

*Tailoring EAP materials to the English Second Language needs of tertiary students
from multilingual indigenous backgrounds*

R.V. McCabe

University of Limpopo

rosem@ul.ac.za

Introduction

This paper focuses on teacher-prepared, “in-house” materials tailored to answer the English needs of a specific multilingual audience, namely, University of Limpopo (UniLim) multilingual students. These students come from various faculties and need English for their diverse academic courses. The two modules offer English for Academic Purposes or also termed Academic Literacy. However, while they need English for their studies and their future careers, their own indigenous languages need to be promoted to prevent their becoming extinct, as well as “to restore enduring legitimacy and dignity to our indigenous languages” (Ministerial Committee Report 2005:5). The indigenous languages of South Africa (SA) must therefore be promoted as cultural¹ (Bourdieu 1986) and linguistic capital² (Galindo 1997). This involves encouraging bilingualism and multilingualism in the institutions of higher education, even in the English classroom.

Contextualisation of the Students

The Limpopo Province, with its capital, Polokwane, is one of the poorest yet most populous (around 5 million) of all the Provinces in South Africa (SA). It comprises just over 10 percent of South Africa’s total area (*Limpopo Leader* 2005:9). It represents the amalgamation of four of the previous homeland governments, Venda, Lebowa, Gazankulu and South Africa, and now incorporates all. Its campus post office, for instance, is named for the Sotho, Venda, and Gazankulu people it serves, Sovenga. The Turfloop Campus of the University of Limpopo, 30 km to the east of Polokwane, is the largest tertiary institution in Limpopo. It serves more than six million people, 98 percent of whom are black. The students registered for the English service course to be investigated (ENGL131 and ENGL132) are mainly African students from the above-mentioned language groups. The languages spoken are Tshivenda, SeSotho, Sepedi, Xitsonga, the major indigenous

¹ **Cultural capital:** forms of knowledge; skill; education; any advantages a person has which give them a higher status in society, including high expectations. Parents provide children with cultural capital, the attitudes and knowledge that makes the educational system a comfortable familiar place in which they can succeed easily (Bourdieu 1986, 1991)

² Linguistic capital: the manner in which a given language or communicative practice, such as bilingualism can function as a symbolic asset that gives value to its speakers by bringing recognition to the use of two languages as a legitimate, important and worthwhile manner of communication (Galindo 1997: 7).

language being Sesotho sa Lebowa (Northern Sotho distinguished from Southern Sotho). (South Africa has 11 official languages: English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.)

The Province, mostly occupied with deep rural farming activities and mining, covers an area larger than England and Scotland put together. Approximately 14 percent of South Africa's population lives there; and just under 90 percent of Limpopo's population live in rural areas (*Limpopo Leader* 2005: 9; Internet: www.ul.ac.za accessed 21 March 2005). Most of the students taking English attended rural schools (and frequently in very large classes). These background factors influence their English proficiency and therefore the departmental (i.e. Department of English Studies, UniLim) decisions relating to the design and content of the ENGL131 and ENGL132 modules and their materials.

The role of English

Communication in English is integral to everyday life in South Africa. English is used in the fields of economics (jobs), politics (as a lingua franca between multilingual participants), and technology (computers and e-mail). At the tertiary level students need a reasonable to very good proficiency in English because

- The jobs for which graduates wish to apply will require oral and written proficiency in English;
- Textbooks continue to play a central role in the South African classrooms and the textbooks used in the content subjects offered at higher education institutions are in English;
- globalisation has increased our contact with people who have mother tongues other than English but who use English as a lingua franca in trade negotiations;
- by 2002 there were approximately 450 million Internet users, which brought about more contact and an increase in information in English - and the numbers are growing;
- there is a burgeoning English-learning industry (in Delhi alone it is a \$100 million-per-year business, and China's 'English fever' has grown to "epidemic proportions because of the country's accession and the coming 2008 Olympics" (*Newsweek* 2005)). This indicates that English will still be important for years to come both in higher education and the workplace.

