconnected more densely to a new environment by rapid secondary learning, or by the development of new languages.

(Fardon and Furniss 1994: 4)

The perspective of imagining African languages as "multilayered and interconnected chains" is radically different from that which forms the basis of early missionary thought, and it is a perspective that can be supported empirically. For example, the relationship between Zulu and Xhosa is one not only of mutual intelligibility but also of interconnectedness. Words which are regarded as non-standard and are thus excluded from standard Xhosa appear in hlonipha and isikhwetha. Hlonipha and isikhwetha are special types of registers associated, respectively, with married women and young men in Xhosa. Hlonipha is a language variety used by recently married women, and isikhwetha is the type of language variety typically used by young men during circumcision. Similarly, words which are stigmatized as part of standard Zulu are acceptable when they enter Xhosa lexical usage through the specialized varieties of hlonipha and isikhweta (Satyo 1998).

The missionaries created languages which were describable as mutually exclusive boxes as opposed to interconnected patterns. In fact, the very notion of languages as discrete units, or "boxes," is a product of European positivism reinforced by literacy and standardization (Romaine 1984). Discussions about African vernaculars are as much about specific ways of imagining the African sociolinguistic landscape as they are about description. In this regard, it is only now that the full implication of the work of missionaries is beginning to dawn on us.

In countries in which the vast majority of the people are not literate, in the Western sense of the term, consciousness of languages as discrete boxes is likely to be alien. The "misinvention" of African languages had clear political

forms of social relations, not only between
ing Africans themselves. Hofmeyer argues
f the presence of missionaries to articulate
al systems:

thin the royal caste itself . . . there
ainst the ruling lineage. The dissatis-
into a loose association with mission-
and its schools which used a lot of
ction.

(Hofmeyer 1993: 48)

created in the process of specifying and
ed to limit what could be said "about,"
Mühlhäuser 1996). The construction of
strict not only the universe of discourse
s but also the participation of Africans in
s construction of African languages has
he major objective of missionary linguis-
ogy in the missionaries' own terms, and
cess were included in the vernacular lan-
udgment on the societies in which they
monstrates that Africans who preferred
her than work in the missionaries' trans-
" and "dishonest" because they did not
ploitation as cheap colonial labor.

inary era were structured in such a way
e European epistemology about them-
current affairs and superimposing new
educated African elite became alienated
anguages of those communities—hence
vernacular use and the promotion of
on sense of belonging can be created,
perialism counteracted. Indeed the oppo-
anguages that were "cobbled together"
ntinues the separation of the people on
e-and-rule tactics of old and serves con-
us the framers of the South African
rom the past they are seeking to chal-
It is therefore appropriate to sound a

pressure on language. The new must
ocial presence must be negotiated

for it. However, the commanders of the new social space are often heirs
both, unwittingly, to the discourses which maintained the old, and to
those which prepared the way for their political success. The discourses
which maintained the old embody the values of an order which has not
yet gone and which may yet stage a comeback.

(Ridge 2001: 16)

It is not only that the current language policy of the South African Constitution
reinforces the attitudes and practices of the missionary past. More significantly,
in the context of this chapter, it reflects a present-day sociolinguistic orthodoxy.
Consider the case of code-switching. Most sociolinguistic research on code-
switching is premised on the assumption that speakers code-switch naturally
from the different languages which they control. So, for example, a speaker who
mixes English, Afrikaans, and African languages is assumed to have the ability to
use English, Afrikaans, and African languages in their "unmixed" forms as separ-
ate codes. It is a logical inference, but unfortunately it is inaccurate and cannot
be supported by the evidence from the sociolinguistic situation of urban African
settings. In these urban centers the "mixed" forms are themselves the linguistic
norm, the starting point in the process of language socialization for most people,
and at times the only version of language for everyday encounters. Most people
only encounter the "unmixed" speech as part of the formal process of education.
The uneducated speakers may never have encountered the languages in their
"unmixed" state. Thus the speakers cannot be said to have the capacity to speak
languages which they do not control, may never have controlled, and are
unlikely to get exposed to unless they get formally educated! It is relatively easy
to understand the conceptual mistake made by the analysts of code-switching.
Because they themselves may control English, Afrikaans, and African languages
as separate codes, they assume that the speakers using the "mixed" forms are
combining these three languages. What the analysts are overlooking is that their
sociolinguistic autobiographies are very different from those of the people they
are analyzing.

