

**THE REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY LANGUAGES ON SABC 1: THE CASE OF  
SISWATI**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree Magister Artium (Communication Practice) at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

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November 2013

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to sincerely thank the following people who have been with me throughout the duration of this MA:

- My amazing father for his undying love, his unwavering belief in me and his unbelievable generosity. If it wasn't for his encouragement and support, I would not be where I am today. I will always love you Babe.
- My beloved late grandparents, Sikhonkwane and Nokwazi Mahlalela.
- And all my loved ones, both family members and friends.
- My supervisor, Professor Attie Gerber



## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Representation of Minority Languages on SABC 1: The Case of SiSwati**

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This dissertation interrogates the representation of SiSwati programming (a minority language) on SABC 1. It critically analyses the statutory provisions in place for language parity and utilises hegemony as the theoretical framework for understanding the concept of language parity in the South African broadcasting landscape. To the researcher's knowledge, there is limited information pertaining to this particular research topic however, most of the previous literature refers to all eleven official languages and not SiSwati specifically. Hegemony, a strand of critical theory as developed by Antonio Gramsci, will serve as the theoretical base of this study. This study falls within the framework of qualitative research. An extensive literature study of various sources and a content analysis of the relevant legislative documents form the basis of the research.

SABC TV is positioned in a highly competitive, multi-channel market environment with powerful social, political and economic forces to contend with, this makes it difficult for SABC TV to fulfil its mandate of treating all eleven official languages equitably, hence languages such as SiSwati are underrepresented on national television. This study is seminal and relevant insofar as it offers a much needed insight into the plight of a marginalised language by the country's public broadcaster.

**KEYWORDS:** South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), SABC1, SABC TV, Public Service Broadcaster (PSB), Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), Broadcasting, SiSwati, English, Minority Language, Official Language, Democracy, Government, Constitution, Hegemony, Parity, Representation, Marginalization, Local Content, Local Programming, Independent Production Sector

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, CONTEXTUALISATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

1.1.	Orientation	p. 1 - 4
1.2.	Problem Statement	p. 4 - 5
1.3.	Research Questions	p. 5
1.4.	Research Objectives	p. 5 - 6
1.5.	Theoretical Framework	p. 6 - 7
1.6.	Research Methodology	p. 7
1.7.	Chapter Outline	p. 8

### **CHAPTER 2: A HEGEMONIC PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE PARITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

2.1.	Introduction: The Meaning of Hegemony	p. 8 - 12
2.2.	A Hegemonic Perspective on Language Parity in South Africa	p. 12 - 15
2.3.	Conclusion	p. 16

### **CHAPTER 3: FACTORS RELATING TO THE TREATMENT OF MINORITY LANGUAGES ON SABC TV**

3.1.	Introduction	p. 17 - 19
3.2.	Hegemony, Language and the Historical Development of Broadcasting in South Africa	p. 19 - 22
3.2.1.	The Early Beginnings of Broadcasting	p. 23
3.2.2.	The Introduction of Television	p. 24 - 26
3.2.3.	Post-apartheid: The Democratisation of Broadcasting	p. 27 - 29
3.3.	Language and Broadcast Regulation in South Africa	p. 29 - 30
3.3.1.	The Constitution	p. 30 - 32
3.3.2.	The Bill of Rights	p. 32 - 33

3.3.3. The Broadcasting Act	p. 33
3.3.4. Regulatory Control (ICASA)	p. 33 - 35
3.4. Language Parity and the Funding of Broadcasting	p. 35 - 41
3.5. Language Parity and the Treatment of Minority Languages by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)	p. 41 - 45
3.5.1. SABC Policy	p. 45 - 46
3.5.2. General Observations about the Treatment of Some Minority Languages	p. 46 - 51
3.6. Conclusion	p. 51

#### **CHAPTER 4: THE TREATMENT OF SISWATI ON SABC-TV**

4.1. Introduction	p. 52 - 55
4.1.1 SABC 1	p. 55 - 56
4.2. Methodology	p. 56
4.2.1 Programme Analysis	p. 57 – 60
4.3. Results	p. 61
4.3.1. The Frequency of Siswati Programming on SABC 1	p. 61
4.3.2. The Content of SiSwati Programming on SABC 1	p. 61 - 62
4.4. Discussion and Conclusion	p. 62 - 63

#### **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1. Introduction	p. 64 - 68
5.2. The Statutory Provision For Language Treatment in South African broadcasting	p. 68 - 69
5.3. The Representation of SiSwati as a Minority Language by SABC 1	p. 69 - 70
5.4. A Hegemonic Conclusion About the Treatment of Minority Languages by the SABC	p. 70 - 71
5.5. A Critique about the Representation of Minority Languages by the SABC	p. 71 - 73
5.6. Recommendations	p. 73 - 79

5.7. Conclusion

p. 80

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

p. 82 - 93



## **Chapter One**

### **INTRODUCTION, CONTEXTUALISATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

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#### **1.1. ORIENTATION**

This study investigates the representation of SiSwati programming on SABC 1 by critically analysing the statutory provisions in place for language parity and using hegemony as the theoretical framework for understanding the concept of language parity in South African broadcasting.

The issue of language parity received special attention in the South African constitution of 1996. It entrenched eleven languages as official, recognised other non-official languages, and states that every South African has the right to use their language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The same sentiments are echoed by the Broadcasting Act, No. 4 of 1999, namely that the public service provided by the Corporation must make services available to South Africans in all the official languages (Broadcasting Act No.4, 1999).

The South African Constitution specifies the following official languages: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, English, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Furthermore, the constitution recognises the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of the people and mandates the state to take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.

The question that arises therefore is, how broadcasting in the Republic has adapted to these constitutional and other statutory provisions such as the South African Languages Bill which provides an enabling framework for promoting South Africa's linguistic diversity and encouraging respect for language rights within the framework of building and consolidating a united, democratic South African nation (SA Language Bill, 2000).

A historical preview will provide some perspective. Originally modelled on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the SABC was established as a public corporation in 1936. It was only 40 years later, in 1976 that the broadcaster first introduced television. This means that although the national broadcaster was by law an autonomous entity, language, culture and ethnicity were at the heart of the dominant ideology (apartheid) that affected South African society as a whole. It therefore came as no surprise that the introduction of television was an area of much contestation (Msimang, 2008).

South African television started with one channel, TV1. It was equally divided between the two official languages, English and Afrikaans. In 1982, TV2, a channel for black people was opened. TV3 was added in 1983 for Sotho speakers whilst TV2 served Nguni speakers. An English entertainment channel, TV4, was introduced in 1985 (Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989 in Msimang, 2008:109 – 110).

Hegemony in a political sense refers to the maintenance of power structures in society (Gerber, 1997). From its inception, SABC-TV has always mirrored the struggle for hegemony within South African society (Teer-Tomaselli, 2008). English and Afrikaans were the dominant broadcast languages; according to Skinner (2006) the status of African languages reflected the hegemony of the ruling class and the subordination of blacks in the Republic. TV2 and TV3 covered Pedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Zulu, and Xhosa while Tsonga, Venda, Ndebele and Swati/Swazi were ignored (Phukubje, 2007:23).

With the dawn of democracy in 1994, many assumed that all South African languages were finally going to be treated equally. According to Skinner (2006: 39) broadcasting foresaw exciting times ahead, and it was during this transitional period that multicultural programmes such as *People of the South*, *Suburban Bliss*, *The Felicia Mabuza Show*, *Jozi Blues* and many others were commissioned by the SABC.

However, representatives of languages other than English still feel that the SABC is still not fulfilling its constitutional obligation because almost two decades have passed since the adoption of the democratic constitution and yet Afrikaans and English still dominate the broadcasting scene. In as much as SABC-radio has made significant advances with

regard to language parity, its television services, according to Moyo (2010) are lacking the same language parity.

Researchers like Fourie (2003), Sikhakhane (2001) and Abboo (2008) identified several reasons for the national broadcaster's inability to ensure language parity in its TV-services. They identified reasons such as the lack of state funding, loss of advertising income due to the low-income profile of minority groups, pressures on services to be economically viable, and globalization.

Besides not fulfilling its constitutional and legal obligation, the SABC according to Hassen (2009) is also at fault with the regulatory framework of the *Independent Communications Authority of South Africa* (ICASA) that not only issues broadcast licenses, but also must ensure multilingualism (Hill, 2010).

The disparity in the SABC's treatment of minority languages on television is especially evident in the case of SiSwati, a language of four variant forms spoken in Swaziland, South Africa and other parts of Southern Africa (Van Wyk, 1966; Simelane, 2006). There are 1 944 332 SiSwati people in South Africa and they make up 2.66% of the population (Stats SA, 2011).

SABC 1 is a full spectrum television channel providing programming in English and Nguni languages (SABC Channel Statement, 2005:1). SABC TV's inability to comply with the language provisions of the Broadcasting Act (and ICASA's stipulations) is evident when one analyses the weekly programming schedule on the SABC's official website as well as the weekly TV Guide. Languages such as English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sepedi and Setswana receive far more coverage than Sesotho, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, and Ndebele (<http://www.sabc.co.za/wps/portal/SABC/tvguide>).

With the limited amount of SiSwati programmes on offer on SABC 1, one questions whether the content of these programmes resonates with the SiSwati speaking audience or not. Programmes that include SiSwati are usually limited to certain genres such as magazine and current affairs programmes; examples include *Seskhona*, *Jika Majika*, *Yilungelo Lakho* and *Cutting Edge*. To date SABC TV has not produced or commissioned any SiSwati comedies, melodramas, cop thrillers or soap operas.

Using language to marginalise groups justifies the statement by the Office of the Presidency (2007) that accused the South African mass media of “hegemonic behaviour” in favour of “dominant interests”. This, according to the statement, “is a serious threat to social cohesion, more so, given how polarized South African society is”. It is therefore within the context of this hegemony, that this research focuses on SABC TV’s failure to fulfil its statutory obligations regarding the treatment of SiSwati.

## **1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Since the introduction of television in South Africa in 1976, African languages have not received the same amount of resources and representation as English and Afrikaans. While dominant language groups such as isiZulu, isiXhosa, SeSotho and SeTswana were given a platform on TV2 and TV3, it was unheard of for minority languages such as SiSwati to be used as a means of communication on SABC TV. Not much has changed since the dawn of democracy. With the exception of the SiSwati/Ndebele news bulletin at 17h00 on weekdays, the public broadcaster still largely under represents minority languages.

Even though SABC TV is required to adhere to the constitution, the Broadcasting Act and licensing conditions set out by ICASA, it has failed to meet its language mandate due to a myriad of reasons, most notably lack of funding, mismanagement and operating in a highly competitive market environment. Despite the above-mentioned challenges, SABC TV is constitutionally obliged to cater to all 11 official languages equitably. The biggest problem facing the public broadcaster is the inability to bridge the gap between policy development and policy implementation. It is futile to have legislation in abundance when there is a shortage of funds.

By exploring the issue of language parity, the hope is that the public broadcaster may become more aware of the role it plays in marginalizing minority languages such as SiSwati. Moreover, by putting forth recommendations, the hope is that SABC TV may take some of them into account and begin to make headway when it comes to redressing language disparity and catering to all its citizens equitably. SABC TV can

only truly consider itself a pure public service broadcaster when it produces the majority of its programmes in most of the African languages, especially ones that are already considered minority languages.

### **1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **Primary research question**

To what extent does SABC TV comply with legal provisions regarding its treatment of SiSwati as an official language in South Africa?

#### **Secondary research questions**

- What are the relevant constitutional, legislative and regulatory stipulations for the broadcasting of official languages in South Africa?
- How and to what extent is an official language like SiSwati being represented by SABC TV?
- How can hegemony in the context of Gramsci explain SABC TV's implementation of legal provisions regarding the treatment of SiSwati as an official South African language?

### **1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

#### **Primary research objective**

This study compares by means of a literature review and content analysis, the relevant legal provisions for the treatment of official languages by broadcasters with the actual handling of SiSwati on SABC TV.

## **Secondary research objectives**

### **This study:**

- by means of a literature review identifies and analyses the provisions in the South African Constitution, the Broadcasting Act and the regulations of ICASA regarding the treatment of the Republic's official languages.
- by means of using hegemony as a theoretical framework investigates language parity in the South African broadcasting sector.
- through literature review investigates hegemonic tendencies that contribute to SABC TV's treatment of official languages such as SiSwati that may be termed as a "minority" language.
- by means of systematic sampling attempts to establish the frequency of presentation and the content structure of SiSwati on SABC TV.

## **1.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Hegemony, a strand of critical theory as developed by Antonio Gramsci, will serve as the theoretical base of this study. Hegemony explains how ruling or dominant classes in society achieve domination by moral and intellectual leadership, and not by force or coercion (Bobcock, 1986). In Gramsci's division of the superstructure into the state and civil society, a public corporation such as the SABC will fit into civil society where human relationships, consciousness and domination or subordination are influenced by institutions such as churches, the educational system, political parties, and the mass media (Gerber, 2012).

The functionality of hegemony as an explanation of dominant and subordinate languages in South Africa is self evident. English is the language of the ruling elite, while minority languages are the lingua franca of marginalized groups in the South African society. Civil society rules by persuasion and marginalized groups are kept at bay by making concessions, e.g. by allocating some programme content to subordinate

groups, by making regulatory concessions to these groups, and by presenting this as part of a democratization process (Gerber, 2012).

## **1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study falls within the framework of qualitative research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). The requirements of reliability and validity are met by triangulating different research methodologies, for example:

- The literature overview includes a study of books, academic articles, internet sources, legislation, TV programmes and official regulatory documents. A Nexus and EbscoHost search (Academic Search Premier and Jstor) have been conducted on the historical background of SiSwati, SABC TV and the treatment of minority languages, as well as internal and external factors that determine the programming of minority languages on SABC TV.
- The content analysis of various literary sources was conducted by identifying and analysing concepts and themes about (a) the provisions for language parity in the Constitution, the Broadcast Act and the regulatory framework of ICASA and (b) the treatment of minority languages by SABC TV.
- Systematic sampling was used to determine the frequency and content structure of SiSwati programs on SABC 1 between 2008 to 2013. TVSA (online industry publication), the SABC's online TV guide and the Sunday Sun Newspaper (Media 24) were used to source the data.

## 1.7. CHAPTER OUTLINE

**Chapter One:** Introduction, contextualisation and problem statement

**Chapter Two:** A hegemonic perspective on language parity in South African broadcasting

**Chapter Three:** Factors relating to the treatment of minority languages on SABC TV

**Chapter Four:** The treatment of SiSwati on SABC-TV

**Chapter Five:** Conclusion and recommendations

**Bibliography**

## Chapter Two

### A HEGEMONIC PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE PARITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF HEGEMONY

The very definition of the word hegemony is contested; it's inevitable that any analyst's use of the term would be "value-loaded" in terms of both a choice of definition and the methodological implications of applying it to a particular empirical phenomenon (Cerny, 2006:67). Roseberry (1994:358) warns that hegemony should not be explored as a finished or monolithic ideological formation; it should be explored as a problematic, contested and political process of domination and struggle.

Williams (2007:182) asserts that, "the traditional definition of "hegemony" is political rule or domination, especially in relations between states. The Marxist school of thought extended the definition of rule or domination to relations between social classes, and especially to definitions of a ruling/dominant class. Hegemony gained a further significant sense in the work of Antonio Gramsci, carried out under great difficulties in a Fascist prison between 1927 and 1935.

Mahoa (2006:4) observes that Gramsci's work led him to the realization that the state is not only composed of the three power apparatus – administrative, executive, and coercive; it also includes the underpinnings of the political structure in civil society. This was the church, the education system, the press and all institutions that helped to create in people certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order. To say that "men" define and shape their whole lives is true only in abstract. In any society, there are inequalities in means and this makes it difficult to define and shape one's own life completely. Gramsci recognised this as a process of dominance and subordination, (Williams, 2007:182-183).