(It is the impact of the above factors that unfortunately also impact negatively on our indigenous languages)

Promoting the Indigenous Languages

While English is necessary as an oral and written communication tool, the indigenous languages may not be ignored since this would impoverish the country and all its peoples – ‘South Africanness’ is reflected in its peoples’ vibrant diversity of culture and language. South Africa is in the midst of transformation and great change, which means the ever-changing character of our world (and the micro-world of UniLim) requires the development of a certain “sensitivity and flexibility to change” (Martin & Nakayama 2004: xxvii) in our approach to education. Our UniLim students have SePedi, Tshivenda, Xitsonga or Shangaan as their primary language. The status of the indigenous languages in relation to English, the past dominance of English and Afrikaans, and our history of apartheid means that we must consider an approach to the teaching of English which is not detrimental to our indigenous languages.

Until recently the medium of instruction (language of learning and teaching – LOLT) policy for schools in SA has been mother-tongue instruction in the first five years with a transition to English thereafter. However, early mother-tongue education combined with an impoverished curriculum in the Bantu Education system has led to a low English proficiency (Heugh 1995:43). An amendment to the 1979 Act was tabled in Parliament in 1991 and made provision for parents to choose the medium of instruction for their children in Department of Education and Training (Department of Bantu Education renamed) schools from the beginning of 1993. However, no infrastructure was put in place to effect any significant change and so the status quo prevailed (Heugh 1995:43). In May, this year, our Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, addressed concerns about the distortion by the press of how the new language-in-education policy was interpreted. She stated (Parliamentary Budget Address 2005) that

It [the new policy] opens up the possibility of developing the other official languages into languages of learning and teaching. Clearly while we work to achieve this noble objective, the current choice of English and Afrikaans as the languages of learning and teaching will remain. In the past, before 1998, pupils were locked into a system that privileged Afrikaans and English for those in search of a matric endorsement. That is now no longer true and all languages will now be equally available as subject choices.

Although our objective as English educators at the tertiary level is to produce students who are sufficiently proficient in English to cope with and succeed in their tertiary studies, as well as be competent English communicators (both in spoken and written English) in the workplace, we need to recognise the role of the indigenous languages. By recognising the advantage of being able to communicate in at least two languages, in addition to utilising the cultural and linguistic capital contained in our indigenous language we can contribute to their growth for SA to become a “successful multicultural society” which takes pride in its linguistic diversity (Ministerial Committee Report 2005).

When educators and students enter the English Second Language (ESL) classroom, they frequently come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Our (UniLim Educators’ and students’) exposure to diverse world views and the changes in South African politics has led us to think differently about ourselves; and so as teachers of English, whether as a first, second or third additional language, we have to bear in mind who our students are, and where English fits in. Our students, too, have to reflect about how they view English and its role in their tertiary studies and their future careers. Learning English and achieving adequate proficiency should not entail the rejection of their mother tongues. When promoting the indigenous languages (or even English) we should consider the saying “A vote for me is not a vote against you”. Promoting the indigenous languages is not, or should not be, *against* English and *visa versa*. Respect for multilingualism endorses the identity of all involved (Marner, cited in Hill 2004:1 and the SA Ministerial Committee Report on the Development of Indigenous languages 2005).

Development of teaching and learning materials³ which support multilingualism

Materials development is both a field of study and a practical undertaking. As a field it studies the principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of language teaching materials. As an undertaking it involves the production, evaluation and **adaptation of language teaching materials** (RMC: my emphasis), by teachers for their own classrooms and by materials writers for sale or distribution. Ideally these two aspects of materials development are interactive in that the theoretical studies inform and are informed by the development and use of classroom materials. (Tomlinson, 2001: 66)

Masahura (1998: 240) examines the issue of the situational needs of learners and of teachers in the design of materials. His study is helpful in that it views the language

³ In this paper the term ‘materials’ refers to printed materials, mainly in the form of textbooks or coursebooks.

learning needs from the perspectives of the three different participants – the learner, the teacher and the institution. Each category of needs is influenced by another (Masuhara 1998:241). Below are the categories (according to who owns the need, what kind of need it is and the source of the need) identified by Masuhara.

