

The Transformative Power of Language

Language has played a pivotal role in societal transformation in postcolonial Africa towards the creation of globally competitive knowledge societies; so far, however, this role has been under-researched and underestimated. This volume addresses this gap in the literature, by bringing together a team of globally recognised scholars to explore the effect of language on African postcolonial societies and how it has contributed to achieving 'mental decolonisation'. A range of languages are explored, both imported (ex-colonial) and indigenous African, and case studies from different spheres of public discourse are investigated, from universities to legal settings. Demonstrating that multilingualism is a resource for, rather than a barrier to, successful transformation, this book brings the intellectualisation and institutionalisation of African languages to the forefront of development discourse and provides an insightful snapshot of how current academic research, public discourse, political activism and social community engagement have contributed to societal transformation in South Africa.

RUSSELL H. KASCHULA is Professor of African Language Studies at Rhodes University. He holds the NRF SARChI Chair in the Intellectualisation of African Languages, Multilingualism and Education. His most recent edited volumes include *Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication* (2017) and *New Frontiers in Forensic Linguistics* (2019). In 2019, he was selected as the Mellon Global South Senior Fellow at the American University in Cairo.

H. EKKEHARD WOLFF is Professor and Chair Emeritus of African Linguistics, Leipzig University. His recently published works include *The Cambridge Handbook of African Linguistics* (2019), *A History of African Linguistics* (2019) and *Language and Development in Africa: Perceptions, Ideologies and Challenges* (2016).

The Transformative Power of Language

*From Postcolonial to Knowledge
Societies in Africa*

Edited by

Russell H. Kaschula

Rhodes University

H. Ekkehard Wolff

Leipzig University



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 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
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Contributors

LINDELHLE BHEBHE Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
ALETIA CHISIN Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
ZAKEERA DOCRAT Rhodes University, South Africa
NATASHA ENGELBRECHT Rhodes University, South Africa
JANET HAYWARD Rhodes University, South Africa
EUNICE IVALA Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
BONIFACE KABASO Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
RUSSELL H. KASCHULA Rhodes University, South Africa
LANGA KHUMALO University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
HERCULENE KOTZÉ North-West University, South Africa
LINDA MANASHE Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
THULANI MKHIZE University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
MANTOA MOTINYANE University of Cape Town, South Africa
WISDOM NTANDO MOYO Rhodes University, South Africa
NTOMBOVUYO NGAPHU Rhodes University, South Africa
LAURETTE PRETORIUS University of South Africa, South Africa
DANIE J. PRINSLOO University of Pretoria, South Africa
MONWABISI K. RALARALA University of the Western Cape, South Africa
THEODORE RODRIGUES Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
JUSTUS C. ROUX Stellenbosch University, South Africa
EMMANUEL SITHOLE Rhodes University, South Africa

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[More Information](#)

xii *List of Contributors*

ZAKHILE SOMLATA Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

MENZI ZAMOKWAKHE THANGO University of the Free State, South Africa

KIM WALLMACH Stellenbosch University, South Africa

FRIEDEL WOLFF University of South Africa, South Africa

H. EKKEHARD WOLFF Leipzig University, Germany

ZIYANDA YOLA[†] Rhodes University, South Africa

NOMPUMELELO ZONDI University of Pretoria, South Africa

Preface

The book addresses the need of and some relevant (pre)conditions for transforming postcolonial societies in Africa into globally competitive knowledge societies. This transformation would appear to be the way African societies must follow in order to achieve full, including mental, decolonisation. Such transformation poses challenges for education and academic research, in particular with regard to higher education and the benefit of knowledge production. This implies provisions and applications of human language technology devices in the service of mass education and lifelong education. It also refers to academic research in general under the new umbrella of digital humanities as part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). These are domains in which Africa still sits low on a global scale. One of the key issues in such transformation is language. More specifically, it is the recognition of multilingualism, and the implied multiculturalism, as a resource rather than barrier to sociocultural modernisation and economic progress. This puts the hitherto underrated role and functions of African languages to the forefront of all development discourse – in particular with regard to the eminent role indigenous languages have to play in all sectors and cycles of education and vocational training, alongside foreign languages of global reach.