Bocock (1986:7) notes that at its base, hegemony is all about ideology. But it is ideology writ large: the idea of an all-encompassing dominant ideology whose scope extends

throughout all social, cultural and economic spheres of a society. Hegemony is constructed through a series of ideological processes, these processes cannot be separated from concrete forms of class and state formation; this is usually the case in different parts of the world, (Kiely, 2007:8). Hegemony is a crucial concept in understanding the unity that exists in concrete social formations, (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001:7).

In essence, hegemony describes how dominant social groups achieve ruler ship or leadership on the basis of attaining social cohesion and consensus, (Joseph, 2002:1). Howson & Smith (2008:1) point out that, “When the term hegemony simply becomes shorthand for ‘domination’, the important insight that it offers to the study of power is lost”. What distinguishes hegemony from other forms of domination is that the position of the ruling party is not automatically handed over; instead the ruling party gets consent to its leadership through the complex construction of social projects and social alliances, (Joseph, 2002:1). Mahao (2006:8) argues that the coercion is always concealed and only applied in marginal or deviant cases.

Howson & Smith (2008:1) perceive hegemony as a process that takes place before power is institutionalized and as an outcome of that process of institutionalization. The place from which power is exercised is often hidden. When we try to pin it down, the centre is always evasive. However this very same indefinable centre exerts a real, undeniable power over the entire framework of our culture and how our culture is understood, (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010:241a). Langford et al (2013:132) assert that hidden power is also associated with the ability to shape and influence policy and decision-making behind the scenes. In South Africa, the ANC, as the ruling party, has often been the real decision maker at the end of the day. Close to the ANC are hidden business interests that are hard to detect until after large deals are done.

Laclau & Mouffe (2001:56) observe that while the process of the democratisation of the mass struggle depends upon a proliferation of points of rupture, which overflow class boundaries, political authoritarianism emerges at the moment when, in order to ground

the necessity of *class* hegemony, a distinction is established between the leaders and the led within mass movements; this is the case in South Africa. Unfortunately South Africa has an inherited legacy of keeping power concentrated within the government and large commercial actors. The government is [only] able to exert sufficient power in any sphere of society when it is a matter of priority, (Langford et al, 2013:130).

Cerny (2006:68) notes that some analysts use the term hegemony as a synonym for dominance or disproportionately preponderant power (Leffler 1992). However, in Ancient Greece, the concept of hegemony evolved into a more specific form, meaning a relatively consensual form of leadership within an alliance of quasi-independent political units (Fontana, this volume; Lentner 2005). The term was associated with leadership, authority, and legitimacy as opposed to domination, force or coercion. In the case of South Africa, it is considered an electoral democracy with space for both citizen and party-based participation. However, the power of the citizens is limited because in reality, most of the power is in the hand of the ruling party, the ANC (Langford et al, 2013:120).

Keohane (1984) notes that hegemony can be defined as the ability to make and enforce rules; this ability is secured by the possession of sufficient material resources to enforce rules on others (Kiely, 2007:8). The real power of hegemony lies in the fact that the interests of the dominant class subordinate the interests of all other classes, (Mahoa, 2006:17). Laclau & Mouffe (2001:55) echo these sentiments by arguing that hegemony involves political leadership within a class alliance. Gramsci (sino anno – without date) stated that institutions like the church, the educational system and the press play a significant role in the propagation of hegemonic ideology because they lead people to accept the prevailing social order (Mahoa, 2006:31).

Cerny (2006:68) is of the idea that that hegemony is not only about holding a disproportionately powerful position, that dominant position has to be firmly embedded in, and generated through, a wider system that gives it its very meaning and effectiveness. Wherever there is power, there is resistance; however, the forms of

resistance differ. It is only in certain cases that these forms of resistance take on a political character and become struggles directed towards putting an end to relations of subordination (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001:152).

## **2.2. A HEGEMONIC PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE PARITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Nakayama & Halualani (2010:256b) argue that language is not merely a tool or a medium; language represents a way of thinking, a mental structure. Furthermore, they state that language is an institution in its own right – one as powerful as any religion, state or educational system – which is also capable of creating and recreating social realities that feel so concrete and ‘natural’. Phaswana (2003:122) supports this view and states that only the people whose languages are used (especially by those in power) are likely to become empowered, and it is usually at the expense of those people whose languages are not used as a result they become marginalized.

All over the African continent, the languages of colonial dominance have not only managed to maintain a hegemonic position of dominance, they have also increased in their power and influence, mainly because African elites have continued to wholeheartedly embrace the usage of these languages (Prah, 2006:29). Maurais & Morris (2003:211) state that, “The linguistic policy of most African states remains currently in the line defined in the colonial era by each dominant power”. Today English is widely recognised as a global standard language. That very fact serves as an enormous power and becomes a basis of discrimination, because it gives the speakers of English enormous power and control in communication worldwide. Furthermore, the fact that the use of English is largely taken for granted also gives an additional power to English-speaking countries and their inhabitants (Nakayama & Halualani (2010:249b 250b).

Kiely (2007:193) believes that the US (United States of America) has acted as the hegemonic power in the capitalist world since 1945. This hegemony was guaranteed by overwhelming military and economic dominance and made most of the world

susceptible to the US's power and dominance, especially in the post-war period. It can be argued that the spread of American products goes hand in hand with the spread of English, thus buying and using American products facilitates the spread of English which in turn facilitates the global spread of American products, creating the cycle of reinforcing the hegemony of English and American materialistic culture, (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010:253b).

Alexander (2011:31- 312) asserts that the language of power in the 'new' South Africa is English. This can be largely attributed to Southern Africa's colonial past. The dominance of English in the modern economy, the challenge to its hegemonic status by the rising Afrikaans-speaking elite, and the black community's passive but powerful support for the continued dominance of English as one of the ways in which they could demonstrate their rejection of "the language of the oppressor", the Afrikaans, have all influenced and characterized the interactions between the contending elites in this country. These are some of the reasons why English is the dominant language to date.

Mwaniki (2012:43) notes that in this country language comes laden with the burden of the past because of the country's complex history; this means language is inextricably intertwined with social, political and economic distortions and realities. Mongwe (2006:176) notes that while the minority of the population, (white South Africans), speak only English and Afrikaans, the majority of the population (uneducated black South Africans) speak African languages, with inadequate command of Afrikaans and English. Nakayama & Halualani (2010: 231a) augment this argument by stating that, "English is far from being the *de facto* lingua franca that many English-speakers (and English-speaking Intercultural Communication scholars) seem to think it is".

Phaswana (2003:121) argues that what distinguishes South Africa from most postcolonial governments in Africa who neglected the multilingual and multicultural nature of their societies for a Eurocentric monolithic approach to language and culture, is the fact that the ANC-led government recognised and embraced both multilingualism and multiculturalism by granting all major languages spoken in the country equal status

at national level. Unfortunately the constitution can only truly become a strong foundation of cultural democracy if there is material, financial and institutional support for the implementation of its policies (Moyo, 2010:432).

Cuvelier et al (2010:138) argue that English is still the most dominant language in this country even though political power is completely in the hands of black South Africans and the ruling party has made strides towards ensuring that it centralizes political control. A decade ago, Phaswana (2003:129) cautioned that unless the newly emerging Black politicians associated with African languages organize themselves to oppose the hegemony of English, and fight for a different political, social and cultural arrangement of power and knowledge, they will not only fail to challenge the dominance of English, but will also contribute to the marginalization of their own languages and cultures. Because English is generally seen as the language of globalization and a source of economic and political power, people tend to gravitate towards it, losing their own languages in the process (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010:252b).

Seemes (1995:9) asserts that, “The negation and control of language requires the expropriation of the power of self-definition, that is, the ability to define and create a world with one’s self at the centre”. As a lingua franca, English threatens other languages by depriving [one] of the opportunity to use other languages (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 252b). It is obvious that English is an extremely powerful language, however, the deepest effect of power is inequality; power *differentiates* and selects, includes and excludes (Blommaert, 2005:2, Nakayama & Halualani, 2010:228a). Many languages are under-developed in terms of lexicon and there is limited material available for the speakers of these languages (Hefer, 2011:1); this is also the case in South Africa. Having the ability to use the language one has the best command of is an empowering factor; in the same vein, not being able to do so is equally disempowering, (Alexander, 2011:314).

Historical linguistics is in agreement – the power of a language does not lie in the language itself, rather, it lies in its demography (Laponce, 2003:59). Mackey (2003:64)

supports this view by arguing that, in most cases the amount of people who use a language usually determine the significance of that language. Some experts have contended that in some decades to come South Africa will experience some form of linguistic convergence, in which the current multilingual reality will disappear and be replaced by a relatively monolingual or bilingual reality, one that will be dominated by English or another world language, (Mwaniki, 2012:87). Within next three generations, the language shift could possibly be complete (Maurais & Morris, 2003:214).

Nakayama & Halualani (2010: 251b) observe that it is ironic that there has been so much awareness around issues of the world's ecology crisis, especially in reference to endangered species. However, not much has been said about the world's many endangered languages. Phillipson (1992) noted that, "there is a structure of inequality between English and other languages"; this inequality is justified and reinforced by international power politics that exploit the development of English as a global language (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 248 – 249b).

Beukes (2004:18) proposes that in order to effect social transformation and nurture South Africa's rich linguistic diversity to comply with our progressive constitutional language clause, we have to ensure that "perceptually valuable linguistic capital" (cf. Kamwangamalu 2000: 59) becomes accessible to indigenous language speakers. In addition to being vehicles of cultural heritage, these languages need to be transformed into vehicles of opportunities for advancement. South Africans must perceive all South African languages as "fashionable", and associate them with high status functions. This can be achieved by using these languages in all government departments and parliament and publishing literature in indigenous languages; these are just a few possibilities.

### **2.3. CONCLUSION**

The definition of the term hegemony is highly contested. However, in summary, hegemony can be described as the covert dominance of a dominant group over a subordinate group by means of gaining the consent of the subordinate group. The power of hegemony lies in the fact that the subordinate group believes that the dominant group has its best interests at heart when in actual fact; the interests of the dominant group always take priority over those of the former. In a hegemonic state, the subordinate group willingly places the dominant group in a position of power, meaning that the subordinate group is less likely to question or possibly challenge the status quo as dictated by the dominant group.

Insofar as language is concerned, English has been identified as the most powerful language globally. A handful of theorists and observers have questioned the hegemony of English at the expense of other less powerful languages, however, very little has been done to reverse the situation. Ironically, today, in most countries on the African continent, colonial languages, mainly English and French, have continued to be the most powerful languages (socially, politically and economically) while it is a known fact that most indigenous African languages are in danger of disappearing within the next few decades.

Unfortunately the same efforts made on the development of English are not exerted into protecting, preserving and promoting all the languages in this country. Language is a basic human right and in South Africa, a constitutional right; imposing one language (English) as the dominant language in all spheres of daily life goes against the spirit of inclusiveness that any democratic country needs to possess. If the hegemony of English remains unchallenged, this country will lose the rich, diverse languages and cultures that set it apart from the rest of the world forever.

## Chapter Three

# FACTORS RELATING TO THE TREATMENT OF MINORITY LANGUAGES ON SABC TV

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### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Beukes (2004a:7) describes the constitutional negotiations as a political miracle that saw the country moving from Nationalist rule to a democratic dispensation governed by a Government of National Unity led by Nelson Mandela. At the time, it appeared as though South Africans were committed to honouring their highly acclaimed, progressive Constitution” and they had high expectations of a free and democratic political system that would bring about transformation. During this heady period, the country witnessed a flurry of policies and interventions that were generated in aid of the government’s reconstruction and development project, which was aimed at effecting radical social redress, securing economic development and building a united nation, (Beukes, 2004a:2).

Orman (2008:91) observes that with this new democratic era came a significant break from the rigid policy of Afrikaans-English bilingualism that existed during the apartheid years. Legislating and entrenching a culture of multilingualism in the Constitution was one of the ways of remedying the language related political, social and economic injustices and imbalances of the past (Mwaniki, 2012:61). Pretorius (1999) believes that the post-apartheid constitution mandated the government to building upon an underlying philosophy of pluralism and linguistic human rights by pursuing a policy of equitable multilingualism (Orman, 2008:91). The South African constitution is recognised as one of the best in the world due to the breadth and scope of individual and social liberties accorded to citizens and because of the linguistic and cultural rights it has given to its ethnic and linguistic minorities (Federico, 2006; Monyae, 2006, Moyo, 2010:432).

By gearing itself towards being a multilingual dispensation, the South African government hopes to facilitate economic access, participation and output, especially for speakers of previously marginalized languages. In this way, it will help redress past

economic injustices while providing economic opportunities to all its citizens (Mwaniki, 2012:42). Makoni (2003:132) believes that by granting official status to nine African languages, South Africa charted a course in opposition to that of other African countries, for example, Malawi and Namibia, whose constitutions stipulate English as their only official language.

The language clause of the constitution is supported by the Bill of Rights which recognises language as a basic human right and states that "everyone has the right to use the language and participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights" (section 30), (Beukes, 2004b: 5). In addition to the constitution, other policies aimed at the protection and promotion of language rights include the Pan South African Language Board Act (Act 59 of 1995); the National Educational Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996); the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2000); the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996); the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997); the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act 3 of 2000); the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000); and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities Act (Act 19 of 2002), (Mwaniki, 2012:97).

South Africa does not exist in isolation, the progress in the achievements of the language, cultural and communication rights of ethnic minorities should not only be seen and understood through the prism of the country's history, but also the challenges of development and democratisation generally facing most countries on the continent (Moyo, 2010:425). Beukes (2004a:15) contends that the ANC's decision to make nine African languages official was a political compromise because it was unrealistic to attempt to maintain the status quo of the apartheid government where English and Afrikaans were the country's only two official languages. Beukes further argues that it is likely that the ruling party's supporters would most probably have accepted the option of English as the new South Africa's only official language, since it was the *de facto* lingua franca of the struggle. However, this option would have been strongly opposed by the (white) Afrikaans speech community.

### **3.2. HEGEMONY, LANGUAGE AND THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BROADCASTING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

During the apartheid era, South African citizens were divided and classified according to their racial background and mother tongue (Slabbert et al., 2007:335, UNESCO, 2011:6). Despite the fact that the racial fault line was the most prominent feature of the South African socio-political landscape for most of the twentieth century, there were certain momentous occasions when the language issue flared up to such an extent that the world was reminded that South Africa cannot be viewed in simple black-and-white terms (Alexander, 2011:311). Mongwe (2006:176) is of the opinion that one of the social consequences of these laws was social polarisation, especially between blacks and whites. This social segregation deprived South Africans of the opportunity to develop as a fully-fledged multilingual society in which the various linguistic groups could live in harmony with a degree of equality.

Horwitz (2001:38) remarks that in the apartheid era, the South African radio and television broadcasting landscape was dominated by the SABC. The history of the SABC is incomplete when reference to the influence of the Afrikaner elites who ruled South Africa from 1948 to 1994 is omitted (Hachten & Giffard, 1984, Jjuuko, 2005:37). When television broadcasting was finally introduced to the country in 1976, SABC-TV was seen as a means of challenging ideology and foreign culture and was soon given the task of challenging international cultural hegemony, (Tomaselli, 1988 in Kapatamoyo, 2007:215). Tomaselli et al (1989:94 – 103) states that the main effect of the SABC as an institution was to reinforce the allocated class positions in society at the time. The policy of separate radio stations for the various black ethnic groups not only underscored the divisions between black and white people, but also the ethnic differences with the black community itself. Fourie (2001:170) asserts that the inherent aim behind this strategy was to 'divide and rule' the already segregated society.

