CHALLENGES FOR ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE 'AFRICAN RENAISSANCE'

TEACHING EUROPEAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF 'AFRICAN RENAISSANCE'

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It is generally accepted that language and culture are closely linked. It is interesting to note that while a definition of language seems self-evident, the term 'culture' - although used extensively - is seldom clearly defined. In order to discuss the *Teaching European Language and Culture against the background of 'African Renaissance'* the concept of 'culture' needs to be clearly defined. Particularly since the African Renaissance, as will be discussed later, is based upon a shift in consciousness. Seen from this perspective teaching European languages and culture is part of development within the 'African Renaissance'.

For the purposes of this paper Hofstede's (1993) concept of culture will be used. He maintains that everyone, during the course of his or her life acquires certain mental, emotional and behavioural patterns that he also calls "mental software" (ibid.:18). The ever-changing social environment influences this "mental software" or culture. This means that in principle any person could discard certain patterns and replace them with new ones. But, says Hofstede, this is normally a complex and difficult process and thus not realised very often. Hofstede's concept of culture integrates the so-called 'high culture' with the 'everyday culture' and pertains to the past as well as to the contemporary. 'High culture' refers to literature, music and art whereas 'everyday culture' includes eating habits, greeting rituals and hygiene. Due to the fact that the individual has the ability and possibility of choosing which patterns he or she wants to make his or her own, culture is not necessarily synonymous with nation any longer.

The effect of culture on our everyday life becomes apparent when looking at the fact that generally people are not aware of their social and behavioural patterns; in other words their culture. One's own culture seems self-evident and the knowledge about it is shared with others from that culture. Whenever representatives of the same culture interact, a common base exists, which renders all explanations superfluous. Because these interactions are usually successful the very same expectations will be transferred to all other interactions. However, when people of different cultures interact something completely different happens: two unlike sets of self-evident patterns confront each other and clash. Because a common basis is lacking, the other patterns are perceived as being incomprehensible. Unfortunately in most cases the 'other' is not merely perceived of as being different but as being wrong. This strong point of view combined with the lack of success in the interchange consequently makes the other appear as a threat, which in turn produces fear and insecurity. Negative judgements about the other are often passed (stereotype formation), prejudices are reinforced and ultimately the refusal to interact with others results in discrimination (see Cushner and Brislin 1986:12).

It could also happen that the confrontation with the unknown could trigger in both persons a positive feeling of uncertainty, which initiates a conscious perception of the other. At the same time they become aware of their own patterns and points of view. This process of becoming aware of the 'own' as well as of the 'other' then reveals differences and similarities. It is important to note that for any interaction between people to lead to intercultural understanding no person may remain attached to his or her own self-evident patterns and declare these to be the sole criterion. The person must be prepared to extend or elaborate on these obvious behavioural examples.

For intercultural interaction to be a success people have to be equipped for it, they have to acquire certain intercultural competencies. First and foremost people must be ready to change their "mental software". This change must be the result of a critical reflection of the interaction that took place. This readiness is enhanced if people learn more about each other, about the differences in their cultures and their overall level of awareness is raised.

It should now be evident that the underlying assumption of the concept of intercultural interaction is that two or more unique but **essentially different** cultures exist. Although it is possible to gain access to the other culture it must, however, be accepted that the 'other' will remain and should remain the 'other'. Referring back to the definitions of culture, the intercultural concept understands culture to be dynamic "mental software". Because of the raised awareness of the 'own' as well as of the 'other' and the readiness to accept change, intercultural interaction makes communication and understanding possible. With this definition of culture in mind, let us now take a look at why and how European languages and culture can be taught within the concept of an African Renaissance.

THE RENAISSANCE

Generally, the European Renaissance is understood to be the re-birth or revival of the languages and literatures of Greece and Rome. Often it is also referred to as the re-awakening. The European Renaissance stretches from approximately 1470 AD to 1600 AD. 'Renaissance' is a comprehensive name for a great intellectual movement. This movement includes a very marked change in attitude of mind and ideal of life. It is also perceived of as a revolt against the barrenness and dogmatism of Medievalism and consequently as an escape from a life regulated and confined by tradition and intellectual tyranny. The study of classical literature, culture and history was supposed to set people free. The central concepts in the political domain were security and peace (see Chambers and Chambers 1906:639). There were a number of significant outcomes of the European Renaissance, such as the Reformation. But the ones that are important for this paper include:

- A complete rehabilitation of the human spirit;
- A new sense of nationality; and
- National languages began to flourish (ibid.:640).

