



CHOICE OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

The following factors need to be considered when specific African languages are selected for development as academic and administrative languages for the University of Johannesburg:

1. the language situation in the country (the total number of speakers of the individual languages);
2. the language situation in the province (the number of speakers of the individual languages in the province);
3. language planning guidelines for the Gauteng Province;
4. languages identified by the Gauteng legislature as the languages to be used in the province for official purposes;
5. the recommendations in the Ministerial Committee's report: *The development of indigenous African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education*;
6. the language profile of students at the University of Johannesburg;
7. the current offering of African languages as subjects (which can be developed as languages of teaching and languages of common use);
8. available expertise at the University;
9. practical African language courses offered by the University;
10. financial considerations;
11. the strategic importance of the choice of Sesotho sa Leboa and IsiZulu.

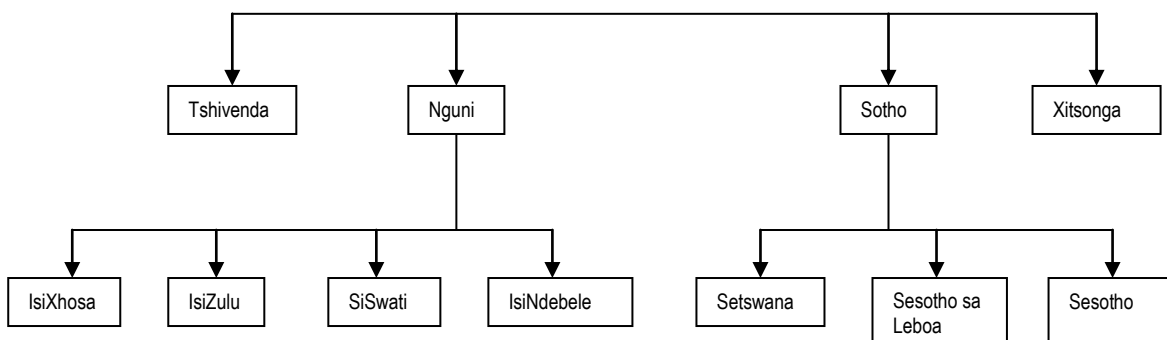
These factors are subsequently discussed chronologically.

1. The language situation in the country

The following table indicates the first-language speakers (L1) of the languages of South Africa as a percentage of the total population of the country (2001 census).

Language	Percentage of population
IsiZulu	23,8
IsiXhosa	17,6
Afrikaans	13,3
Sesotho sa Leboa	9,4
Setswana	8,2
English	8,2
Sesotho	7,9
Xitsonga	4,4
SiSwati	2,7
Tshivenda	2,3
IsiNdebele	1,6
Other languages	0,5

The inter-relationship between African languages is also relevant. They can be divided into two main groups, namely the Nguni and Sotho groups, with Xitsonga and Tshivenda related to neither group. The Nguni group includes Southern Ndebele (IsiNdebele), Swazi (SiSwati), Xhosa (IsiXhosa) and Zulu (IsiZulu). The Sotho group includes Southern Sotho (Sesotho), Tswana (Setswana) and Sesotho sa Leboa (Northern Sotho). This relationship is depicted in the scheme below:



The four Nguni languages and the three Sotho languages are closely related within their respective groups and the mutual comprehensibility among the speakers of the languages within each of the groups is good. It is therefore acceptable practice to select one Nguni language and one Sotho language as being representative of the respective two language groups, if financial considerations should constrain the building up of the individual languages.

2. The language situation in the province

The following table indicates the number of L1 speakers in the Gauteng Province (2001 census).

Language	Number	Percentage
IsiZulu	1 902 026	21,50
Afrikaans	1 269 177	14,40
Sesotho	1 159 587	13,10
English	1 105 192	12,50
Sesotho sa Leboa	945 657	10,70
Setswana	741 218	8,39
IsiXhosa	671 046	7,60
Xitsonga	505 379	5,70
IsiNdebele	171 019	1,90
Tshivenda	154 184	1,80
SiSwati	122 560	1,40
Other languages	90 134	1,00

3. Language planning guidelines for Gauteng

The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) has confirmed on enquiry that the languages identified for Gauteng are Afrikaans, English, IsiZulu and Sesotho sa Leboa, in alphabetical order.