Although the SABC was generally regarded as a public broadcaster, Horwitz (2001:38) believes that in reality, it was an arm of the apartheid government and it reflected the National Party's (NP's) political agenda by forcefully promoting apartheid ideology in its

programming, editorial practices, and hiring practices. Acting as an agent to promote the views of the Nationalist government both inside and outside South Africa, the SABC stopped pretending to be an impartial public body a very long time ago (Potter, 1975:49, Fourie, 2001:170). The apartheid government did everything in its power to establish standardised cultural and linguistic groups. From the onset, language was identified as one of the most important aspects of the country's national identity that had to be protected from the supposedly corrupting influence of television (Kapatamoyo, 2007:216-217).

Dutch, English, and later, Afrikaans all became "legitimate languages" in different periods of the country's history. This legitimacy was, and still is, the result of colonial conquest. Furthermore as more and more structural transformations took place over time, the dominance of the above-mentioned languages was complemented and reinforced by hegemony (Alexander, 2011:315). Finlayson and Madiba (2002:44) point out that during the apartheid era, the indigenous African languages were only important in so far as they served as tools (used by the Nationalist government) for the division of African people into a large number of conflicting and competing so-called ethnic groups (UNESCO, 2011:6).

The role of national broadcasters in both colonial and post-colonial Africa has been mainly to fortify the ideology of the government and the ruling party while also promoting propaganda on behalf of the government (Mbaine, 2003:139). Kapatamoyo (2007:217) observes that in South Africa, broadcasting was not organized to provide a common space of communication culturally or technologically, instead broadcasting has been utilized as a tool to reinforce the notion of separate development - separate and distinct populations with their own separate cultures. Probyun (2005) believes that the Afrikaner Nationalist government strategically introduced the use of African languages to further its particular political aims of bolstering hegemonic relationships (Kapatamoyo, 2007:16).

Tomaselli (2006:97) is of the opinion that racial classification was part of the apartheid modernist project; as a result, the terms 'culture' and 'identity' became somewhat interchangeable. Masenyama (2005:14) asserts that the narrow hegemony of apartheid ideology, with the majority of the population forcefully boxed within set racial national group classifications, forms the background against which the new South African national identity had to be created. Perhaps this is why the historical tendency in the South African mass media is towards the expression of dominant interests. This is considered a serious threat to social cohesion, given how polarised South African society already is (Office of the Presidency, 2007:303).

Phaswana et al (2003: 117) note that as a backdrop for understanding the crisis around and preoccupation with the language question, South African language policy must be located within its socio-cultural context, from the seventeenth century right up until today. Building on three centuries of colonialism and the establishment of the South African Union in 1910, the apartheid state was systematic in its political and economic control, (Langford et al, 2013:121). Langford et al further describe apartheid as one of the world's most repressive regimes in modern times. Yet, Meyerhoff (2013:110) is of the opinion that the apartheid regime in South Africa collapsed partly as a consequence of political, sporting and economic boycotts.

According to Prah (2006:5), under apartheid, English retained the prestige it had historically acquired in the public domain as the language of British colonial power. Afrikaans on the other hand, was systematically developed with a great deal of state resources because it was the second official language. In fact, the struggle to assert the use of Afrikaans in the face of English hegemony, continued in the years following the Anglo-Boer War. For reasons connected to the history of colonial conquest, slavery, and the role of the missionaries, in the course of the nineteenth century, English rather than Afrikaans became the language of aspiration and national unity for the black elite (Alexander, 2011:312).

Nakayama & Halualani (2010:249b) attest that the hegemony of English refers to a situation where English is so dominant that inequality and discrimination take place in communication. In South Africa, English has an exceptionally high status. It is regarded as the major economic, educational, and social language of South Africa. Furthermore it has also become a symbol of the struggle against apartheid. However, English is also a colonial language, and its dominance as a language, coupled with the fact that it is only accessible to a privileged minority, poses “a very real psycholinguistic threat of alienation” (Erasmus 2002: 200, Kruger et al, 2007:36).

Prah (2006:4) asserts that language is the most important means of human intercourse. Sociologically, language has played a pivotal role in the growth and development of South Africa. It has been used for mobilization and segregation, education and mal-education, information and misinformation (Kapatamoyo, 2007:220). In choosing to use or not use a language, we unavoidably amplify the social voices with which we speak; and in doing so we unconsciously privilege our own ways of thinking over those of others (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010:229a). Stevens (2006:3) notes that the socio-political history of South Africa has played a major role in the language used in the country’s media.

Kruger et al. (2007:36) observe that South Africa is unique in that the increasing prevalence of English for all modes of communication is based on the perception (prevalent also among people who do not speak English as a first language) that social, cultural and economic advancement is inextricably linked to proficiency in English. Perhaps that is why to date, English is by far the most widely used language in the media, followed by Afrikaans and the African languages in that order (Stevens, 2006:3).

Ndlovu (2008) argues that even though Afrikaans is a minority language, it is recognised as a dominant minority language “due to its continued privileged status in post-colonial South Africa” (Moyo, 2010:428). Afrikaans continues to play an ancillary role in the processes of economic production in the so-called formal economy, even though there are determined attempts to reduce its presence in this domain as well, as in other high-status domains (Alexander, 2011:312).

### **3.2.1. THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF BROADCASTING**

The history of the SABC dates back to the late 1920's when film pioneer I.W. Schlesinger obtained a ten-year broadcasting license from the government for his African Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). By 1934, this medium was commercially successful, this prompted the government to invite Lord John Reith, the first Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to carry out an investigation and propose a public service model for South Africa (Hachten and Giffard, 1984; Golding-Duffy and Vilakazi, 1998, Jjuuko, 2005:34). The SABC was formed in 1936 by an act of Parliament; this led to the creation of national English and Afrikaans radio stations (Poisson, 2008:7).

Wiederroth (2012:111) notes that the SABC first went on air with its first Union-wide wireless broadcast for blacks on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1942. With this transmission, the SABC introduced its new service in five languages, English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sotho. The 1940s saw the launch of African language services and the introduction of radio services in local languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Southern Sotho. The corporation was further expanded in the 1960s when large-scale radio services that broadcast in all the major African languages were introduced (Slabbert et al, 2007:337, UNESCO, 2011:5).

When South Africa became a Republic under the leadership of H.F. Verwoerd on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1961, the Republic of South Africa Act reinforced the equality of English and Afrikaans, however, there was no mention of the status or position of African languages (Phaswana, 2003: 117). From these laws one can deduce that the public interest was very narrowly defined under apartheid. Many of the laws only made provision for the interests of the minority and ensured that their dominant position was maintained (Fourie, 2001:167). The National Party used the SABC to dominate its political opposition and, according to Hachten and Giffard (1984:200), its broadcasts did not truly reflect the cultural diversity of South African society (Fourie (2001:169).

### 3.2.2. THE INTRODUCTION OF TELEVISION

While countries such as Ethiopia, Liberia and Ghana introduced TV into their countries as early as 1964, it was only introduced to South Africa in 1976 (Wikipedia., 2013a). Orlik (1974) cites three reasons that the apartheid government used to argue against commissioning television in this country: (1) reliance on American and British produced features would be unavoidable and highly detrimental to the recently achieved broadcast equality of English and Afrikaans languages, (2) the potential political impact of television was unknown, and (3) the psychological impact of the medium on urbanised Bantu might be dangerous in a country where Caucasians alone possess the vote but constitute only one-fifth of the population (Kapatamoyo, 2007:215).

“At eight o’ clock, Prime Minister B. J. Vorster officially opened the service (SABC TV) with a short bilingual address. ‘After years of thorough preparations, we have now reached the stage where television becomes a part of our daily lives,’ Vorster explained. ‘... It is still too early to say or even to predict what influence it is going to have on our daily lives. But what *is* clear, is that we are dealing with a medium that, as it has already been experienced by all other countries, can have a powerful influence, whether for good or for bad” (Bevan, 2008:167).

The SABC’s official television service began on 5 January 1976 with one channel that broadcast only in English and Afrikaans. In the 1980s, SABC expanded its television services with the introduction of TV2 (which provided services “in the Nguni languages”) and TV3, which broadcast “in the Sotho languages”. The black channel (TV3) was launched with a stately gala opening. Its services were structured so that it broadcast to areas where there was electricity and a bigger concentration of people who speak different languages (Bevan, 2008:169). TV1 operated with an inflexible policy that allocated 50 per cent broadcast time to English language services and 50 per cent broadcast time to Afrikaans language services (Slabbert et al, 2007:337, UNESCO, 2011:5).

Television was instantly popular in South Africa, by the end of 1976, 650 000 licences had been issued, and more than 1,5 million viewers tuned in every evening. For the first

four years, television was broadcast for about 37 hours a week, with equal treatment of Afrikaans and English. The transmission time was extended to 42 and half hours per week in 1980 (Bevan, 2008:165). Kapatamoyo (2007:217) argues that disproportionately high amounts of resources were invested in the radio and television services for the minority white audiences and less for the codified and institutionalised nine African languages, each of which was conceived of as corresponding to a separate and distinct ethnic population, located in a homeland.

Jjuuko (2005:35) observes that the broadcaster used a top-down approach, ignoring the interests of the black majority while promoting those of the white minority. Benjamins (2010:29) asserts that in post-apartheid South Africa, where eleven languages are official and another eight are 'recognised', the lower status of widely spoken languages has been *legislatively* enhanced, but the unofficial pressures that sustain English as the country's lingua franca continue to remain unchallenged.

According to Tomaselli (2006:98) the apartheid division in the wider society was reflected in the structures of the television channels. SABC TV defined a South African as a white person, while Blacks were defined in terms of their ethnic groups (e.g. Zulu man, Sotho woman), (Currie & Markovitz, 1993:94, Masenyama, 2005:14). Apartheid was understood as a form of subjugation involving both race *and* class. Racially specific television programmes and advertisements made some stations whites-only and some blacks-only; in essence, to watch the 'wrong' ones was considered transgressive and subversive, as though it was a small invisible act of defiance. The state controlled public imagination, especially where freedom of expression was concerned (Office of the Presidency, 2007:302).

By 1979, the broadcasts covered more than 80% of the white population, and 42% of the black population, (Bevan, 2008:167). The SABC was restructured In the 1990s, TV1 was established as a commercial white channel and TV2 as a commercial black channel and renamed Contemporary Community Values Television (CCV) and a public service channel called National Network Television (NNTV) was created out of the Top Sport Surplus Sport (TSS) network (Horwitz, 2001, Jjuuko, 2005:36).

For many years during the 1970s and 1980s, local productions made up more than 60% of total television broadcasts. Imported programmes were also extremely popular. In the 1970s and 1980s, Dallas and The Cosby Show, for example, were on the list of most watched programmes. Dubbed programmes like Heidi were also very popular, as were certain co-productions like Casimir and Oscar (Bevan, 2008:167). In 1986, MNet, South Africa's first independent subscription service started airing (Poisson, 2008:8). MNet (Electronic Media Network) is a subscription-funded television channel in South Africa, established in 1986 by a consortium of newspaper companies. It offers a mix of general entertainment, children's programmes, sports and movies, most of which are acquired from overseas (Stevens, 2006:3).

Fourie (2001:169) states that in the late eighties the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) ran twenty four radio station services with broadcasts in twenty languages, as well as four television services with broadcasts in seven languages. On the surface, it appeared as though the previous government made some provision for *equality*, in as much as a public broadcasting system was in place. However, under scrutiny it is obvious that this system was not too concerned about the promotion of diversity.

Poisson (2008:8) states that in 1995 DSTV was formed. It is a subscription satellite bouquet of television channels further increasing the scope for domestic commercial productions (DSTV, 2008). This was followed by eTV in 1998. eTV is South Africa's first private free to air commercial television station (eTV, 2008). Top TV, a second satellite TV service, began broadcasting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2010 after being granted a pay TV license by ICASA in 2007, (Wikipedia., 2013b). In October 2013, eTV announced that it is launching four additional channels in October, 2013. eKasi+ celebrates and inspires authentic township life. eAfrica+ showcases original African stories, created by Africans, for Africans. eMovies+ will have a broad range of movie genres and ensure that everybody's needs are catered for. eToonz+ will provide quality kids entertainment (eTV., 2013a).

### **3.2.3. POST-APARTHEID: THE DEMOCRATISATION OF BROADCASTING**

Today politics and governance are directly or indirectly connected to the media. The media usually provides a public platform to debate issues such as globalisation, Europeanisation and other processes of change, this is why the media can be considered a primary space in the contemporary public sphere (Barnett 2003, Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, Franklin 1994, Fairclough, 2006:97). Mbaine (2003:142) remarks that the African broadcasting landscape between 1990 and the beginning of the 21st Century has been characterised by three main factors, (1) old state broadcasters in various stages of being transformed (2) private and community broadcasters and lastly (3) a multi-channel environment with both satellite and pay channels as alternatives to the public broadcaster.

Langford et al (2013:122) assert that after the interim constitution of 1993 came into being, the period of the Mandela Presidency (1994 – 1999) was marked by “heady legal and policy optimism”. The SABC attempted to transform itself into an institution that would serve the interests of all of South Africa’s citizens while aspiring to adhere to the objectives of the constitution at the same time, (Jjuuko, 2005:51). Tleane & Duncan (2003:83) remark that the SABC prioritised the development of a language policy in 1994. However, Prah (2006:29 – 30) contends that in the media, both print and electronic, the subordination of the interests of African language-speakers continues to be very marked.

Moyo (2010:427) notes that while radio appears to have excelled as a medium and platform for ethnic and linguistic minorities to celebrate their languages and cultures, the experience on television is alarming. Kamwangamalu (2003b: 233) observes that, “In spite of the change from apartheid to democracy, the indigenous African languages remain marginalised [on television and higher education], much as they were in the apartheid era” (Moyo, 2009:427). It is common for economically and politically strong languages to replace weaker languages (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010:252b).

Prah (2006:24) states that the transformation process in this country at the cultural and linguistic levels points to a steady integration of the budding African elites into the cultures of the white minorities, principally the English. Beukes (2004a:3) argues that democracy has been the greatest enemy of indigenous languages. All the grand pronouncements made in the early days of transition seem to have been thrown out of the window and the authorities have not paid any real attention to the issue. Kapatamoyo (2007:221) augments Beukes' standpoint by reiterating that the constitutional provisions and SABC practices in place have not had the desired effect of promoting the status of indigenous languages in public affairs, and have even faced criticism as being merely symbolic.

Prah (2006:23) observes that the situation in South Africa is such that African language-speakers are the overwhelming majorities with cultures, languages and histories, which have been ruthlessly suppressed under colonialism, and this unfortunate legacy has been carried over into the post-colonial era. Language maintenance is not a matter of priority for all language groups. Language maintenance assumes greater importance when a group and its language are at some risk of being absorbed into the culture of a more powerful linguistic neighbour, (Benjamins, 2010:32). Ten years into the 'new' South Africa and English had already firmly established itself as the most dominant language at the expense of all the other languages, this despite the fact that it is only spoken as a home language by approximately 8% of the population, (Prah, 2006:16).

The SABC undertakes to achieve its language broadcasting objectives by achieving fair and equitable allocation of financial and other resources when commissioning and airing programmes in the official languages, (Hassen, 2009:33). Kapatamoyo (2007:214) is of the opinion that the SABC's language policies are closely tied to the dominant ideology of the government regarding socio-linguistic and cultural rights. However, as far back as a decade ago, Fourie (2003:154) observed that "there is a general feeling of discontent among the African and Afrikaans language groups that the SABC is doing and has done, far too little to promote their languages and cultures". The unintended consequence of the SABC's relationship with the government over the years has resulted in the resentment of the medium by communities that feel they are

underrepresented in the language, content and presentation of the SABCs broadcasts (Kapatamoyo, 2007:215).