It is crucial to note, that the word 'Renaissance' was not used to describe the epoch during the time from 1470 to 1600. Jules Michelet used this concept for the first time in 1855 AD.

PROBLEM AREAS IN THE RENAISSANCE

Having pointed out the achievements and positive points of the European Renaissance, one should also take note of the problems that existed. For example, "pedantry threatened to check originality and spontaneity; the worst ancient works were prized more than the best written in any new European tongue" (ibid.:641). Furthermore the revolt against tradition was to a large extent accompanied by immorality. Chambers and Chambers (ibid.) continue by stating, "Literacy and artistic refinement put no check on brutal lusts and savage passions". It should also be stressed that the European Renaissance did not embrace all sectors of society of Europe. Those that benefited belonged to the middle class, who in fact made the European Renaissance possible and also funded it. The majority of the people in Europe were still poverty-stricken (see Smith 2000).

AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

As Christen (15 February 1999) points out, "South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki did not coin the phrase 'African Renaissance', but he has popularised it in countless speeches and public appearances". According to Christen, Mbeki does not so much propose a rebirth of a specific period in African history but rather of a, "'true' or second liberation, which will - and indeed must - supplement and complete those of decolonisation and political independence. In his view, Africa must be liberated from nonrepresentative (sic) regimes, from one-party systems, military coups and endemic corruption". Bearing in mind the general negative opinions about Africa, these are vital aims indeed. While in Japan, Mbeki said:

> The restoration of the dignity of the peoples of Africa demands that we deal decisively and as quickly as possible with the perception that, as a continent, we are condemned forever to depend on the merciful charity which those who are kind are ready to put into our begging bowls (in Christen 1999).

It seems that the African Renaissance is thus regarded as a call for justice and equality, as a call for the recognition of what is African. It involves, "the reassertion of a uniquely African identity and the restoration or revival of the African capacity for self-development, which was severely undermined during the period of the Slave Trade and direct colonial rule" (Viljoen 2000). In his article, Bofelo (1997) argues that any renaissance should not be an end in itself but serve a purpose. He further points out that:

> The womb within which 'the African renaissance' movement was born was the struggle against imperialism in all stages, forms, shades and hues. The world as envisaged, was one in which the needs, interests, dreams, aspirations and desires of the downtrodden and wretched of the earth would be held paramount and wherein their political hegemony would be a fait accompli.

Referring to the context in which the African Renaissance debate takes place, Bofelo (ibid.) states that, "Elsewhere in the continent successful uprisings and revolts against neo-colonialist regimes have indicated the growing awareness that it does not take the colour for a person to be a right-winger, tyrant, bureaucrat and oppressor". The most significant ideas of the above deliberations in the context of this paper is the recognition of and the pride in what is African, without restricting this pride to that which is Black. The African Renaissance encompasses much more than just Black consciousness. In a similar vein Viljoen (2000) maintains that the African Renaissance, "could also be seen as an invitation to Africans to participate in the creation of a world civilization, the creation of a new world order".

While the European Renaissance was only referred to as such much later in history, the African Renaissance seems to be a deliberate movement. Whereas the European Renaissance aimed at setting people free, the aim of the African Renaissance is advancing self-development as well as a pride in one's identity and restoring self-dignity. Although essentially different from its European counterpart the African Renaissance could accomplish important achievements in the further development of Africa. Education in general and the teaching of languages, in particular, should naturally play a central role in this process.

HISTORY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN NAMIBIA

Long before the German flag was hoisted at Angra Pequena in August 1884, missionaries had settled in the country, which Andersson first referred to as South West Africa in 1856 (Vedder 1997:384). These missionaries, as well as the German settlers and the German 'Schutztruppe'

brought about substantial changes in the lives of the original inhabitants. Missionaries were determined to convert the 'nomads' not only to Christianity but to a settled life as well. In order to accomplish this, the White settlers secured additional land for themselves and resettled the Black people on less fertile land. Subsequently a growing number of Black people had to seek employment from the Whites in order to survive. They might not have been aware of it, but for these people culture was a self-regulating system that ensured their survival.

As early as 1892 Governor von François had ordered that all White children attend German schools even though this meant that at times more Dutch than German speaking children were in the classes. In 1906 schooling was declared compulsory for White children between the ages of eight and fourteen years of age living within four kilometres of a school. This ruling was expanded in 1911 to include all White children irrespective of where they lived. Although no unified syllabi existed, the schools followed the German system to a greater or lesser extent.