Because the sociolinguistic evidence suggests that mixtures resulting from the
interconnected nature of language are indeed a defining part of the sociolinguistic
situation, it is therefore possible that we are placing emphasis on and studying
the wrong phenomenon. The area which needs urgent analysis is one in which
attempts at linguistic "unmixing" or "uncoupling" take place. The metaphors
we need to create are those which can capture the faltering nature of linguistic
"uncoupling," particularly in mother tongue education, which is generally
premiered upon assumptions about discrete codes. "Uncoupling" refers to a pro-
cess whereby a speaker expunges words by manipulating phonological rules that
are supposedly not part of the language the speaker is using. For example:

- 1 Standard Swati: *Indvodza iye edolobheni ekuseni.* (The man has gone to town).

eni kusasa. (The man has gone to

eni ekuseni. (The man has gone to

to town." A child ethnically classi-
Indoda iye edolobheni kusasa will be
 not speaking "pure" siSwati (as stan-
 ding referred to, even in educational
 dard Xhosa and Zulu instead of *ind-*
oda iye edolobheni kusasa will be said to
s kusasa instead of *ekuseni*. The child's
 even though it is correct Standard

plies to the African situation is not
 the main strength of the "frontier"
 ers and works on the basis of inter-
 struct forming the basis of notions
 stitution. Conceiving of language as
 k about the number of languages a
 about language repertoires or work-
). Language as "frontier" is more
 ion. Frequency of interaction could
 other in their repertoire, in the reper-
 eanings they attach to each selection

ted patterns and scrambled systems
 the overwhelming hold of the past.
 ated by the South African Constitu-
 n contemporary form. The traces of
 usual because all constitutions retain
 formulated. The language provision
 tion is written in what Ridge calls
 deeply encoded and captures the end
 shift away from clear directions for-
 lted ideals as if beyond the claims of
 ptic discourse" (Ridge 2000: 47).

the Pan South African Language
 of "apocalyptic discourse." The tri-
 ALB is in sharp conflict with the
 f the chapter delineating Founding
 is placed in a difficult position in
 easonably be expected to meet. It is
 s commonly used by communities in

South Africa"—an open-ended list which cites eight languages over the fifteen already specified, and as if that were not enough, all languages used for religious purposes—three are mentioned. PANSALB is charged, at the highest level, with a task which is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

The other responsibilities placed upon PANSALB make very little sense in the real world. For example, Richterweld Nama is the only existing Khoi language. There are fewer than ten people who are speakers of San language. There are about 70,000 speakers of Italian and less than 800 speakers of Telegu. However, it is the latter that is mentioned in the Constitution. An apocalyptic discourse, which sets forth a perfect, ideal condition without suggesting any practical ways in which the historical processes can be realized, is a paradox. What is required is an articulation with the real world, not an apocalyptic vision, not proposals based on historical accident or concepts inapplicable to the African situation, but locally specific solutions. Such locally specific solutions may be constructed, I suggest, through the notion of *disinvention*.

Disinvention does not mean a return to arcane forms of African language speak. It is a serious effort to capture current language practices, which are generally pan-ethnic in nature—hence, which cut across conceptualizations about language/society/ethnicity affiliation implicit in the South African Constitution. Disinvention is a prerequisite to capturing the role and forms of African languages as interconnected patterns and moves away from notions of languages as boxes or discrete items. This can be realized through detailed descriptions of current language practices. These descriptions would be useful not only for disinventing African speech forms, hence constraining the legacy of nineteenth-century positivism, but also for facilitating the new roles created for African language speech forms by the Constitution.

The advantages of disinvention would not be limited to the Constitutional arena, but would extend to education as well. Most learners of African languages, mother tongue and second languages alike, find themselves confronted with a sharp divide between the official language, as embodied in current written texts, and the speech used in the everyday drama of life, moment by moment, situation by situation. One of the serious drawbacks apparent in any serious engagement with local speech communities is the limited amount of material for fostering literacy in the so-called African languages. A shift away from African languages as discrete boxes to interconnected hybridized forms would make it possible to produce a set of materials based on the same orthographic system. An orthographic commons would serve not only South Africa but also Southern Africa.

The disinvention project foregrounds the importance of retaining distinctions between standardized "indigenous" languages, non-standardized languages, and urban argots. The distinction can be made along a number of lines. The first one is historical. "Indigenous" languages were to some extent the creation and invention of missionaries using and interpreting data from their African apprentices. Non-standard and urban hybrids are more contemporary linguistic forms,

Indigenous" languages are currently
 and urban argots that some of the
 the African sociolinguistic landscape
 forms also vary by gender and reflect
 ographies of their users. Illustrative
 rded and analyzed by Cook (2002:
 taken from a conversation between
 who are socializing and flirting with
 2 captures a conversational moment
 al excerpts reflect a fair amount of
 ntional ways.

Transcript 1

abuti Popompo! Ga waa apara bine
 ompo, brother Popompo! You're

ereka yang waitse? (Hey! I don't
)

aming mare o ntsoore o patagantse.

ou keep saying you're struggling.)

othing like that.)

here is meat.)

is there meat?)

eat is there, man.)

s and . . .)

n there.)

place?)

, you're lying, you're lying.)

ba Dolphina. (Because if you're

ws heavily on Afrikaans and African
 s is often regarded as the language
 guage of urban male youth, such as
 on above, shows that Afrikaans, the
 ed as a marker of urbanity.

Transcript 2

ba ba sa existeng. E? e a re bueng

ka batho. (No, don't talk about those people, people who don't exist. No,
 let's talk about real people.)