List of needs identified in needs analysis literature (taken from Masuhara 1998: 240-241)

OWNERSHIP	KIND	SOURCE
LEARNER'S NEEDS	Personal needs	age; sex; cultural background; Interests; educational background; teacher's language proficiency
	Learning needs	learning styles; previous language learning experiences; gap between the target level and the present level of proficiency in various competence areas (e.g. skills, strategies) learning goals and expectations for a course
	Future professional needs	Requirements for the future undertakings in terms of : Knowledge of language Knowledge of language use L2 competence

OWNERSHIP	KIND	SOURCE
TEACHERS' NEEDS	Personal needs	Age; sex; Cultural background; Interests; educational background Teachers' language proficiency

OWNERSHIP	KIND	SOURCE
ADMINISTRATOR'S	Institutional needs	socio-political needs; market forces;

NEEDS		educational policy; constraints (e.g. time, budget, resources)
--------------	--	---

The rationale for tailor-made in-house English language materials is that in-house developed materials address the issues of *contextualisation*, *timeliness* and the *personal touch* (Block 1991: 213-215); and in SA this involves the recognition of multilingualism and multiculturalism. These issues cannot always be dealt with by the commercial textbooks which focus on a much wider market. In-house materials take into account the constraints within an institution, such as the student: lecturer ratio, the cost of a textbook, or the failure to find one textbook which addresses all the items covered in the course.

The issue of “cultural continuity” (Holliday 2001: 169), is given a broader sense by Holliday (the term ‘cultural continuity’ was originally coined by Jacob 1996). He takes it to mean: “to be sensitive to the cultural expectations of the ‘recipients’ of innovation whether they be students or teachers encountering new teaching methodologies or stakeholders in curriculum projects (Holliday 2001: 169). Cultural continuity calls for methodologies appropriate to the socio-cultural context (1994) which includes the restoring the status of, and maintaining the various home languages. This includes acknowledgment of different cultures. To deny the existence of cultural differences is to negate the child’s (student’s) and those of her or his family and community, and serves to undermine her/his self-concept (Robb 1995: 17). Hence, bilingualism and multilingualism (including multiculturalism) is an important issue in the tertiary education of these speakers of indigenous languages, and in their teaching and learning materials. The language learning and teaching needs of the UniLim Engl131 and Engl132, their lecturers and their institution need to be considered before designing materials because they are variables whose needs may differ yet influence each other. In producing effective coursebooks an attempt must be made to include as many of the needs of the three stakeholders concerned.

Recognising the indigenous languages is of particular significance in SA because of our Apartheid past. The indigenous languages were in the past not viewed as having any significant cultural or linguistic capital. The Ministerial Committee appointed by the previous Minister of Education to write a report on the development of our indigenous languages as mediums of instruction in higher education, have expressed the view that “a

crisis is looming in South Africa regarding the preservation, maintenance and associated identity of our indigenous languages” (Ministerial Committee Report 2005:4). The strong preference for English is detrimental to the indigenous languages. In terms of additional languages in education, there are two approaches: Language-as-a-problem or language-as-a resource. Instead of viewing additional languages as a problem (as certain people do in the United States with regard to Spanish) they should be viewed as resources (Galindo 1997: 9).