4. Languages identified by the Gauteng legislature

The Gauteng legislature has confirmed on enquiry that the languages it has identified for official languages in this province are Afrikaans, English, Sesotho sa Leboa and IsiZulu.

5. The recommendations of the Ministerial Committee

The recommendations in the report entitled *The development of indigenous African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education* boil down to the fact that each university has to select an African language for this purpose. In regions in which both the Nguni and Sotho languages are strongly represented, universities could consider selecting one Nguni language and one Sotho language for specific development. Given the situation in Gauteng, the University could therefore identify an Nguni language and a Sotho language for specific development. The Committee's ultimate recommendation on the specific languages that ought to be developed by particular universities is reflected below.

	Sesotho sa Leboa	Isi-Ndebele	Sesotho	SiSwati	Xi-tsonga	Se-tswana	Tshi-venda	IsiXhosa	IsiZulu
Fort Hare								✓	
Johannesburg	✓								✓
Cape Town			✓					✓	
KwaZulu-Natal									✓
Nelson Mandela MU								✓	
North	✓				✓		✓		
North-West						✓			✓
Pretoria	✓	✓				✓			
Rhodes								✓	
Stellenbosch			✓					✓	
Unisa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Venda	✓				✓		✓		
Free State			✓					✓	
Western Cape								✓	
Wits			✓						✓
Zululand				✓					✓
Total	5	2	5	2	3	3	3	8	6

After the Council for Higher Education had submitted its proposal on a language policy framework for higher education in South Africa to the Minister of Education in July 2001, Prof G.J. Gerwel was invited to establish a committee for advising the Minister on ways in which Afrikaans “can be assured of continued long-term maintenance, growth and development as a language of science and scholarship in the higher education system without non-Afrikaans speakers being unfairly denied access within the system”.

The former Afrikaans-medium institutions changed over voluntarily and without additional funding to parallel or dual-medium teaching, principally as a result of the change in student profile. In the Language Policy for Higher Education, the position of Afrikaans as a language of science is described as follows:

The Ministry acknowledges that Afrikaans as a language of scholarship and science is a national resource. It, therefore, fully supports the retention of Afrikaans as a medium of academic expression and communication in higher education and is committed to ensuring that the capacity of Afrikaans to function as such a medium is not eroded.

In spite of the Gerwel Committee’s recommendation that the (then) Potchefstroom University and the University of Stellenbosch had to see to the sustainability of Afrikaans in higher education, the Minister agreed that the responsibility for maintaining and expanding Afrikaans as a language of science had to be assigned not only to these two universities. All former Afrikaans-medium universities had, however, to take measures to ensure that Afrikaans would not become an exclusion mechanism for prospective students. Against this background, Afrikaans was retained as a language of teaching at the then RAU – next to English, which had been introduced to best serve the increasing student corps who preferred English-medium teaching. If Afrikaans is taken into account as another one of the languages that have been assigned to specific universities in order to be developed as a language of science, the table above can be revised in the following way:

	Sesotho sa Leboa	Isi-Ndebele	Sesotho	SiSwati	Xi-tsonga	Se-tswana	Tshi-venda	IsiXhosa	IsiZulu	Afrikaans
Fort Hare								✓		
Johannesburg	✓								✓	✓
Cape Town			✓					✓		
KwaZulu-Natal									✓	
Nelson Mandela MU								✓		
North	✓				✓		✓			
North-West						✓			✓	✓
Pretoria	✓	✓				✓				✓
Rhodes								✓		
Stellenbosch			✓					✓		✓
Unisa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Venda	✓				✓		✓			
Free State			✓					✓		✓
Western Cape								✓		
Wits			✓						✓	
Zululand				✓					✓	
Total	5	2	5	2	3	3	3	8	6	5

6. The language profile of the students at the UJ

Regarding the selection of an Nguni language, IsiZulu appears to be the most obvious choice for the number of first-language speakers at the University. There are 4 328 IsiZulu L1 students, compared to 1 121 IsiXhosa L1 students, 426 SiSwati L1 students and 189 IsiNdebele L1 students (June 2005, with inclusion of all campuses).