Masengo Nna, waiste ke eng? Ka re bathing ke mo rata gore . . . (Me, you know
 what? I say, you guys, I really like him . . .)

Wendy Ka re ga se go soGelwa lebatho ga re tswa contesting phakela, iyo. (I'm
 saying I was provoked by people when we came from the contest in the
 morning, yo!)

Dineo E? esa e bua eo. Waitsore keeng tsala ya me? Ke nako e eke buang ka
 yona, ga ke jouke bathing. O ko s'petlele. Ga se go robeng fela looto. (No,
 don't say that. You know what it is, my friend? It's that time, I'm talking
 about. I'm not kidding. He's in the hospital. He broke his leg.)

Wendy Ka re ka soGelwa tsheng'wa ke batho, ba mpolet'la gore, bampole'la
 gore ka a ba spitlela mare ke tawa. Thlabane suo fer, ke hirile fo Phokeng
 mare ka ba spitela. (I'm saying I'm being provoked and laughed at by
 people, they told me, they told . . . I ignore them, but I came from Thla-
 bane so far, I'm renting in Phokeng, but I reject them.)

Dineo Ba re nn'a ke pila. Leshambola le le tshwanang le nna e be ba tloo re nna
 ke pila, huu, waitse ba mborile waitse. (They said I'm not beautiful. Looking
 like I look, how can they say I'm not beautiful, when, you know they bore
 me.)

In the women's conversational excerpt, the salient aspects of the mixing are
 English words such as *joke*, *contest*, *exist*. If one looks at the entire conversation, it
 can be seen that some words occur quite frequently, such as the modification of
bore to *mborile*. The Afrikaans speech forms can be grouped into two categories:
 conventional borrowings, such as *s'petlele* (hospital), and more stylized code-
 switching, such as *suo ver* (so far). As in the excerpt from Transcript 1, words
 drawn from other African languages (*pila*, *leshammbola*) appear as well, but are
 not used as frequently.

Differences between standard and non-standard language systems are also
 evident at a syntactic level with an increased use of non-standard syntactic fea-
 tures even in the written standard. Consider the noun class system in Xhosa.
 According to descriptions of Xhosa, concordial agreement (between a noun and
 its assigned prefix) is the core of Xhosa. Descriptions of Xhosa dating to the ear-
 liest grammar by Casalis (1841) present the rule of concordial agreement as
 categorical, but in language practice the rule is variable. The difference between
 the noun-prefix agreement system in actual use and the idealized descriptions of
 standard/standardized Xhosa can be illustrated by the sentences below from the
 writing of educated Xhosa users (cited in Satyo 1998). (The *s* in parentheses
 after each noun indicates the noun class to which the noun belongs.)

- 1 Ulwimi (11) lithi lincede (5) ke nomtu ukuba azi ukuba yena ngowasiphi na
 isiwe—You can identify a person's nationality by the language he/she
 speaks.

ba ulwimi (11) lakubo . . . (5) livelise (5)
 babo batheba elo (5) lwimi (11)—He/she
 language . . . his/her language will also

e (5) kwaphela kwilwimi ezininzi—Gen-
 other languages.
 le have their own languages.

Conclusion

Arbitrary language has always been an arbitrary selection is not an argument against such a selection. The current mapping of the landscape differently. The current selection on the arbitrary selection. In Southern Africa—missionaries and colonial institutions—have their own convenience and without any languages being specified. In this respect, African “languages” are analogous to colonial powers in disregard of ethnic and linguistic boundaries. The current selection of disinvention is to undo history, or inventing languages so that when they are selected they are only to actual linguistic boundaries. Ultimately to do away with the concept of separate languages are socially constructed and so can be

The current selection project will be confronting the current language “purity” in South Africa in a way that is equated with moral purity. Speakers of African languages are regarded as morally irreverent because they are morally suspect because they are indeed the norm of ordinary

to be one of the most powerful agents of change. Radio, television, popular magazines, newspapers and disinventing African languages. The current selection, combines a wide range of languages, to effectively communicate its message. Current television draw heavily on the pan-African experiences of speakers, as is evident in the current selection (simunye, Swati for “We are one”), current generations, and Egoli (gold). In a very real sense the powerful role of urban hybrids and the current selection sanctioned as media of instruction in

teaching/learning, these *linguae francae* may resolve the educational problems which standard African languages are now causing in South African schools. Not only does this urban, hybridized speech reflect the sociolinguistic practices of students; local teachers are also expert in this *lingua franca*.

The past and its legacy in South Africa, as in other societies in transition, cannot be changed by using the same modes of thought which produced it. Change requires new thought and new ways, linguistically, of conceptualizing the problem. As Brink puts it:

The past cannot be corrected by bringing to it the procedures and mechanisms and mind-sets that originally produced our very perception of it. After all, it is not the past as such that has produced the present or poses the conditions for the future . . . but the way we think about it. Or even more pertinently, the way in which we deal with it in language.

(Brink 1998: 23)

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