Media ownership and its relationship to the role of the media in general and broadcasting in particular is an essential question in the building of democratic societies (Nyamnyoh, 2003:114). There is no way a public broadcaster can fulfil its public broadcasting service (PBS) obligations without broadcasting in languages that are understood by both the majority and the minorities (Jjuuko, 2005:84). Fourie (2001:177) observes that equality is clearly articulated in the ANC policy about the role of public broadcasting services in South Africa. However, there has been some criticism about the restructuring and the role of the SABC under the new government.

### **3.3. LANGUAGE AND BROADCASTING REGULATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Laclau & Mouffe (2001:155) claim that “In order to be mobilised, the democratic principle of liberty and equality first had to impose itself as the new matrix of the social imaginary, or, in our terminology, to constitute a fundamental nodal point in the construction of the political”. Prah (2006:13 – 14) argues that during the early days of the new dispensation, the government’s eleven-language policy was an attempt to satisfy a wide range of contending interests, and to avoid possible future conflicts around the potentially explosive and divisive language issue. In trying to appease all the various constituencies, the government failed to chart a way forward that would meet the needs of the teeming African language speaking majorities.

Makoni (2003:140) believes that the problem with the implementation of the South African national language policy (its “inelegance, contradiction and messiness”) is a direct consequence of the very nature of the languages it seeks to promote. To begin with, it is important to bear in mind that the discourse that constructs African languages as separate categories is rooted in colonial thinking, namely in an ideology of “linguistic fixity” that disregards the socio-historical contexts in which they were invented (Ranger 1985; Chimhundu 1992; Harries 1995; Makoni 1998b, Makoni, 2003:134).

While ethnic and linguistic minorities enjoy constitutional protection on paper, the reality of the situation on the ground is another matter, (Moyo, 2010:432). Fourie (2003:165) is of the opinion that the problem may be that the South African broadcasting policy was developed too hastily under the undue influence of foreign consultants operating in the interest of transnational corporations and not necessarily in the interest of the country and its needs and circumstances. Cuvelier et al (2010:136) attribute the failure to implement constitutionally prescribed multilingualism policies to the government's unsuccessful top-down approach.

### **3.3.1 THE CONSTITUTION**

According to (Anon., 2013a), the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, was approved by the Constitutional Court on 4 December 1996 and took effect on 4 February 1997. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land. No other law or government action can supersede the provisions of the Constitution. The Constitution (1996:1245) states that the official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Finlayson and Madiba (2002:41) point out that the 11 official languages are part of a total of between 24 and 30 languages spoken in South Africa. The 11 official languages “account for the home languages of a very large majority of the total population of around 45 million people” in South Africa” (UNESCO, 2011:5).

The Constitution (1996:1245) also recognises the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of the people and declares that the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. Maurais & Morris (2003:209) note that, “African languages have been celebrated by passionate homages exalting their richness, their originality and their necessary link with African-ness”. However it would be quite another thing to take positive steps towards developing them for the modern world by promoting a policy of language planning.

Langford et al (2013:120) assert that South Africa's constitution is well known for its transformational social vision, justifiable socio-economic rights and its emphasis on achieving substantive equality. The South African Constitution indicates how vitally important language rights are. However Meyerhoff (2013:111) also points out that there are, smaller language groups whose languages have not been given official recognition and support - this creates a hierarchy within the larger sociolinguistic picture of the new South Africa. Nakayama & Halualani (2010: 262b) set forth that, "Linguistic equality together with language rights should be urgently established so that a more equal and democratic international communication will be made possible where voices of different languages will be heard and recognised".

Insofar as the SABC and the constitution are concerned, Gutto (2001:115) states that from a constitutional point of view, the media derive their primary legal position from, and they also exploit, the right to freedom of expression and the right of access to information. Furthermore, the media are part of civil society or the "public" and thus enjoy the direct constitutional privilege of participation in the activities of the legislative organs of state and government. Over the years, political rights have flourished – universal suffrage, media rights and rights of association – and in some provinces and localities there is significant political competition. But the full development of highly competitive multi-party politics (with regular transfers of executive power) and a broader participatory form of governance have been potentially slowed down by the ruling party's dominance (Langford et al, 2013:123).

Makoni (2003:132) believes that the main reason this country's constitution has been heralded as intellectually progressive and politically enlightened is because of the significance it attaches to the acknowledgement of multilingualism in the African context. Phaswana (2003:117) argues that the fact that the South African national government has been charged by the new Constitution with the tasks, *inter alia*, of the promotion of multilingualism and multiculturalism on the one hand, and the promotion, as well as the elevation, of the status of African languages on the other, makes the issue of language/s used and preferred by the national government crucial. However,

despite its worthy intentions, the degree to which the government has managed to attain its objectives regarding language rights as set out in the Constitution, remains questionable (Kruger et al. 2007:35).

### 3.3.2 THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Language should be recognised and established as an essential part of human rights because it is one of the most important components for human beings (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 261b). The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom, (Bill of Rights, 1996:1245). According to (Anon., 2013b) the state must respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights in the Bill of Rights.

Insofar as language is concerned, the Bill of Rights declares that:

- “The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (Bill of Rights, 1996:1246).
- “Persons belonging to a Cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community- (a) to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language; and (h) to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society” (Bill of Rights, 1996:1257).
- “Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights” (Bill of Rights, 1996: 1257).

Fourie (2001:176) states that freedom of expression forms an integral part of the Bill of Rights, which, *inter alia*, also makes provision for the right to send *and* receive

information. According to UNESCO (2011:2) South Africa is a good example of a country in which constitutional clauses and policy guidelines obligate the public service broadcaster to promote all 11 official languages in its programming.

### **3.3.3 THE BROADCASTING ACT**

The Broadcasting Act 1999 set out to establish and develop a broadcasting policy in South Africa in the public interest which would among other things contribute to democracy, development of society and encourage ownership and control of broadcasting services through participation of persons from historically disadvantaged groups, (Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group, 1999:25). The SABC derives its mandate from the Broadcasting Act of 1999 (UNESCO, 2011:5).

“A range of programming in the Republic's official languages must be extended to all South Africans as circumstances permit” (Broadcasting Act, 1999:10). The Act (1999:13) goes on to state that the public service provided by the Corporation must:

- a) Make services available to South Africans in all the official languages;
- b) Reflect both the unity and diverse cultural and multilingual nature of South Africa and all of its cultures and regions to audiences;
- c) Strive to be of high quality in all of the languages served

The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group (1999:25) states that under the terms of the Broadcasting Act, programming provided by the South African broadcasting media must be varied and comprehensive, providing a balance of information, education and entertainment while meeting the broadcasting needs of the entire South African population in terms of race, gender, interests and backgrounds.

### **3.3.4 REGULATORY CONTROL (ICASA)**

Fourie (2001:166) defines regulators as institutions or measures that function within the external framework to determine or co-determine media content from the outside.

Horwitz (2001:38) states that the constitutional negotiators created an independent regulatory board to direct the changes and to oversee the broadcast sector as a whole. Still sensitive to the role of apartheid censorship and capital's self-interest, Parliament stipulated that the IBA be an "independent agency" subject only to the Constitution and the law and "without any political or commercial interference" (Rivers, 2008:101).

The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act 1993 established the IBA to control and regulate the broadcast media. The IBA commenced its operations in 1994, (Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group, 1999:26). Rivers (2008:101) states that in 2000, the IBA was disbanded; its authority was assumed by the new Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA).

According to (ICASA., 2013a) ICASA was established as a merger of the telecommunications regulator, the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). The Authority is responsible for regulating the telecommunications, broadcasting and postal industries in the public interest and ensuring affordable services of a high quality for all South Africans (ICASA., 2013a).

Rivers (2008:101) notes that parliament passed the ICASA Act with the intent of spurring technological integration and innovation within and between the broadcasting and telecommunications industries. Gutto (2001:114) adds that like any other branch of the media, it (SABC) is subject to regulation by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), an independent constitutional institution. Even though the state is generally regarded as the most important regulator of the media, it is certainly not the only one. Ultimately, all institutions or individuals outside the media – and in the position to regulate the media in some or other way – could directly or indirectly lay down media policy in the external framework (Fourie, 2001:166).

According to ICASA's official website (ICASA., 2013a) the functions of ICASA are –

1. To license broadcasters, signal distributors, providers of telecommunication services and postal services;
2. To make regulations;

3. To impose license conditions;
4. To plan, assign, control, enforce and manage the frequency spectrum;
5. To ensure international and regional co-operation;
6. To ensure the efficient allocation of numbers;
7. To ensure interoperability of networks;
8. To receive and resolve complaints;

According to (ICASA., 2013b) the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa is a product of statute, the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa Amendment Act of 2000, amended in 2005. The primary objective of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa Act of 2006 (ICASA Amendment Act) is to provide for the regulation and control of telecommunication matters in the public interest (S2). It seeks, among others, to promote the universal and affordable provision of telecommunication services. Furthermore, the Act established the South African communications regulator, and the regulator shall be independent and impartial, (ICASA., 2013b).

### **3.4. LANGUAGE PARITY AND THE FUNDING OF BROADCASTING**

Gutto (2001:114) sets forth that in the broader scheme of societal structures, the modern media are basically business institutions that deal with information. They are major ideological focal points and therefore, centres of intellectual power in society. They are in the business of gathering, processing and disseminating public information, news and advertising, whilst at the same time remaining profitable. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most public service broadcasters have survived by reinventing themselves to meet the challenges of new technology, competition and regulatory change. Public broadcasters have to manage a difficult balance between redefining their remit in a rapidly changing communications environment and, at the same time, securing sufficient funding sources that do not compromise that remit (Lowe & Hujanen, 2003:134).

The nonaligned role of the media as a 'fourth estate' fulfilling a public service role, providing accurate and neutral information, and where necessary, exposing and

criticizing social ills, is being seriously undermined as transnational corporations become dominant in the media field across the globe (Blumer & Gurevitch 1995, Fairclough, 2006:99). This new so-called global communications industry is dominated by powerful transnational corporations (e.g. AOL-Time Warner, Vivendi, News Corporation, General Electric, IBM, Microsoft) and plays a pivotal role in the emergent 'global economy' (Fairclough, 2006:99).

Horwitz (2001:37) observes that old monopoly structures in telecommunication and broadcasting have been giving way to new models of liberalisation, competition and privatisation; these models are pushed by transnational corporations, multilateral organisations and trade regimes. Ricento (2000:17) declares that, "The domination of the media by a handful of multinational industries and the consequent world-wide control and dissemination of culture is an even greater threat to independence than colonialism" (Lubbe, 2011:14).

The South African Broadcasting Corporation can be defined as an independent public, commercial and community broadcasting company owned by the state, but dependent on commercial advertising (Gutto, 2001:113). Mbaine (2003:152) observes that in Southern Africa, public radio and television have found their survival in commercialization after losing their monopoly position. Tleane & Duncan (2003:166) argue that due to the harsh fiscal realities imposed on the SABC by decreased, almost non-existent public funding, it was forced to adopt practices that can be considered to be detrimental to its image as a suitable public broadcaster.

The South African broadcast system is a mixed system of commercial, community and public service broadcasting (Horwitz, 2001:39). Lowe & Hujanen (2003:123) note that most public service broadcasters have survived by reinventing themselves to meet the challenges of new technology, competition and regulatory change. When the SABC tried to transform itself into a self-sustaining broadcaster, it was compelled to rely more heavily on advertisers and sponsors (Tleane & Duncan, 2003:166).

Steeners (1999) claims that this reinvention has come at a price; the broadcaster has been forced to emulate commercial practices either because of necessity or financial and political pressures (Lowe & Hujanen, 2003:123). Jjuuko (2005:20) states that the SABC is largely funded through advertising with additional revenue from television licenses and government grants. The problem with reliance or dependence on advertising is that most of the African economies are small and advertising revenue is still hard to come by. Many economies have yet to recover from the command policies of the past even with economic reforms (Mbaine, 2003:153).

The competition between the public service broadcaster and privately owned commercially driven broadcasters means that broadcasters are seeking out audiences with spending power instead of mass audiences (Mbaine, 2003:158). Moyo (2010:433) opines that the dominance of English and Afrikaans languages is not necessarily caused by a lack of political will to implement policies by government, but rather by the power that English and Afrikaans speakers wield in the South African economy. Mbaine (2003:158) believes that advertisers look for broadcasters who target affluent audiences and not necessarily mass audiences.

Public service broadcasters responded to the new market environment by modifying their programming strategies (e.g. new and popular programme formats such as game shows and talk shows of which the quality is more than often dubious), by moving towards thematic channels and narrowcasting, by extending popular programme formats, by co-operating with independent producers/joint ventures, by exploring supplementary sources of revenue (apart from advertising, sponsorships, subscriptions, etc.), by rationalising working practices, by providing additional value-added services (e.g. time-shifting and extended coverage), and by providing of services that go beyond traditional broadcasting, for example on-line services (Fourie, 2003: 150 – 151).

Public service broadcasters are obliged to serve the interests of the public rather than governmental or private interests (Tleane and Duncan, 2003, Jjuuko, 2005:12). Lowe & Hujanen (2003:126) assert that the widely held belief that the market will ignore minority tastes or restrict access based on the ability to pay is not new. However true that ratings

success underpins claims to public funding, it is problematic to reconcile both the pressures and attractions of the marketplace with the more traditional principles of public service broadcasting (Lowe & Hujanen, 2003:123).

One of the major challenges facing public service broadcasting is crafting viable and sustainable funding and financing mechanisms (Mbaine, 2003:150). Kruger (2004:3) points out that compared to producing a programme locally, buying a programme from an Anglophone country is much cheaper. Kramsch (282) cautions that the concept of intercultural communication should not be used to gloss over the increasingly deep rift between the rich and the poor, between those who have access to Western discourse and power and those who don't, and lastly the "discourses of colonialism" promoted by English as a global language (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 230a).

According to the SABC's 2011 Annual Report (2011:21), the SABC received R872 million in license fees in 2011. This means the SABC is heavily reliant on commercial revenues, which make up 76% of the total revenue for 2011; this trend has not changed over the past 5 years. Licence fees make up only 17% of the revenue for the SABC. Lowe & Hujanen (2003:124) argue that the licence fee may not allow public service broadcasters to do everything they wish to participate in the digital revolution, but at least, in most cases this income allows them to concentrate on programming rather than the pursuit of profits. If the SABC wants audiences to accept and comply with paying license fees and levies, it needs to ensure that it creates strong links through programming and give the audience a sense of ownership (Mbaine, 2003:159).

"While there was a substantial shift in the locus of political power away from the white community, economic centres of power remained largely unaffected. Race remains a predominant factor in poverty and inequality" (Langford et al, 2013:122 - 123). Horwitz (2001:37-38) is of the opinion that the economy was and remains the key terrain of contestation today, because the economy, more than any other post-apartheid institution, determines the life chances of politically enfranchised modern South Africans.

South Africa's transition to democracy is similar to many other political transitions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) in the sense that it was a *double* transition: from authoritarianism to democracy, and from a controlled or command economy to a market system more responsive to the exigencies of globalisation (Horwitz, 2001:38). The SABC's dependence on advertising revenue results in more emphasis being given to audience size rather than audience appreciation, (Position Paper, 2009:18). "It is clear that some people's ways of speaking are also more equal than others" (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 231a). The small languages – minority or otherwise – are handicapped because they do not represent sufficiently profitable markets (Maurais, 2003:19).

Kapatamoyo (2007:221) argues that, "South African whites have significantly higher incomes than the "non-white" South Africans, who together make up the majority of the population". According to an online article (Mail & Guardian., 2013) "the average income by race showed white people earning the highest, followed by Indian/Asian people, coloured people and then black people, this is based on the findings of the 2011 Census". The 2011 Census found that the unemployment rate among the black African population group is the highest, while among the white population group is the lowest (Census, 2011:51). Tleane & Duncan (2003:14) believe that the wealthier the audiences, the more advertising they will attract and the more broadcasters will tailor their services to attract these audiences, hence the often-cited reference to broadcasters "selling audiences to advertisers".