Higher Education Teaching Materials Which Uphold Multilingualism

Although the maintenance and growth of the indigenous languages is of particular importance during the earlier years of a child’s education, deepening and extending the use of the indigenous languages is also the role of higher education (Ministerial Committee Report 2005). Bilingualism or multilingualism is more of an issue for academic learning in general and in content subject learning; but English educators can support these by offering additive bilingual education by teaching English and about its culture (e.g. where some of the proverbs and idiomatic expressions come from) and teach and discuss the culture and customs of the main indigenous languages of the region. Apportioning equal importance to the indigenous language and English, may hopefully prevent students from devaluing their own languages. Renowned writer, Es’ki Mphahlele, when asked what advice he could give young African writers, replied, “Affirm Africa” (Discussion at Book Festival, Polokwane 2005). Although the objective of the UniLim English teachers/educators is to increase their students’ English proficiency they can promote bilingualism and multilingualism in the classroom and in the materials; and thus, the status of the students’ home languages. I recommend the following strategies:

i) Adopt a *language-as-resource* orientation and not language-as-problem orientation. In the United States the ‘additional’ language (that is, Spanish) was seen as a problem or handicap: “...English is the ‘real’ language of the United States and that speaking another language is a ‘handicap’, a barrier that must be overcome (Schmidt 1997: 351). García (1995, cited in Galindo 1997) challenges the assumption that a complete shift to English will be accompanied by socioeconomic success. The new South African language-in-education policy adopts a ‘language-as-resource approach.

- The speakers of the other nine official languages in SA now have the opportunity to recognise their languages as individual and collective

resources and so resist the devaluing of their linguistic resources as a cover for devaluing their communities (Galindo 1997: 12).

- One way of using the students' mother tongue as a resource is to compare the two (or three or four) languages used in the UniLim community. I use their mother tongues to compare style and structure of the two languages.
- A controversial aspect of incorporating Maori into English programmes in New Zealand has been the suggestion (with which I agree) that a comparative study of the two languages would help to increase students' metalinguistic knowledge *about* the language, while also meeting the social policy imperatives of the government (Middleton 1996: 231). Metalinguistic knowledge is useful in English grammar instruction, pronunciation and sound system and the writing system. By developing a sound metalanguage students learn to talk about language by asking: In what ways is this language I'm learning different from or the same as the language I already know (Middleton 1996:232)? It may also lead them to look at their own language and get to know it better. For example, I will sometimes ask them to translate an English sentence in the active voice and another in the passive into Sepedi, so that they can see how the form of the words change in their own language and compare it to the English one, note the verb and word order changes.
- An interesting comparison mentioned by Middleton (1996: 231), which we can also use at UniLim is a comparison with English in terms of oratory. African languages, as does Maori, have a strong oral tradition with a stylised form of speechmaking. They spend time greeting the audience formally, referring to their genealogy, pay respects to the ancestors and to the physical environment, before coming to the topic of the speech. The use of proverbs is common. This is in sharp contrast to the "quick and inexorable logic of English orators" who spend most of their time keeping to their topic.

ii) Teach English as a second or third language by means of additive bilingualism⁴ and not subtractive bilingualism⁵. This means an approach to teaching where the

⁴ **additive bilingualism:** When learning a second language does not interfere with the learning of a first language. Both languages are developed. This can be contrasted to subtractive bilingualism. (<http://bogglesworld.com/glossary/additivebilingualism.htm>)

acquisition of a second language does not occur at the expense of proficiency in the first. Students learn about both the English culture and language and their own. An exploration of both (or more) world views and languages is encouraged by including authentic material about customs, practices or current events from their own region. After piloting activities, local material will eventually form 75 percent of the UniLim ENGL131/132 coursebooks.