The full statistics appear below. The languages listed here are Afrikaans (and Afrikaans/English), English, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu, because they are the languages that may be at issue in a choice for specific language development.

English	17 947
Afrikaans (and Afrikaans/English)	7 900
IsiZulu	4 328
Setswana	2 875
Sesotho sa Leboa	2 766
Sesotho	1 819
IsiXhosa	1 121

7. The current offering of African languages as subjects at the University

Before the incorporation of the former Vista campuses, RAU had offered Sesotho sa Leboa and IsiZulu as subjects. At the East Rand Campus of Vista, Sesotho sa Leboa, Xitsonga, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu had been offered as subjects. Sesotho, Setswana and IsiZulu had been offered on the Soweto Campus. At present, the merged University of Johannesburg therefore offers the following African languages: Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu. (Xitsonga is not taken into account, since 2005 is the last year in which it is to be offered as a subject.)

8. The availability of expertise at the UJ

The allocation of staff in the Department of African Languages according to languages offered is set out in the following table:

Staff	Language				
	Sesotho sa Leboa	Sesotho	Setswana	IsiXhosa	IsiZulu
Chapole, S.		✓			
Groenewald, M.					✓
Kgopa, M.	✓				
Khoali, H.			✓		
Kock, J.	✓				
* Madi, S.					*✓
**Manyaka, J.			**✓		
**Mngadi, P.					**✓
Mokgathi, R.	✓				
Mtumane, Z.				✓	
Posthumus, L.					✓
Pretorius, W.	✓				

* Ms Madi is a contract appointment.

** Drs Manyaka and Mngadi are Campus Heads at Soweto and East Rand Campuses respectively. Their academic involvement in the Department is consequently limited.

9. Practical African Language courses offered at the University

Sesotho sa Leboa and IsiZulu practical language courses were offered on the former RAU Campus (and also to private concerns). Because the former RAU had offered separate language courses for mother-tongue and non-mother-tongue speakers from 1996, the staff on APK have, in this way, gained experience in the development and offering of an African language as L2/L3.

10. Financial concerns

The number of African languages that are identified for development will have financial implications for the University. Although the government has indicated that funds will be allocated for the development of African languages as teaching languages at higher education level, one cannot rely entirely on this: therefore, the

financial implications of such an undertaking will have to be considered carefully. The University should therefore earmark one African language, or two languages at most, for development.

11. The strategic importance of developing Sesotho sa Leboa and IsiZulu

The development of an Nguni and a Sotho language as languages of common use and as mediums of communication at the University is not only of strategic importance, but it is also a moral and educational necessity. The University should therefore commit itself to developing these languages as languages of teaching, as well as to using them as instruments for ensuring student recruitment and student retention.

CONCLUSION: A CHOICE BASED ON THE ABOVE FACTORS

The application of the above factors leads ineluctably to the identification of IsiZulu as the Nguni language that should be chosen for specific development at the University. Regarding the Sotho languages, factors favour Sesotho sa Leboa as the Sotho language that should be earmarked for development (although there are slightly more Sesotho than Sesotho sa Leboa speakers in the province and slightly more Setswana speakers than Sesotho sa Leboa speakers are enrolled at the University). PanSALB's language choice for the province, as well as the choices of the Metropolitan Municipality of the City of Johannesburg and that of the legislature, the guidelines of the Ministerial Committee and the availability of expertise within the University are the vital considerations for choosing Sesotho sa Leboa as the language within the Sotho group that should be earmarked for development.

The University's Management has declared its full support for the development of Sesotho sa Leboa and IsiZulu alongside English and Afrikaans. In the words of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Ihron Rensburg, "the language policy of the University of Johannesburg is one of inclusion rather than exclusion".

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