As far back as 2003, local television productions cost more than R3 000 (US\$300) per minute, (Kariithi, 2003:174). The funding of public service broadcasting has a direct impact on programming and the choices available to citizens of this country (Mbaine, 2003:153). It is pointless to mandate a public service broadcaster to perform certain tasks, such as providing broadcasting services in 11 official languages, if sufficient funding is not available (Fourie, 2003:168). Unfortunately a decade ago, debates in South Africa during the Broadcasting Amendment Bill (2002) process revealed that even if the SABC gets the lion's share of advertising on account of its reach, the revenues would not be sufficient to fulfill its African languages mandate (Mbaine, 2003:158).

Kruger (2004:3) is of the opinion that imported English programmes are here to stay as they consistently guarantee entertainment and information at affordable rates (Lowe & Hujanen, 2003:130) state that due to the increased costs of producing local programmes and the increase in transmission capacity, some public service broadcasters have demonstrated that they are just as capable as their commercial counterparts at implementing competitive scheduling and commissioning strategies. Erasmus (2002:201) summarizes the key question surrounding the viability of multilingualism as follows: "Is multilingualism an affordable, practical, viable option in a Third World environment?" Financial viability and practical considerations are the most cited reasons for an unwillingness to implement a greater degree of multilingualism (Kruger et al, 2007:42).

Teer-Tomaselli (1998:156-157) noted that catering for the information and entertainment needs of a small group of distinct language speakers is expensive and the rate of return on the number of viewers and listeners reached is very low. This is particularly true of television, where original programming is very costly to produce (UNESCO, 2011:8). Wardhaugh (1992:26) believes that a bilingual, or multilingual, situation can result in either the loss or diffusion with features of one language spread to another language on a syntactic level (Bembe, 2006:26).

Slabbert et al. (2007:339) outline the challenges that confront the SABC as it strives to produce and broadcast a variety of programmes in 11 official languages in an equitable manner (UNESCO, 2011:6):

- The first challenge is the constitutional obligation to cater for 11 official languages in an even-handed way.
- The second challenge deals with limited broadcast time available to fit in all programmes in all the 11 official languages.
- The divergences and parallels among the 11 official languages (e.g. some language groups are bigger or smaller than others); some languages are "more marginalised than others (Xitsonga, Tshivenda, siSwati and isiNdebele).

- The additional responsibility this places on institutions such as the SABC to address this marginalization.
- And lastly, the possibility of using television to promote South Africa's diverse cultures and languages.

Public broadcasting has to see its audience as a 'public' rather than a 'market' (Lowe & Hujanen, 2003:44). Fourie (2003:166) states that the public service broadcaster should ensure that its programming is popular, not in the derogatory sense that some give this term, but rather in the sense that the public forum it provides should not be restricted to an elitist minority. Prah (2006:22) argues that the cultural and linguistic oppression of Africans in South Africa, which affects Africans more profoundly than any other group in the country, is paralleled by an economic structure of subordination. Fourie (2003:149) believes that the SABC can possibly play a developmental role in South Africa and meet the objectives set out in the South African Broadcasting Act (1999) if its policies are geared towards that end and not dictated by market trends.

### **3.5. LANGUAGE PARITY AND THE TREATMENT OF MINORITY LANGUAGES BY THE SABC**

African broadcasters tend to privilege foreign languages or the most spoken languages and to marginalize some African and minority languages (Mbaine, 2003:155). Orman (2008:143) states that in addition to the fact that most black South Africans are symbolically alienated by the state's linguistic practices which promote an English-speaking, self-styled universalist, pan-South African identity, they are also instrumentally and materially marginalised by an increasing dominance of the English language in most spheres of public life on a daily basis.

Kapatamoyo (2007:217) states that at a social level, the SABC faces the challenge of language syncretism because of the multilingual nature of its audience. Maingard (1997:262) argued that the recognition of 11 official languages in South African broadcasting "further entrenches the responsibilities of broadcasters both in terms of

advancing linguistic democracy and in terms of safeguarding the rights of those whose languages have been disregarded in the past” (UNESCO, 2011:6).

The 1990s was a period of significant transformation for the South African broadcasting environment (Kapatamoyo, 2007:221). Once upon a time, states and governments representing the public interest could – if they wished – exercise a certain constraining influence on the appetite of commercial media (Raboy, 2003:41). As far back as 2003, Lowe & Hujanen (2003:123) asserted that it is easy to conclude that the future outlook for broadcast television and public service television, in particular, is bleak. Fourie (2003:152) outlines the crisis of public service broadcasters: “On the one hand, they have to adhere to public service obligations. On the other hand, if they fail to rise to technological and competitive challenges, they cannot afford their public service obligations and will lose their audiences in the process”.

Public service broadcasting has the potential to play a vital role in a situation where structural imbalances and scarcities of media access can undermine democratization and development (Mbaine, 2003:138). Public service broadcasters are expected to be independent institutions. Independence may mean the freedom to make decisions without needing help from other forces. However, the sense more commonly applied to PBS is where independence may also mean being autonomous, the ability to act and make decisions without being controlled by anyone else (Hornby, 2000, Jjuuko, 2005:10).

Ideally, public service broadcasting is expected to cater for the diverse needs of its audiences (UNESCO, 2011:2). Lowe & Hujanen (2003:127) point out that there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ public broadcaster because the commitment to societal objectives is compromised if there is an over-reliance on commercial income or objectives. There is no consensus on what PBS entails among scholars and policymakers. The role a PBS plays in a society is not static, it differs from one country to another” (Mpofu, 1996, Chukunkhuzeni, 1999, Jjuuko, 2005:7).

Public service broadcasters worldwide are expected to produce programmes that cater for everybody. In countries with a common language, this might not be as difficult as it is in a multilingual country such as ours (Jjuuko, 2005:83). Hefer (2011:1) points out a major shortcoming of programming in minority languages – while it boosts the local morale and the local film and television production industry by creating a sense of accomplishment, it also presents a number of logistic challenges. The material produced is often not accessible to the majority of the South African viewing public because of language barriers and the lack of sufficient (if any) subtitles. Lubbe et al (2011:10) argue that the language-as-a-problem orientation favours a single language and attempts to restrict the role of minority languages. Such an attitude can also be typified as assimilationist.

According to acting general manager of the Broadcasting Compliance Unit in the Policy and Regulatory Affairs Unit of the SABC, Fakir Hassen (2009:30), the term equitable means just, fair and reasonable — not necessarily equal — treatment. In this regard, the SABC aims to broadcast every official language on television, while ensuring that programmes are accessible to as many viewers as possible. Hassen (2009:30) further highlights that equitability is achieved through a combination of means, including unilingual productions and multilingual programmes. The SABC also strives to explore the use of technologies such as subtitling to ensure that programmes are accessible to as many viewers as possible. At times this objective is best met by broadcasting in cognate or widely understood languages. When this is applied, the SABC rotates the use of languages in any cognate group in order to achieve equitability. This explains why some programmes have more characters or presenters who speak in more than one language.

Hassen (2009:30) notes that in determining the allocation of time given to each language, SABC uses the following criteria:

- The number of home language speakers in the coverage area of a channel
- The geographical spread of the language

- The extent to which members of a language community are able to understand other languages
- The extent of marginalization of the language
- The extent to which it is understood by other South Africans
- Available resources.

Hassen (2009:30) states that in fulfilling its mandate to provide television programmes in all the official languages, the SABC takes into account the following:

- The Constitutional requirement to treat all the official languages equitably
- The comparatively little television air time available, especially in prime time, and the complexities of allocating time equitably to all the languages
- The similarities and differences between the official languages; for example, certain languages are part of a cognate group (languages that are mutually understandable within that group), others are not cognate but are shared and understood by different communities, whereas some are neither mutually understandable nor widely spoken
- In addition, some language communities are much bigger than others
- The realization that certain languages are recognised as being more marginalized than others (XiTsonga, TshiVenda, SiSwati and SiNdebele) and the additional responsibility this places on institutions such as the SABC to address this marginalisation
- The need to address historical underdevelopment of the vast majority of South Africans and their languages in order to realise the rights of all people to equality and dignity
- The unique potential of television to showcase cultures and languages creatively; to nurture people's knowledge and experience of one another, and to contribute to developing a national identity

Apart from broadcasting programmes in various languages on the same television channels, the SABC management has also developed new programmes that advance multilingualism. For example, it's common for several presenters to anchor a single

news programme or quiz show, each presenter speaking a different language (and thus representing and speaking to a different language constituency in South Africa).

Sometimes individual hosts will switch between two or three languages, often within the same sentence, (Hassen, 2009:31). Barnard (2006:49) observes that popular South African soap operas are the epitome of this trend: different characters may speak different languages, individual characters may switch languages depending on whom they are addressing, or sometimes within sentences spoken to a single addressee, and dialogue is often subtitled into an additional language (UNESCO, 2011:7).

### **3.5.1. SABC POLICY**

The institutionalisation of public service media is critical not only because it promotes the development of local programs and talents but also because it enhances citizen access to information, democratization of information and the development of a deliberative public sphere in which the citizens will engage freely in participatory communication to empower themselves, (UNESCO, 2011:2). In South Africa, there is a deliberate policy framework designed to facilitate the use of public service broadcasting to improve and develop official languages. Furthermore, the SABC is obliged by its charter to develop specific policies that address issues relating to news and editorial, programming, local content, education, universal service and access, language and religion, (UNESCO, 2011:5).

According to the SABC's Mandate (SABC., 2013a) the Charter is laid down in chapter IV of the Broadcasting Act (as amended) and requires the SABC to encourage the development of South African expression by providing, in the official languages, a wide range of programming that:

- a) Reflects South African attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity
- b) Displays South African talent in educational and entertaining programmes
- c) Offers a plurality of views and a variety of news, information and analysis from a South African point of view
- d) Advances the national and public interest

In relation to language, the SABC's Charter (SABC., 2013b) states that:

- a) The Corporation must encourage the development of South African expression by providing, in South African official languages, a wide range of programming that reflects South African attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity
- b) The Corporation must develop a Code of Practice that ensures that the services and the personnel comply with-(a) the constitutional principle of equality;(b) the equitable treatment of all segments of the South African population;(c) the constitutional requirement of equitable treatment of all official languages

Language development is highly recognised and addressed in the SABC charter and mandate. This is understandable in light of the legacy of discrimination suffered by speakers of other languages that were not recognised as official during the Apartheid era (UNESCO, 2011:6). There is an urgent need to move away from the current dominance of English to a situation in which all the languages of South Africa are treated equally, and properly resourced not only on paper but, in fact (Prah, 2006:24).

### **3.5.2. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF SOME MINORITY LANGUAGES**

Beukes (2004b:2) asserts that "many of our young democracy's hatchlings have started "testing their wings". However, some of these hatchlings have remained bound to their nests, lacking the maturity to test their wings for long haul flights. A case in point is the language policy planning crisis faced by the SABC. The requirement for equitable representation of all official languages in post-apartheid South Africa presents the SABC with a major challenge of how to broadcast in 11 official languages in an equitable manner on its three television channels, (UNESCO, 2011:6). Nakayama & Halualani (2010: 231a) observe that while some people's languages are considered prestigious, attractive and cutting-edge, others are dismissed as unimportant, insufficient and primitive.

Dibetso & Smith (2012:1) argue that there is still an under-representation of marginalised people and the issues that affect them on SABC TV. Siswati, Tshivenda, Ndebele and Xitsonga receive the least amount of coverage (if we exclude sign language). IsiZulu stands out of the indigenous languages, but this is perhaps less surprising since Zulu is one of the most common languages in South Africa. Furthermore, despite the fact that the number of people who speak English as a first language in South Africa stands at eight per cent, more than 76 per cent of programmes (based on broadcast time) are primarily broadcast in English. The second and third most predominant languages are Afrikaans (6 percent) and IsiZulu (5 percent) (Dibetso & Smith, 2012:11- 12).

Orman (2008:94) notes that in a typical week in May 1998, English-language programmes took up 91% of the airtime of the three television channels of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (Kamwangamalu, 2004a: 239 – 40). Afrikaans-language programmes had 5, 66% of airtime while Zulu, numerically the country's largest language, had just 1.01% of airtime. Four of the smaller Bantu languages – isiNdebele, SiSwati, Tsonga and Venda – had no airtime at all. In 1999, on SABC 1, English accounted for 86, 4 percent of airtime, with African languages accounting for 5 percent. This situation did not change much for two years, although there was a slight improvement in unspecified programming areas in African languages (to the tune of approximately 3 percent) (Tleane & Duncan, 2003:165).

In the SABC Annual Report (2011:67), the section on compliance with ICASAs language quotas reveals that in 2011, SABC TV only had 1, 38% programming in marginalized languages as opposed to the 1, 54% quota ICASA target. Prah (2006:25) is of that opinion that “the persistence of this condition undermines democracy in a cultural sense and entrenches a sense of inferiority not only to the African languages but those who use those languages”. Furthermore, the fact that English dominates television means that television in our country implicitly addresses the concerns and interests of English speakers, (Prah, 2006:28). Dibetso & Smith (2012:12) note that even if all foreign-generated content is removed from SABC TV's programming schedule, 65 percent of locally produced content is also in English.

According to ICASAs' licensing conditions (SABC RFB Book, 2010:13), SABC 1 & SABC 2 are expected to have:

1. Sixteen hours and 24 minutes of official languages other than English, but excluding marginalised languages in prime time
2. One hour and 48 minutes of marginalised languages in prime time; and,
3. Forty-one hours of official languages other than English during the South African television Performance Period

In 2005 the SABC was granted a licence to begin two new regional television channels focusing on marginalised indigenous languages. The aim of the two channels was to ensure that languages such as tshiVenda, xiTsonga, siSwati and isiNdebele received more broadcast time, (Fourie, 2008:55). According to Mwaniki (2012: 42) the deliberate attempt to promote previously marginalized languages is a systematic response aimed at including the speakers of these languages, and who make up a majority of South Africa's population, into mainstream social and political discourses, processes and outcomes. Beukes (2004a:21) observes that "the promise articulated more than two decades ago that "the African National Congress (ANC) has identified language as an area in need of planning for post-apartheid South Africa" (Eastman 1992: 95) has not borne the envisaged fruit".

As far back as 2003, Fourie (2003:153) lamented, "the SABC has been criticised, among other things, for mismanagement, corruption and nepotism, a drop in the quality of news and documentaries, and too few local productions. In short, there is rising discontent that very little has materialized of the vision for public service broadcasting as formulated during the years of the struggle against apartheid by the Jabulani Group, the Campaign for Open Media and the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting. Langford et al (2013:125) state that, "the national media have regularly raised issues of corruption and poverty". More recently, the SABC has spent a whopping R19.5 million investigating corruption at the public broadcaster and a further R10.8 million on resolving staff dismissal disputes since 2009. The SABC's own internal and forensic audit units have carried out 107 investigations, (Anon., 2013c).

People's attitude towards how others speak tells us a lot about the material and cultural inequalities between people who speak differently from each other (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 231a). While the perception is that the majority of the South African population is proficient in English, a sociolinguistic survey (PanSALB 2001: 9) indicated that only 22% of non-English-speaking South Africans feel they are fully proficient in English to the degree that allows them full access to speeches and statements in English, while 27% feel that they understand only as much as they need to (Kruger et al. 2007:41).

Laponce (2003:58) is of the opinion that most languages are like leaves blowing in the wind. But the major standardised languages have at least some control over their own evolution, and those that are supported by a government have ways of steering their relations among the other languages with which they are linked by communication, competition, cooperation and conflict. Barnett (2000: 77) argues that minority African languages have not received as much attention in broadcasting debates as, for example, Afrikaans. This can be attributed largely to the fact that the Afrikaans language lobby is backed by strong organisational and economic resources (Kruger et al. 2007:42).