- Grant (1996, cited in Mercer & Swann 1998: 276) mentions his own involvement in materials development in African countries where “a priority has been to reflect national social and cultural aspirations”. Colonialism, and then apartheid have done great damage to our black South Africans’ self-esteem in devaluing the indigenous languages and cultures. It is therefore vital to use examples in the teaching and learning materials of the work and achievements of “successful” black South Africans. It is also important to be aware that teaching methods as well as content carry cultural messages (Pennycook 1994b). Bourne (1996, cited in Mercer & Swann 1998: 263) warns that discussions held without some purpose, for example, one week the freedom of the press and the next, abortion, can trivialise the issues. It may be better to choose passages whose content may elicit spontaneous discussion of the sociocultural issues mentioned. Mutual trust is a prerequisite to effective discussion of culturally or politically sensitive issues between the educator and the students. Grant (1996, cited in Mercer & Swann 1998: 279) points out that although the ELT materials developer may take a neutral stance on an issue such as ‘lobola’ (bride-price) to start a debate or encourage dissent, it could be interpreted as “‘smuggling in’ western notions of self-expression associated with bourgeois liberal humanism”. Grant also asserts that it is not for the materials developer (or especially the educator using the materials – each educator using a particular text will often unwittingly introduce his/ own approach/stance to the topic) to make value judgments or ‘preach’ but to use it to present an issue, an idea or activity to engage students in discussion so that they may think, discuss, share, learn and make up their own minds. (See annexure 1 for examples of issues for

⁵ **subtractive bilingualism:** When learning a second language interferes with the learning of a first language. The second language replaces the first language. This is commonly found in children who emigrate to a foreign country when they are young, especially in cases of orphans who are deprived of their first language input. This can be contrasted to additive bilingualism.

discussion besides using it as a comprehension test or passage to be summarised.)

- iii) Practise Language Awareness Raising: discuss language issues, for example, sociocultural differences which may be reflected in proverbs and in a language in general; the status of different languages; relationships between language, power, persuasion, propaganda, manipulation and the mass media; language-in-education policy; linguistic tolerance.

Conclusion

There are many examples of indigenous languages becoming extinct. This must not be allowed to happen to our South African indigenous languages. Should they become extinct we will lose a rich vibrant dynamic that is South Africa. Our teaching and our teaching materials should affirm all our students whose mother tongues are one of the South African indigenous languages and thus also affirm Africa.

Bibliography:

Bourdieu, P.1986. The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press.

_____. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourne, J. 1989. *Moving into the Mainstream: LEA provision for bilingual students*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

Galindo, R. 1997. Language wars: The Ideological Dimensions of the Debates on Bilingual Education. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 21 (2&3).

García, O. 1995. Spanish language loss as a determinant of income among Latinos in the United States: Implications for language policy in schools. In J. F. Tollefson (ed.) *Power and Inequality in Language Education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Grant, N. 1987. *Making the most of your textbook*. London: Longman.

Heugh, K.. 1995. From unequal education to the real thing. In K. Heugh, A. Siegrühn and P. Plüddemann (eds.) *Multilingual Education for South Africa*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Hill, D. 2004. *World: English Language Gets New Surge of Growth*.

<http://www.rfer.org/featuresarticle>

- Masuhara, H. 1998. What do teachers really want from coursebooks? *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mercer, N & J. Swann. 1998. reprint. *Learning English: development and diversity*. London: The Open University.
- Middleton, S. 1996. In Mercer, N & J. Swann. In *Learning English: development and diversity*. London: Routledge.
- Robb, H. 1995. Multilingual Preschooling. In K. Heugh, A. Siegrühn and P. Plüddemann (eds.) *Multilingual Education for South Africa*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.
- Schmidt, R. 1997. Latinos and language policy: The politics of culture. In C. García (ed). *Pursuing Power: Latinos and the political system*.
- South Africa. Department of Education. Ministerial Committee Report on: The Development of Indigenous Languages As Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education. 5 April 2005.
- Tomlinson, B. 2001. *Materials Development in Language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Annexure 1

Grammar and language activities used in the in-house materials for the EAP course at The University of Limpopo

Activity 1. Underline the verbs in the following passage:

(NB. Remember that a verb can often consist of the main verb AND a helping/ auxiliary verb= a verb phrase)

A LETTER ASKING FOR ADVICE:

Dear Thandi

Please help. My best friend and I are constantly fighting. Last month she broke up with her boyfriend and soon after it happened, he asked me out. I asked her if she still cared about him and she said she didn't, so I went out with him. We have been seeing each other ever since, but decided not to tell my friend about it in case she was upset. She found out from someone else and has been fighting with me ever since. What should I do? I really like this guy, but my friend is important to me too.