The book provides insight into recent public discourse, academic research and related political activism and social community engagement as far as societal transformation in South Africa is concerned. Post-apartheid South Africa assumes, at least on paper, a leading role on the African continent regarding the constitutional and enabling legal provisions for creating the necessary multilingual environments for such transformation, which could also have application in other parts of Africa. Within their civil society obligations, it remains a primordial task for academic researchers to monitor the design, implementation and shortcomings of policies and all related activities, not least in order to identify and provide ‘good practice’ examples for other African countries to study and, possibly, follow for their own purposes under their own conditions and provisions. Such monitoring is documented in this book.

For both general information and specialised research purposes, the book provides a snapshot account of current academic discourse in South Africa on

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the role and functions of indigenous and other languages for societal transformation and aspirations towards creating democratic knowledge societies that would eventually put African postcolonies on an equal footing with the rest of the world.

The editors express their gratitude to the contributing authors for their cooperation in putting this book together, to anonymous reviewers for valuable comments and to Cambridge University Press for its support along the way.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Ms Ziyanda Yola, a co-contributor to this volume and former doctoral student in African language studies at the School of Languages and Literatures of Rhodes University, who passed away ever too soon during the preparatory stage for this publication.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIKS	African Indigenous Knowledge Systems
ALICT	African Leaders in ICT
ALRI	African Languages Research Institute
ANC	African National Congress
ASR	Automatic Speech Recognition
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
AUC	African Union Commission
BICS	Basic Intellectual Communication Skills
BoP	Balance of Payment
BoR	Bill of Rights
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CASAS	Centre for Advanced Studies in African Society
CC	Constitutional Court
CCURL	Collaboration and Computing for Under-Resourced Languages
CE	Christian Era
CJ	Chief Justice
CPA	Consumer Protection Act
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
DARIAH	Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities
DCJ	Deputy Chief Justice
DDMT	Data-Driven Machine Translation
DH	Digital Humanities
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DST	Department of Science and Technology
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECP	Extended Curriculum Programme

xvi *List of Abbreviations and Acronyms*

EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
e.g.	exempli gratia; for example
EIPC	English-isiZulu Parallel Corpus
et al.	et alia; and others
ETD	National database of digital dissertations and theses
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESCI	Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative
GPS	Global Positioning System
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLT	Human Language Technology
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
INC	isiZulu National Corpus
ISAP	Index of South African Periodicals
ISWE	Informal Sector Women Entrepreneurs
KS	Knowledge Systems
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LANTAG	Language Planning Task Group
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LGP	Language for General Purpose
L _{index}	Language (indexed, e.g., L ₂ ‘Second Language’)
LIP	Language Implementation Plan
LOI	Language of Instruction
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
LPHE	Language Plan for Higher Education
LT	Language Technology
LU	Language Unit
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MIS	Management Information System
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MT	Machine Translation
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NEXUS	National Research Fund’s database of current and completed dissertations and theses
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NLU	National Language Unit

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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NRF	National Research Foundation (of South Africa)
NWU	North-West University
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PEBIMO	Bilingual Education Programme in Mozambique
PhD	Philosophiae Doctor; Doctor of Philosophy
PZU	Pretoria isiZulu Corpus
R	(South African) Rand (ZAR)
RAD	Rapid Application Development
RET	Rapid Economic Transformation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA	South Africa
SADiLaR	South African Centre for Digital Language Resources
SAePublications	South African Electronic Publication Database
SANTED	South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme
SARChI	South African Research Chairs Initiative
SARIR	South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap
SCT	Sociocultural Learning Theory
SCU	Supreme Court of Appeal
SSADM	Structured Systems Analysis and Design Method
TSA	Transformation South Africa
TUKI	Institute of Kiswahili Research (Tanzania)
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UFS	University of the Free State
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
ULPDO	University Language Planning and Development Office
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa
UP	University of Pretoria
US	United States (of America)
v.	versus
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front
ZimASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development