James Tollefson writes, “[Language] is built into the economic and social structure of society so deeply that its fundamental importance seems only natural” (Alexander, 2011:312). Nakayama & Halualani (2010:231a) criticise the fact that our scholarship is constrained by the tendency to think of language as merely (or neutrally) representational rather than as reproductive and politically invested.

In 2007, a pilot study was conducted and focused on two marginalised official languages, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. The reason for the marginalised status of these languages is attributable not only to the fact that they are each spoken by less than 5% of the total population, but also to the fact that they are spoken mainly in remote rural areas. Furthermore, they do not belong to either of the two major language families, namely the Nguni languages (IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, IsiNdebele and Siswati) and the Sotho languages (Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi) (Kruger et al. 2007: 42). The study found

that on television, Tshivenda viewers have access to one multilingual drama series per week in which Tshivenda is represented, one multilingual magazine programme containing Tshivenda, and one ten-minute news bulletin. Xitsonga viewers receive only a ten-minute news bulletin per day and limited representation in a couple of multilingual programmes, (Kruger et al. 2007:44).

Critics claim that public broadcasting in South Africa has tended to display a bias towards certain language and ethnic groups, (Kapatamoyo, 2007:215). Mbaine (2003:145) observes that public service broadcasting is expected to nurture, reflect and represent the plurality and diversity of cultures as they exist and evolve in a society and other societies that make up the world. According to Fourie (2003:171), the public service broadcaster is expected to play a role in changing negative prevailing social attitudes towards marginalized groups and provide, both in programming and employment, a platform for marginalised groups to express themselves. It seems that in the case of South Africa, the success of minority language development is linked to two factors: (1) specific constitutional clauses on language development and (2) the strengthening of that requirement in the SABC mandate intended to boost minority language programming on the SABC (UNESCO, 2011:7).

Mbaine (2003:155) is of the opinion that most authoritarian regimes have used state broadcasters in their projects of ethnic and cultural hegemony by privileging some languages over others. Public service broadcasters should avoid going down the same path. Maurais & Morris (2003:212) note that one may mention, first, the general weakness of most African states that have generally too small a population to handle long-range, large cultural programmes. All the more so, since economic crises in the countries demand much attention. The South African experience demonstrates the hard realism of entrenched power constraints but at times its surprising fragility in the face of idealism. This idealism was initially embedded in the constitutional, legislative and developmental optimism that followed the end of apartheid. However, socio-economic progress was disturbed by certain constellations of power, for instance, the visible

power of the state and corporate interests and the invisible attitudes and ideologies that resisted change (Langford et al, 2013:146).

### **3.6. CONCLUSION**

With the dawn of democracy, many South Africans believed that all the languages in this country would finally be given equal status, not just in the Constitution, but also in other spheres of life such as education and broadcasting. Elevating the status of the other languages was meant to rectify the social ills of the past, however, it is abundantly clear that we are far from seeing language parity manifesting into a reality. In addition to social, political and economic pressures, language disparity can be largely attributed to this country's fraught past of slavery, colonialism and more recently, apartheid. It is difficult for a country that has been divided along racial and ethnic lines for so many decades to heal the wounds of its past and transform into a functioning multilingual society overnight, a lot more work needs to be done in this regard.

The statutory provisions put in place to promote, protect and preserve the less powerful languages in this country are theoretically sound however they seem to be impractical on the level of implementation.

Furthermore, it is evident that policy makers do not bear in mind the cost of producing local content when drawing up some of their lofty policies, this also contributes towards the widening gap between policy development and policy implementation. Still struggling to adjust to all the changes that come with being part of a fast-changing, technologically driven global village, South Africa is basically a developing country with a traumatic past: this should also be taken into consideration when critiquing the progress made in the promotion of multilingualism. Multilingualism is an ideal most democratic states strive for; whether it is possible to achieve it or not, is a completely different story.

## Chapter Four

### THE TREATMENT OF SISWATI ON SABC TV

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#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

SiSwati is a Southern African language spoken predominantly in South Africa and Swaziland. It is the official language of Swaziland and, since 1994, is one of nine indigenous languages to enjoy official recognition in South Africa's first post-apartheid Constitution (Anon., 2013d). SiSwati is one of the Nguni languages of the south-eastern branch of the Bantu languages, (Corum, s.a:1).

Normann (2003:211) states that the Nguni language family includes isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati. Each of these languages has its own history (for details see Schapera, 1937; Schuring; 1990). In their development, all four languages have been influenced by the Khoisan languages, and later Afrikaans and English. Normann adds that today, the majority of South Africa's population have one of these languages as a home language.

SiSwati speakers fall under the South Eastern Bantu or Ntu group, which is part of the Nguni's Thekela subgroup. There are two varieties of SiSwati, 'thithiza' and 'yeyeza', (Anon., 2013e). IsiXhosa, IsiZulu and (Southern) isiNdebele belong to the Zunda group, while siSwati and (Northern) isiNdebele belong to the Thekela group. The main distinguishing feature between the Zunda Nguni and the Thekela Nguni is the use, by the former, of /z/ instead of /t/ and vice versa. Despite this difference, the Nguni languages are to a large extent mutually intelligible (Normann, 2003:211). Ngcongwane (1987) maintained that SiSwati could be even older than isiZulu. It is not an offshoot from isiZulu as many people claim. If anything, it can be as old as isiZulu, but for some unexplained reason it did not develop as fast as isiZulu (Simelane, 2006:4).

Van Wyk (1966:37) distinguishes four variant forms of Siswati (Simelane, 2006:3-4), namely:

- *Central Siswati*, which is spoken in the central and Western parts of Swaziland

- *Eastern Siswati*, which is spoken in eastern parts of Swaziland
- *Northern Siswati*, which is spoken in the districts of Nelspruit; Barberton; White River; Lydenburg and Dullstroom
- *Southern Siswati*, which is spoken in the southern parts of Swaziland, and is influenced by isiZulu

Unlike the variant in the south of Swaziland, the Mpumalanga variety appears to be less influenced by Zulu, so it is regarded to be closer to standard Swazi. The Mpumalanga variety is distinguishable by distinct intonation, and perhaps distinct tone patterns. Intonation patterns (and informal perceptions of 'stress') in Mpumalanga Swazi are often considered discordant to the Swazi ear. This South African variety of Swazi is considered to exhibit influence from other South African languages spoken close to Swazi (Wikipedia., 2013b).

Ross (2008:17) states that the name SiSwati is derived from the fact that the people claimed their political identity from the chief to whom they were, perhaps only temporarily, subject. The amaSwati, the name by which they call themselves, expresses their allegiance to the successors of Mswati, a king who ruled in the mid-nineteenth century.

Isichei (1997:55) states that in 1818, the Ngwane (an 'Nguni' people) fled to what later became Swaziland, the royal clan expanded, because its men had numerous wives and its prestige led others to imitate both their siSwati speech and their rituals, laws and customs. In modern times, 70 per cent of the Swazi were of 'Nguni' descent. There were seventy clans, of greatly differing sizes, and rules of clan exogamy meant that they were bound by an intricate web of marriages.

It is alleged that when the Missionaries came to Southern Africa, they ignored Siswati and translated everything, the hymns, the Bible, and the schoolbooks into isiZulu alone (Simelane, 2006:4). The development of Siswati as a literary medium and a language of instruction has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s. With the emergence of the newly independent Swaziland, there was a desperate need to

have a standard language separate from isiZulu, which was the most important language of the neighbouring homeland of KwaZulu Natal.

Simelane (2006:5) states that in South Africa, including the former Kangwane Homeland (now Mpumalanga), isiZulu was a medium of instruction and Ngcongwane (1987) confirms this by pointing out that in every walk of life, including schools and churches, communication was in isiZulu. When the former KaNgwane Homeland came into being in 1977 SiSwati was introduced for the first time in schools in the Republic of South Africa. In 1978 it was introduced in the lower classes phasing out isiZulu. It has since attained the status of being one of the eleven official languages of South Africa. It is taught in all phases of the Education System from Grade one until Doctorate degree level.

According to the Statistics SA 2011 Census (2011: 23), there are 1297 046 SiSwati speakers in South Africa ; there are an estimated 3208 SiSwati speakers in the Western Cape; 2020 in the Eastern Cape; 648 in the Northern Cape; 2246 in the Free State province; 8347 in Kwa Zulu Natal; 12 091 in the North West; 136 550 in Gauteng; 25 346 in Limpopo and the province that has the largest amount of SiSwati speakers is Mpumalanga where there are 136 550 people who are first language SiSwati speakers. In total, SiSwati speakers make up 2, 5% of the country's total population.

Mongwe (2006:177) observes that languages such as isiZulu, SeSotho, and Setswana predominate. Others, such as Xitsonga, SiSwati, isiNdebele, and Tshivenda, are still considered minority languages. (Lubbe et al (2011:15) argue that where "minority language" is used, the term is not used pejoratively; rather it refers to an official language (as recognised in the Constitution) of a community whose members comprise a minority in comparison with the total population.

Prah (2006:27) notes that an endangered language is a language headed for perdition. It is a language with very few, or no monolingual speakers. It is a language spoken by a steadily diminishing minority of people, who are relatively disempowered. In South Africa, over the past 40-50 years, languages like Korana,

Nghuki, Seroa, //Xam, //Xegwi, Xiri have become extinct. All these languages are Khoe Khoe and San.

#### **4.1.1 SABC 1**

SABC 1 is a full spectrum channel aimed at younger viewers. It broadcasts in English, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati (Alexander et al. 2006:158). According to the SABC Annual Report (2011:42), SABC 1 is the largest television channel in South Africa, drawing one third of all adult audiences – 22 million viewers per week. SABC 1 broadcasts in English and Nguni languages and positions itself as “Mzansi’s Official Storyteller”, focusing on dramas and documentaries. SABC 1 enjoyed its greatest market share in 2010/2011 within LSM 5-8 and in the 16-24 age range.

SABC 1’s channel statement sets forth that SABC 1 is a channel that celebrates and shapes a youthful South African identity with programmes that reflect the broad canvas of our society with a focus on ordinary people telling the South African story with authenticity (SABC RFP Book, 2010:17). Local content regulation is a way of stimulating and developing a local production industry as well as economic activity in general. It is critical that ways of financing and creating professional skills for local content production to be developed, if not, local content quotas will remain unfulfilled license conditions (Kariithi, 2003:162). Mbaine (2003:159) argues that public service broadcasters must be protected from having to devote their energies to securing advertising revenue and instead focus on putting together programming that is distinct and caters for all needs and tastes.

According to Hassen (2009:31), the SABC actively encourages the production of multilingual programmes as a means of attaining its language broadcasting objectives. However, Dibetso & Smith (2012:11) state that bilingual programmes may come at a cost: depth of context is often more limited, and people may struggle to understand what is going on, if they are not fluent in both languages since meaning is lost in translations and subtitles.

Language in broadcasting should also take account of the social expectations and values of different language groups, and the right of every South African to be treated with respect and dignity (Hassen, 2009:27). However, there seems to be an over-representation of English as well as White people across all SABC services, which is not representative of the demographics of the country. This is not unique to the public broadcaster; it can also be seen across all media and is a reflection of South Africa's social context (Dibetso & Smith, 2012:1).

## **4.2. METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology used to determine the frequency of SiSwati programming on SABC 1 is systematic sampling. This is a method of selecting sample members from a larger population according to a random starting point, and a fixed, periodic interval. Typically, every "nth" member is selected from the total population for inclusion in the sample population. Systematic sampling is still thought of as being random, as long as the periodic interval is determined beforehand and the starting point is random (Investopedia., 2013).

According to (Anon., 2013f) in a systematic sample, the elements of the population are put into a list and then every *n*th element in the list is chosen (systematically) for inclusion in the sample. To ensure against any possible human bias in this method, the researcher selects the first individual at random. This is technically called a 'systematic sample with a random start'. For the purposes of this research, the third week of January was chosen at random for the systematic sampling process. Another advantage of systematic sampling is that the researcher is guaranteed that the population will be evenly sampled (Anon., 2013f).

The table below (table no.1) is a list of the SiSwati TV programmes that have been broadcast on the third week of January on SABC 1 between 2008 and 2013. TVSA (online industry publication) the SABC's online TV guide and the Sunday Sun Newspaper (Media 24) were used to source the information in the table below.

#### 4.2.1 PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

DATE	PROGRAMME	CONTENT/GENRE	LANGUAGE USAGE
<b>2008:</b>			
Sun 13 Jan	None		
Mon 14 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Tue 15 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Wed 16 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Jika Majika	Youth Dance Show (once a week)	SiSwati (33%) IsiZulu (33%) Other Languages (33%)
Thu 17 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Seskhona	Lifestyle Magazine Program (once a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Fri 18 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Yilungelo Lakho	Interactive Live Consumer Rights Show (104 episodes, 2 episodes per week)	SiSwati (10%) Other Languages (90%)
Sat 19 Jan	None		
<b>2009:</b>			
Sun 18 Jan	None		
Mon 19 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Tue 20 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Wed 21 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)

	Jika Majika	Youth Dance Show (once a week)	SiSwati (33%) IsiZulu (33%) Other Languages (33%)
Thu 22 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Seskhona	Lifestyle Magazine Program (once a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Fri 23 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Yilungelo Lakho	Interactive Live Consumer Rights Show (104 episodes, 2 episodes per week)	SiSwati (10%) Other Languages (90%)
Sat 24 Jan	None		
<b>2010:</b>			
Sun 17 Jan	None		
Mon 18 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Tue 20 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Wed 21 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Jika Majika	Youth Dance Show (once a week)	SiSwati (33%) IsiZulu (33%) Other Languages (33%)
Thu 22 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Seskhona	Lifestyle Magazine Program (once a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Fri 23 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Yilungelo Lakho	Interactive Live Consumer Rights	SiSwati (10%) Other

		Show (104 episodes, 2 episodes per week)	Languages (90%)
Sat 24 Jan	None		
<b>2011:</b>			
Sun 16 Jan	None		
Mon 17 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Tue 18 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Wed 19 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Jika Majika	Youth Dance Show (once a week)	SiSwati (33%) IsiZulu (33%) Other Languages (33%)
Thu 20 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Fri 21 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Yilungelo Lakho	Interactive Live Consumer Rights Show (104 episodes, 2 episodes per week)	SiSwati (10%) Other Languages (90%)
Sat 22 Jan	None		
<b>2012:</b>			
Sun 15 Jan	None		
Mon 16 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Tue 17 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Wed 18 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Jika Majika	Youth Dance Show (once a week)	SiSwati (33%) IsiZulu (33%)

			Other Languages (33%)
Thu 19 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Seskhona	Lifestyle Magazine Program (once a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Fri 20 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Yilungelo Lakho	Interactive Live Consumer Rights Show (104 episodes, 2 episodes per week)	SiSwati (10%) Other Languages (90%)
Sat 21 Jan	None		
<b>2013:</b>			
Sun 13 Jan	None		
Mon 14 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Yilungelo Lakho	Interactive Live Consumer Rights Show (104 episodes, 2 episodes per week)	SiSwati (10%) Other Languages (90%)
Tue 15 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Wed 16 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Umvubu Nabangani	Kids show (once a week)	SiSwati (100%)
Thu 17 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
Fri 18 Jan	SiSwati/Ndebele News	News/Current Affairs (5 days a week)	SiSwati (50%) Ndebele (50%)
	Yilungelo Lakho	Interactive Live Consumer Rights Show (104 episodes, 2 episodes per week)	SiSwati (10%) Other Languages (90%)
Sat 19 Jan	None		

## **4.3. RESULTS**

### **4.3.1. THE FREQUENCY OF SISWATI PROGRAMMING ON SABC 1**

As (figure no.1) illustrates, over the past 5 years, there has been very little programming in SiSwati on SABC 1. With the exception of the children's' show 'Umvubu Nabangani', none of the programmes are 100% SiSwati, all of them are multi-lingual programs. In fact it seems as though the amount of SiSwati programming has reduced since 2012. No strides have been made to produce a SiSwati programme that falls outside the 'actuality' or 'factual' genre; there are no SiSwati dramas, comedies, thrillers, cop shows or soap operas, just to name a few genres. Furthermore, 'Umvubu Nabangani' is not specifically a show targeted at SiSwati speaking audiences, it is actually dubbed into numerous languages and SiSwati is one of them.