Pumza

Activity 2. Read the passage below:

Not too long ago, life in the small rural village of Makotse in the Northern Province was uneventful. Francina Kanyane, a resident of Makotse, remembers the past. "After work I would come home and find my friends bored and depressed." But in 1995, Mello and Malema decided that since their country was in the process of transformation, they should try to transform their own village. Their first idea was to start a community garden. After holding community meetings with traditional leaders, 33 women started the Bakone Garden Project, each contributing R20 towards the purchase of seeds and renting a tractor.

Activity 3. Comprehension

Answer the questions below:

a) Which adjectives show that life was uneventful for women in Makotse?

The women were _____

b) With what did two of the residents decide to transform their village?

c) What did the Bakone Garden Project buy with the members' first contributions?

Activity 4. Rewrite the passage below and change all the verbs to the present tense:

I was busy preparing the evening meal in the yard in front of the hut. Camara was playing safely nearby and I had no time to keep an eye on him. When I looked up I saw him pushing a reed down the throat of a big, fat snake. I was so horrified that for a moment I was fixed to the spot, not knowing what to do. I shouted 'Camara, stop. Leave it. Leave it.' My heart was thumping as I flew across the yard, grabbed my little boy and hugged him to my breast. The snake slid off round the hut.

Activity 1. Reading exercise

Getting down to Business

Kwaito kingpin Mandoza could have become a gangster. Instead he's overcome the problems of his youth to carve out a successful music career, writes DIANE COETZER (taken from and adapted, Sunday Times Magazine April 16, 2000)

Kwaito king, ex-convict, now role model, and long-time resident of Zola South, Soweto: this is Mandoza, strolling around the seaside town of Fish Hoek's quiet streets, thinking of the right words for a chorus. This is where he is laying the foundations of his new CD with Gabi 'Ibomvu' Le Roux of Groove City Studios. 22-year-old Mandoza is now a main figure on the Kwaito scene and a role model to his thousands of fans. But this is something that *almost* didn't happen.

Life was not easy in the Tshabalala household where Mandoza lived with his two sisters, mother and grandparents. "There was lots of love, really. But my father drank too much. I mean we could be starving to death in the house but he would find cash for himself somewhere. We gave him plenty of chances but he kept messing up."

Growing up in Zola was hard, with the gangster life looming large over all youngsters in the township. The gangster life was made even more attractive by Zola's high unemployment rate. Mandoza ended up in jail for stealing a car.

"I was just a teenager when it happened, just sixteen. And, you know, it was hard to resist the older guys in Zola, who were gang members and who were always pressuring the younger kids into taking part in crime. So I landed up in Sun City (Diepkloof jail) with the old timers for one-and-a-half years. It was hard. Even basic things — like in jail you eat twice a day only and I wasn't used to that. Also staying in one place for the whole day and seeing the same people every day drove me mad. But in Sun City I dreamt about becoming a real musician and singer so this really is a dream come true."

Mandoza came out and, instead of finding his way back onto the streets, was determined to be an artist of note. Mandoza says much of his strength at ditching a life of crime is because of his mother. "My mother always believed in me," he says. "She knew that there was something different about me because I liked music, big time. My family are churchgoers so gospel music was always around. And then I used to listen to the Toyota Top 20 on radio and loved the R&B sounds coming out of it." Together with music-mad childhood friends, S'bu, Sipiwe and Sizwe, Mandoza formed Chiskop. The group was not an overnight success.

"We had been together for eight years and we were almost ready to give up when we got our recording deal," recalls Sipiwe. But after the release of their debut album, *Klaimer*, and the success of the recent *Ghetto 2000*, Chiskop are at Kwaito's forefront.

Activity 5. Comprehension

Answer the following questions. Answer in complete sentences where necessary.

i) **What made gangster life attractive?**

ii) What is a role model?

iii) Was Mandoza's band immediately successful? Substantiate your answer.

iv) What is a 'debut album'?