The last time the SABC issued its annual 'request for proposal' book (RFP book) was in 2010; this document is an invitation to the independent production sector to produce local content for the SABC based on briefs drawn up by the broadcaster's commissioning editors. In the 2010 edition, SABC 1 only put out 10 briefs requesting programmes in minority languages. Of these 10 briefs, only 1 requested 100% language delivery in an indigenous language; the other 9 only wanted 15 – 20 % minority languages, the other 85 – 80% of the airtime of most programmes is dedicated to English and what is termed 'predominant Nguni languages', namely isiZulu and Xhosa, (SABC RBF Book, 2010:20 - 50).

### **4.3.2 THE CONTENT OF SISWATI PROGRAMMING ON SABC 1**

All of the programmes listed in (Figure No.1) fall within the broader genre of actuality. The news bulletins are current affairs and all the other programs are either studio based magazine shows or lifestyle based magazine shows.

On air for seven seasons, from 2005 to 2012, 'Seskhona' was a lifestyle magazine show that covered various facets of youthful living by taking viewers on a weekly

journey through the latest lifestyle trends, social events and insights into the country's entertainment industry, (TVSA., 2014a).

On air from 2006 to 2012, 'Jika Majika' was a music and dance show that gave the youth a platform to showcase their dance moves whilst acknowledging the history of music and the art of dancing, (TVSA., 2013b).

'Yilungelo Lakho is an interactive live show that airs twice a week and aims to inform and educate consumers about their rights and provide advice, (SABC1., 2013).

No information was available about the programme 'Umvubu Nabangani' however it can be described as an animated kids show about a hippo and her friends in the animal kingdom, the show is dubbed into different languages and SiSwati happens to be one of those languages.

Other bilingual programs that include between 10 – 25% of SiSwati usage that have been commissioned by SABC 1 are listed below:

1. Only on air for one season in 2012, 'Zoned TV' was an interactive multi-platform user-generated magazine reality television series that encouraged young people to capture interesting images using their phones and share them on national TV, (TVSA., 2013c).
2. Also on air for one season in 2013, 'i-Identity' was a multi-faith magazine series which focused on shaping new ways in which young South Africans in the religious-spiritual, technologically-challenging world relate to one another, (TVSA., 2013d).

#### **4.4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

From the analysis above, it is evident that SiSwati is underrepresented on SABC 1. In its language planning, it seems like SABC 1 deems the interests of the majority as more important than those of the minority. For example, the most popular soap opera in the country, 'Generations' airs on SABC 1, a channel mandated to cater for all four Nguni groups (isiZulu, isiXhosa, SiSwati and Ndebele). 'Generations' has been on air

for 20 years, however, there has never been a permanent, well rounded SiSwati or Ndebele speaking character on this show.

In its attempts to keep up with commercially driven broadcasters such as eTV, DSTV and Top TV, SABC TV is often forced to be profit-driven in its way of production. On one hand, it has to fulfil its constitutional mandate by catering to all 11 official language groups. On the other hand, it needs to ensure that it is a profitable and commercially viable enterprise in order to survive in the highly competitive, contemporary broadcasting environment. Public broadcasters the world over are confronted with the same crisis. Clearly the mandate to cater to all the language groups in this country is a tall order for an organisation that is grappling with unpredictable shifts in the political landscape, a management crisis, and the after-effects of the global economic recession and trying to stay afloat in a highly competitive market environment.

Maurais & Morris (2003:209) rightly observe that in most African states political discourse in favour of indigenous languages was not followed up with concrete measures. The language parity challenge faced by SABC TV is merely a reflection of what is happening in other sectors of government. From the Department of Human Settlement to the Department of Health, the language of operation is English. The status quo is constantly challenged but rarely changed. Nakayama & Halualani (2011:261) assert that language, especially the mother tongue, is not merely an instrument, it is a source of human pride and dignity. This is why it is vital for language rights to be established as an essential part of the right to be oneself.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

Nakayama & Halualani (2010: 263b) argue that linguistic equality is a necessary condition for social and communicative equality. Linguistic equality can be described as a situation where all languages are given equal status so that they will be used equally in communication. Huntington (1996:163) sets forth that South Africa is the leader of both southern Africa and English Africa, and possibly of all sub-Saharan Africa. This can be attributed to factors such as the country's peaceful and negotiated transition from apartheid, its industrial strength, its higher level of economic development compared to other African countries, its military capability, its natural resources, and its sophisticated black and white political leadership (Maurais, 2003:14).

The fact that the use of English has become a worldwide phenomenon is seldom questioned or addressed (Nakayama & Halualani, 2010: 248b). Prah (2006:18) argues that the point that must be forcefully made is that multilingualism, not bilingualism or unilingualism, needs to be cultivated if all voices in South African languages are to be heard. If and when this new multilingualism policy becomes operative, a new impetus to a more democratic and majority oriented approach to language use in South Africa could become a reality.

Kruger (2004:17) points out that because South Africa has eleven official languages, it is impossible to divorce language rights from multilingualism. Erasmus (2002: 198) makes this point very succinctly: "The recognition and development of all South Africa's languages is in fact; not merely a status quo to be maintained, but an objective towards which all citizens of the country should strive" (Kruger et al. 2007:35). Phaswana (2003:133) warns that the lack of political will to publicly promote African languages could possibly result in the betrayal of the cause of both the language and cultural renaissance and the destiny of mankind as we know it.

Alexander (2000 & 2002) observed that in the post-apartheid era, the promise of "liberation" through English has not materialised. Over the years, English has remained "unattainable" for the majority of South Africans and has instead become part of the "cultural capital" of the new elite (Beukes, 2004b:17). The majority of South African citizens do not speak English, and those who do, speak it with very limited fluency. This has consequences for programming diversity, as it limits language diversity (Dibetso & Smith, 2012:12). Orman (2008:94) states that in contrast to the equitable promotion of all eleven languages envisaged by the country's constitution, there seems to be an increasing tendency towards English mono-lingualism in all spheres of South African public life.

The progress made by South Africa for ethnic minorities in the fields of language, communication and cultural rights has been greatly influenced by the historical and cultural challenges that have taken place in this country. The country's emergent democracy is still getting over its complex history of colonial segregation and discrimination. In addition, globalisation is also a huge influence, because while it fosters the human rights culture at the rhetorical level, in reality it marginalises the indigenous and ethnic minority languages in favour of English (Moyo, 2010:438).

Alexander (2002: 86) believes that the promotion of multilingualism and the fostering of linguistic diversity in support of the social transformation South Africa has achieved in other domains, as well as the role of language policy in "promoting or retarding economic growth and development" have not been integrated into the national planning agenda. Kruger et al. (2007:36) observe that the promotion of multilingualism in South Africa is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, promoting English as the country's majority language will lead to the marginalisation of the indigenous languages. On the other hand, encouraging speakers of indigenous languages to insist on their right to speak, read, hear and learn in their own language in all contexts may be construed as limiting minority speakers within the confines of a language that does not have a wider use and possibly read as an act to constrain social mobility.

A democratic culture cannot be fostered without the development of a democratic language policy. Without a language policy that is aimed at culturally empowering mass society, eventually development in South Africa will stagnate (Prah, 2006:11). During the apartheid era, the divisions and iniquities in South Africa were reflected in the manner in which policies were formulated. Even when the new dispensation came into power, the ideology of apartheid was hugely influential in how the core values of the new democracy were articulated (Fourie, 2001:167). Prah (2006:15) argues that most observers who have looked at the issue of language policy agree that there is a big gap between intended policy (planned or espoused policy) and action or implementation. One important reason for the gap is that elite interests have become deeply entrenched in the *status quo*.

Hassen (2009:26) asserts that freedom of expression can only be realised fully when every South African can inform and be informed in their language of choice. The difficult task for publicly funded public service broadcasters is to ensure that the pressures and attractions of the marketplace do not overwhelm the public service profile that sets them apart from their commercial counterparts (Lowe & Hujanen, 2003:134). Despite the fact that the burden of expectation regarding plurality and cultural diversity is the responsibility of public service broadcasting institutions, attention needs to be paid to the past deficits of these institutions in responding to public concerns and needs, as well as their susceptibility to commercial and political pressures (Lowe & Hujanen, 2003:129).

Langford et al (2013:123) warn that we should be very wary of a narrative that sees the ANC as either homogenous or the prime or problematic wielder of power. The death of apartheid entailed not just a political transformation from racial authoritarianism to one-person-one-vote democracy, it encompassed the widespread reform of many national institutions – social, political, economic and cultural, to name a few (Horwitz, 2001:37).

Maurais & Morris (2003:209) criticises African governments by stating that most states, in the name of safeguarding African languages, have not gone beyond the level of

political discourse. Language planners often attribute the failure of language policies to government's ineffective management of language matters (cf. Alexander 2000, 2002; Kamwangamalu 2000; Moodley 2000; Heugh 2003; Carstens 2006; Webb 2006) and the inadequate congruence between government's language policy statement and real language practice (cf. Verhoef 1998; Du Plessis 2006, Beukes, 2004a:13).

As far back as 2003, Mbaine (2003:154) stated that both television and radio were lacking locally made programmes that represented South Africa's local cultures and values and showcased the creativity of African producers. Regarding the SABC's language planning crisis, Steyn (1998) asserts that there is little agreement on what constitutes the best approach to media policy development, most of the guidelines are usually fragmented, ineffective and differ from country to country (Jjuko, 2005:19 – 20). Orman (2008:09) believes that the short post-apartheid period of just over a decade may be too small a timeframe for one to make any meaningful deep-ranging judgments regarding the success of the South African government's efforts at promoting national unity through its multilingualism policy.

Alexander (2011:314) contends that to be denied the use of one's language is the very meaning of oppression. The preference for English at the expense of the other official languages can be viewed as an encroachment on the language rights of all other language communities served by the SABC as a public broadcaster (Kruger, 2007:42). After all, the self-esteem, self-confidence, potential creativity, and spontaneity that come with being able to use the language(s) that have shaped a person from early childhood (one's "mother tongue") is the foundation of all democratic polities and institutions (Alexander, 2011:314).

Lubbe et al. (2011:14) caution that the term "linguistic genocide" is not an exaggeration. Investigations have indicated that 50% of the total number of languages could die out within this century, and that a further 40% are endangered languages. When a language disappears, the related cultures, values, knowledge, philosophy, poetry, songs, memories, and linguistic souls of that language disappear with it (Nakayama &

Halualani, 2010: 251b). Maurais & Morris (2003:216) observe that the death of hundreds of Africa's local minor languages is unfortunately the surest expected event, unless some unexpected unprecedented measures at the national, or better, international level are taken. Phaswana (2003:122) questions whether South Africa will live up to the expectations of linguistic democratisation promised by the constitution or not.

Jjuuko (2005:84) observes that producing and broadcasting programmes in all the official languages including the marginalised ones (those with hearing disabilities, the Khoi, Nama and San), which might not attract a lot of ad-spend, shows the desire for the public broadcaster to adhere to the objectives of an ideal public service broadcaster. Public accountability is impossible if programming is not in line with the interests of all language speakers. If the SABC can successfully implement its language policy, in line with its other PBS obligations, it will be on its way towards becoming a fully-fledged public service broadcaster (Jjuuko, 2005:84).

## **5.2. THE STATUTORY PROVISION FOR LANGUAGE TREATMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING**

As a medium of mass communication that reaches millions of people, SABC TV has been a vehicle for the promotion of language from its inception; it is a pity that certain languages have received more recognition than others. The rift between policy planning and policy implementation has only gotten wider and wider. It is time for SABC TV to go back to the drawing board and interrogate why most of their language policies are impeccable on paper but seemingly impractical to implement in real life situations. From the broadcaster's inception, dominant majority languages were given preferential treatment while minority languages were mostly side lined. It is problematic that 20 years after the first democratic elections, the situation remains largely unchanged.

In a democratic dispensation, language parity is of paramount importance. Had the newly elected government overlooked this issue, many South Africans would have felt

left out. The ANC-led government set out to undo the entrenchment of English and Afrikaans as the dominant languages by drawing up a constitution that was inclusive of all the languages spoken in the country. Today, many complain that although the constitution is progressive on paper, it offers no real protection in real life. Ideally, a democratic society is one where every citizen is allowed to communicate and access information in the language of his or her choice; however this is seldom the case.

The high cost of producing local content is a factor that policymakers constantly overlook. Due to the high cost of producing local content, multilingualism seems to be more of an option than a constitutional mandate for SABC TV. Mbaine (2003:138) observes in most cases public service broadcasters are still under-funded and government-controlled however they are expected to do a lot on behalf of their government's political and developmental agendas. This is certainly the case with SABC TV. However, as challenging as it may be to successfully implement a multilingual policy with limited resources, it is imperative that the task is approached with as much vigour as it was when the policy documents were drawn up in the early days of the 'new' South Africa.

### **5.3. THE REPRESENTATION OF SISWATI AS A MINORITY LANGUAGE BY SABC ONE**

Besides a daily news bulletin in SiSwati during the week and the occasional SiSwati co-presenter on a handful of shows thinly spread over the past 20 years, it is difficult to site many examples of programmes that cater for this language group. SABC TV has tried to cater to its SiSwati speaking viewers by broadcasting programmes such as 'Jika Majika', 'Zoned TV' and 'Seskhona' where one presenter speaks SiSwati and the other speaks either isiNdebele or isiZulu. The problem is that programmes that include minority languages are usually limited to studio-based, presenter driven shows instead of dramas and programs in other genres. When SiSwati is included in a drama, it is by way of one character (usually a guest appearance). This has been the case in programs such as 'Muvhango', 'Intersexions' and 'Zone 14' (all broadcast on SABC 1).

Not only has SABC TV failed to meet its mandate when it comes to adult programmes, the same is true for children's programmes. It is very rare to see a children's program in SiSwati. Upon inspection of the TV guide and the TV programmes on SABC 1, the researcher found that there was only one program for children in SiSwati, a program called 'Umvubu Nabangani' that airs once a week. This program has not been produced specifically to cater to children who speak SiSwati, the level of language used by the voice-over artist is too advanced for children below the age of 6 to comprehend. Like most SiSwati programmes on SABC 1, it seems as if the script was merely translated into SiSwati and the needs of the target market were not kept in mind.

Today the sad reality is that there is little to no programming in SiSwati on SABC 1. At this rate, the only way SABC TV can cater for its audience is through radio, in this case, Ligwalagwala FM. This is not to say SABC 1 has not made some headway insofar as the production of SiSwati programming is concerned, but it has to be acknowledged that that 'progress' is far from satisfactory. As democratic as the country aspires to be, there will always be economic, social and political reasons why some languages are more dominant than others. Minority language groups such as SiSwati stand no chance against a linguistic giant as great as English. The unfortunate part is that the languages that are being diminished are the ones that are indigenous to Africa and not the powerful foreign language that is constantly promoted not only in South Africa but all over the world.

One shudders to think what the state of the other 10 official languages will be in the next 20 to 30 years if the other privately owned broadcasters also continue to be even more English dominated than the already English dominated SABC.

#### **5.4. A HEGEMONIC CONCLUSION ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF MINORITY LANGUAGES BY THE SABC**

The fact that hegemony is attained with the consent of the group it aims to influence, makes it more potent than more overt methods of persuasion such as propaganda. South Africa is a perfect example of a hegemonic society due to the fact that the ruling

party does not have to impose its power forcefully; the majority willingly keeps the ruling party in power by voting in democratic elections. However, only a handful of South Africans benefit from belonging to the dominant group while the majority of the population continues to live in poverty and squalor, even though they are the ones who willingly consent to hand over their power to a privileged few with political power.

With the dawn of democracy, many South Africans were hopeful that finally, the hegemony of the two former official languages, English and Afrikaans, would finally be contested; however this was not to be the case. Today, English is considered the lingua franca of South Africa. Due to its universality, even democratic governments are willing to elevate the status of English and negate the promotion and protection of the other official and unofficial language groups. The hegemony of English has become so entrenched in the fabric of our daily lives that it is has become an invisible, unquestionable norm. It is clear that even with all the legislation and policies in place, South Africa is still very far from achieving language parity, not only in the media but in all spheres of daily life.

## **5.5. A CRITIQUE ABOUT THE REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY LANGUAGES BY THE SABC**

The SABC gives first preference to programmes in languages that attract large numbers and shies away from programmes in languages that cannot guarantee the same returns. There are various factors contributing to the broadcaster's inability to cater for all 11 official language groups equally. The majority of advertisers consider English the most commercially viable language. In order to attract these advertisers and ensure its survival, SABC TV is forced to negate its constitutional mandate and lean more heavily on English programming than programming in any of the other official languages.

The assumption is that programming in minority languages will not attract large audiences therefore it will not ensure returns for advertisers. This belief has been proven wrong by the local soap 'Muvhango', this daily soap that has been airing on SABC 2 for the past 16 years. It is primarily based on a Venda speaking family based

both in Venda, Limpopo and in Johannesburg, Gauteng. Although some of the characters speak isiZulu, Sotho and Setswana, the soap's main language is Venda. In as much as Venda is a minority language, this program has proven itself to be largely popular, sustainable and commercially viable, drawing in millions of viewers from all the language groups each night because of its authentic and engaging storylines.

The viewing public and the independent production sector are the most adversely affected in this instance. The independent production sector has fewer programs to produce and when there are programs to be produced; those programs are not necessarily in their first languages. The viewing public is affected in a similar way, not all the viewers have access to programs in their first languages or the languages of their choice.

It is more profitable for SABC TV to acquire foreign syndicated programmes in English than it is to produce local programs in any of the other official languages. Perhaps it is time to make peace with the fact that South Africa is a third world country and the chances of measuring up to public service broadcasters in countries such as the USA, Britain and Canada are slim as money will always be directed towards more urgent and pressing needs such as the alleviation of poverty or the building of roads and hospitals, for example.

In order to understand why the SABC is failing to cater to minority language groups satisfactorily, it is important to understand how the SABC is funded. The broadcaster's over reliance on funding from external sources is problematic. How autonomous can a broadcaster be when it has to be accountable to its commercial clients in order to ensure its continued profitability and sustainability? Surely it would be untenable to expect SABC TV to make do without the funding it receives from advertisers when government funding and license fees are not nearly enough to sustain it's continued existence.

With the introduction of digital terrestrial television (DTT) impending, there will be more competition for the national broadcaster. Striking the balance between catering for the viewing public and running a profitable organisation is difficult. SABC TV's funding

model can be debated to no end. The question that still remains unanswered is 'how does the SABC retain its independence without being over-reliant on either state or commercial funding to keep it going?' Only once this conundrum is solved, can the SABC interrogate how it can effectively work towards meeting their language mandate.

Minority languages, specifically indigenous minority languages, have to be protected and promoted in this rapidly changing broadcasting climate. There must be a clear distinction between a program that has been produced to generate revenue and a program that has been produced to meet a constitutional obligation. If this distinction is not made, the fact that programs in the minority language groups are not profitable will always be the reason why these programs are not being produced. Sadly it seems as though the only way the SABC can fulfil its language mandate realistically is through radio, television production is simply too expensive.

SABC TV can only be recognised and deemed an authentic public broadcaster only when it manages to fully cater for all 11 official languages equally. However, as long as funding remains an issue, language parity will also remain an issue.

## **5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light of all the findings in this study, my recommendations to SABC TV are as follows:

### **5.7.1. Review the current Broadcasting Act and other language planning policies**

Prah (2006:34) notes that in South Africa as indeed the rest of Africa, language policies need to be more than just pious articles of faith enshrined in constitutions and policy documents by ruling elites who are out of touch with the needs of the people. If South Africans want to make progress in social, economic, political and cultural development, they will need to pursue these policies at the level of active practice. The inability to implement policies is a challenge that has been plaguing SABC TV far too long. Lowe & Hujanen (2003:44) argue that in order to flourish in the future, public service

broadcasting will need to be re-conceptualized in the context of a changing role for the country.

In light of the recent global economic meltdown and all the different market forces at play, the Broadcasting Act and ICASA's license conditions need to be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. As long as lack of resources and mismanagement remains a stumbling block, the policies currently in place will remain just that, policies.

In 2009, Communications Minister General Simphiwe Nyanda, announced in parliament that the current Broadcasting Act was to be amended in order to strengthen governance at the SABC. Nyanda went on to add that the public broadcaster is plagued by governance, mismanagement and financial management challenges so the new vision and mandate for public broadcasting must be in line with South Africa's developmental agenda. The minister announced that the amended Broadcasting Act would be referred to as the Public Services Broadcasting Act, (Anon., 2013g). Perhaps this piece of legislation is still being amended, perhaps not. What is certain is that it is 2013 and it has not materialized.

What is positive about the minister's announcement is that the government is aware of the need to review this piece of legislation. Beukes (2004a:6) opines that one of the reasons the government has been unsuccessful in its language planning activities because the government uses the traditional top-down model where 'people with power and authority' make language related decisions for groups. In reviewing and amending its policies, the SABC needs to avoid making the same mistake. Language is part of lived culture; to draw up language policies pertaining to the public without consulting the citizens of this country, is an error.. The hope is that the Public Services Broadcasting Act will be more effective and practical to implement than the current legislation in place.

### 5.7.2. Have subtitles in other languages besides English

Dibetso & Smith (2012:1) point out that the SABC has a difficult mandate because it has to broadcast in all 11 official languages. It also has regional requirements, local content requirements and an unclear charter. Currently, most South African programmes have subtitles in English, with the exception of a few programmes sporadically subtitled into Afrikaans. Most of the programmes imported from abroad display English subtitles too, that is if they are subtitled at all (Hefer, 2011:2). This is precisely why SABC TV needs to revisit the idea of having subtitles in languages other than English. Kruger et al. (2007:36) note that the relatively little subtitling on the SABC channels attests to the lack of commitment on the SABC's part. Furthermore, the fact that subtitling is only done into English suggests that the SABC is promoting English at the expense of the indigenous languages.

Gofflieb (2004:95) argues that offering subtitles in indigenous languages will improve the status of so-called lesser-used languages and make program production in these languages more viable (Kruger, 2004:4). On paper, this seems like a brilliant idea; the only problem is the practical implementation thereof.

Subtitling has a great deal of potential as a creative solution to the promotion of multilingualism on the national broadcaster, and is in line with the SABC's principle of applying "appropriate technologies to achieve language coverage (SABC, 2005:5). Nevertheless, subtitling remains largely underutilized (Kruger et al. 2007:42). This benefit could be made even more effective in terms of multi-lingualism by providing subtitling in all the official languages, and particularly in the marginalised languages. Kruger et al. (2007:42) state that the mere presence of a language in writing on screen elevates the status of that language while fulfilling the indirect function of expanding higher-order language functions and reinforcing linguistic conventions towards standardization in that language.

Since most local programmes are repeated two to three times a week on SABC TV, one possibility is to make sure that each run of the episode is subtitled in a different indigenous language. For example, a show like 'Generations' which airs on SABC 1 from Mondays to Fridays at 20h00 and is repeated daily both on SABC 1 at 09h00 and on SABC 3 at 10h30 can be subtitled in three different languages for each run of the show. This solution is more suited to monolingual programmes though as the subtitler would have to be proficient in a number of different languages if they are to perform the job efficiently. However, in this case the problem would be funding; as additional subtitling and post-production costs would be incurred.

It should be mandatory for all programs to be accompanied by subtitles on any public broadcaster that claims to be democratic; that is the only way to transcend linguistic barriers (for those who are literate). A SiSwati program with subtitles can be understood by the English and Nguni speaking audience, it cannot be understood by, for example, a Venda or Afrikaans speaker who is not able to read English and does not understand SiSwati. One could also argue that subtitles should be in isiZulu because it is the most widely spoken African language in South Africa.

### **5.7.3. Dub programmes into different languages**

Kariithi (2003:163 – 164) asserts that in today's highly globalized environment, media content produced for one society often has high resale value in other societies, as long as they have some cultural values in common with the original, or are willing to tolerate foreign values, Many broadcasters still purchase foreign TV programmes that has been dubbed into English or whatever language the viewers understand. A case in point is the Spanish soap opera 'Snakes and Lizards' that has been dubbed into English. This soap airs on Mzansi Magic (DSTV) daily (it has repeats and an omnibus) and is enjoyed by a South African audience.

Some people complain that dubbing comes across as unnatural and takes away from the pleasure of the viewing experience. However if dubbing can help the SABC meet its language mandate, then surely the above-stated can be overlooked. English programmes can be dubbed in indigenous languages and programmes in indigenous languages can be dubbed in English. This could go a long way towards helping SABC TV achieve language parity.

#### **5.7.4. Ensure that all multilingual programmes each have at least one or two minority language speaking characters**

Cuvelier et al (2010:139) argue that one possible explanation for language disparity in our society is that the nine African languages have not been significantly, meaningfully, linked to a sense of distinctive identity in the communities in which they are spoken, so that their non-promotion is not perceived as a reflection of their own marginalization. So if SiSwati speaking viewers were more aware of their rights and the SABC's mandate, perhaps they would realize that SiSwati is indeed marginalised by our national broadcaster.

Locally produced programmes produced for SABC TV usually make use of more than one language, hence the term multilingual programme. Hassen (2009:31) argues that the SABC encourages the production of multilingual programmes as a means of attaining its language broadcasting objectives. Furthermore, the SABC has been successful in using this strategy as a means of complying with ICASA's license conditions. This is true, especially in the case of dominant languages. However, the problem arises because most multilingual programmes do not have minority language speakers as characters or presenters.

Most programmes on SABC 1 have characters that speak isiZulu, Xhosa, English and sometimes even Sotho. It is very rare for a local production to have a permanent well-rounded minority language speaking character as part of its 'world' or 'diegesis'. The

general consensus seems to be that it's not necessary to cater for minority language viewers because they can understand the majority languages (isiZulu, English and Xhosa) and also read the subtitles.

Hegemonic theory proposes that boundaries are normal, natural and necessary for us because we are different. Boundaries assist in maintaining this difference. In holding that boundaries are normal, natural and necessary, hegemonic theory seeks to include what is necessary and to exclude what is not necessary to maintain the dominant mode of production, (Mahao, 2006:1). To counter the hegemony of linguistic exclusion and domination, SABC 1 needs to make it compulsory for the independent production sector to ensure that they include minority language characters and/or presenters in every program they produce for SABC TV. This is in no way contrived – South Africa is a melting pot of diversity and it is very common for people who speak different languages to interact with each other in their own languages.

As much as a SiSwati speaking viewer can understand isiZulu, a Zulu speaking viewer can understand SiSwati so there is really no solid reason to continue excluding minority language actors and presenters from popular TV programmes.

#### **5.7.5. Invest funds into training the minority language sector to produce high quality content for the SABC**

The independent production sector is centralised in Johannesburg and Cape Town; that's where most of the skilled TV and film practitioners are located. Once one wants to tell a story outside these two provinces, one is confronted with the issue of budgetary constraints. This leads most producers to resort to telling their stories in dominant languages (there are more than enough professional actors and presenters who speak dominant languages) in places where technical support is easily accessible i.e. Gauteng and Western Cape. Every time this happens, a vicious cycle of exclusion is perpetuated.

Budget usually overshadows constitutional obligations. From the look of things, the industry is getting further and further away from achieving its objective of redressing language disparity. This is a pity because there is so much more our public broadcaster can do for our developing democracy. Kariithi (2003:168) is of the opinion that the media can assist in nation building by engendering a common sense of citizenship, and by promoting tolerance, diversity and reconciliation. Such roles place the media alongside such national institutions as the Church and other civil society institutions in advancing social stability and progress.

It is of vital importance that diverse South Africans are given the opportunity, skills, resources and institutional sanction to produce media texts, (Office of the Presidency, 2007:304). If SABC TV invests more funds into training producers, actors and presenters from the peripheries (Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West etc....), it will be more cost effective in the long run. Producers won't have to factor huge transport and rental costs into their budgets, making it easier for stories from different parts of SA to be told.

A few years ago, SABC TV proposed regional TV stations for every province but nothing came of it. In the early 2000's the SABC announced the launch of two regional television channels, SABC4 and SABC5. SABC4 was supposed to broadcast in Tswana, SeSotho, Pedi, Tsonga, Venda and Afrikaans as well as English, to the northern provinces of the country. In the southern provinces, SABC5 was supposed to broadcast in Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Swazi as well as Afrikaans and English, (Wikipedia., 2013c). It is extremely unfortunate that the SABC was not able to fulfill its promise of adding these two channels to its portfolio because they could have gone a long way towards addressing language disparity on in the local broadcasting industry.

#### **5.7.6. Communicate with minority language viewers and engage them more directly**

Most minority language viewers do not identify with the programmes on SABC TV. This could possibly be the reason why SABC TV does not receive as much public support in terms of TV license fees as it could. Perhaps if SABC TV paid more attention to its minority language viewers by communicating with them and engaging with them more directly, it would have a lot more success in encouraging viewers to pay their license fees. Viewers need to know that they are being catered for and that the SABC hears them when they air their concerns about programming and content.

Prah (2006:3) believes that if the indigenous South African languages are to be used in transforming and leading South Africa to modernity, the whole exercise needs to be undergirded by economic rationality and the cultural empowerment of the masses. As the largest platform to communicate with South Africans from different walks of life, the SABC has the potential to either reinforce the status quo of language disparity or to redress this problem by ensuring that all the 11 official languages get the equitable treatment that has been promised to them in the Constitution of South Africa.

## **5.8. Conclusion**

South Africa is a complex country with a multifaceted historical landscape; this complexity stems mostly from the fact that various ethnic groups have to co-exist in a country that is still healing from the wounds of both its present and its past. The SABC as the public broadcaster, has always been caught up in the cross fire between the various groups that have used it as a platform for furthering their own political interests.

Beukes (2004a:20) asserts that based on this rather bleak picture one is inclined to agree that expectations of realizing a democratic language policy in post-apartheid South Africa have been annihilated. However, this does not mean SABC TV should not continue to strive towards achieving the ideals set out in the various policies. It is time for the national broadcaster to pull up its socks and reassess its strategy in order to redress language disparity and ensure that it caters to all its viewers in a manner that is equitable, democratic and inclusive.

Minority languages such as SiSwati need to be taken just as seriously as dominant languages such as isiZulu and isiXhosa. If our public broadcaster still harbours any hopes of being fully democratic, the absence of SiSwati on SABC TV cannot simply be swept under the proverbial carpet.

It is difficult to predict how long it will take for SABC to recover from the effects of the global economic recession and solve its management and cash flow problems. It is unfortunate that while the organisation struggles to keep its head above the water, minority languages such as SiSwati suffer the most. When this happens, the public broadcaster ceases to be as democratic as it ought to be.

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