Schooling for Black children was extremely rudimentary. The mission schools were poorly equipped, attendance was not compulsory and secondary schools did not exist. Those Blacks who could read, write and showed a keen interest in religious instruction soon found themselves working as teachers. The missionaries shared the view of the settlers that the inhabitants should be educated in such a way as to best serve the colony. Accordingly, girls and boys were taught different skills. While the girls were instructed in how to keep a Christian home clean, boys were introduced to woodwork and gardening (Cohen 1994:67). Sr. Clara Nerz (1996:3) of the Catholic Church stated that, "Soon the white ladies of the town were eager to acquire the services of the girls once they had left the hostel".

The medium of instruction in the Rhenish Mission schools was either Otjiherero or Nama. In addition, two hours of German lessons per week were compulsory for all pupils (Rheinische Mission 1910:22). The Catholic Mission followed a different approach and all tutoring was done in German. The Finnish Mission schools had adopted yet another method; they taught in the indigenous language of the north only (Cohen 1994:65-66). The mission schools took pride in the fact that they not only taught academic subjects, but they claimed to have also taught norms and values, necessary for proper everyday communication with the White settlers (Rheinische Mission 1910:5).

The above discussion indicates that during the colonial times a large proportion of the population came into formal contact with the German language. At the same time, this discussion draws attention to the fact that education for Black children was intended to be different and not of the same standard as for White children. The former were merely expected to be good servants to the White masters. This was clearly reflected in their edification.

After the capitulation of the German forces in 1915, South Africa was given the task of governing South West Africa as an integral part of South Africa and to prepare it for independence. Cohen (1994:40) reports that, "The ex-German colonies were differentiated into 'A', 'B' and 'C' mandates depending on the state of development of their inhabitants and other factors such as economic conditions and geographical location. South West Africa (Namibia) was classified as a 'C' class mandate". However, already at Versailles in 1919 General Smuts had announced that the territory should become a fifth province of South Africa.

The medium of instruction at all schools had to be either Afrikaans or English; German was intended only as a foreign language. The German population group vehemently fought against

this. Ironically the Germans now experienced what von François had demanded of all non-German speakers in 1892. For the Black learners at the mission schools, this meant the end of German lessons. English and Afrikaans, both foreign languages, had to be mastered instead. Afrikaans received special attention, the reason being: "It is essential ... to give preference to one language for the establishment of better understanding among the natives themselves as well as between natives and Europeans" (Education Department 1935:27).

Frustrated and concerned, Black parents voiced their dissatisfaction with the inequality that prevailed in education:

> There is further the pronounced aversion of the Herero to all institutions of a European Administration. Many Hereros maintain that the real aim of the school is to train the young people to be good servants for the Europeans and they are not prepared to send their children to school for that purpose.
>
> Others are not opposed to schools on principle. ... They are, however, dissatisfied with the system of education. They demand for their children the same education as that given in European schools (ibid. 1934:20-21).

The authorities however chose to ignore these concerns. As a matter of fact, the situation for Black pupils was about to worsen. The racial segregation implemented by the German colonial government that manifested itself in different education for different races, reserves for Black inhabitants and a ban on mixed marriages, played right into the hands of the nationalist Government of South Africa that came into power in 1948. The Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 was one of the corner stones of the apartheid policy that was to govern the lives of millions of people, not only in South Africa, but in South West Africa (Namibia) as well.

In his endeavours to establish apartheid firmly in South West Africa, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Dr H. Verwoerd, demanded that all matters concerning Blacks be placed under his jurisdiction. This step eventually led to the formation of the Odendaal-Commission, which proposed in 1964 that South West Africa be divided into eleven Homelands or Bantustans. From then on all educational activities were shifted to the various homelands, the reason of course being to keep people segregated. Although more junior secondary schools were being built, Black children were discouraged from obtaining high school training.

By the mid-seventies things had changed in South West Africa/Namibia. SWAPO's freedom fight had escalated, many young people had left the country, the *Turnhalle Conference* had its first official meeting and the UN passed Resolution 435 to speed up Namibia's independence process.

The Catholic private schools in Windhoek, the Holy Cross Convent and St Paul's College decided in 1977 to forfeit any governmental subsidies and open their schools to all races. In 1978 the *Deutsche Höhere Privatschule* followed suit. During this time, the syllabi of the Cape Province replaced the Bantu Education Syllabi. For the first time Black, Coloured and White children were taught according to the same curriculum. However, according to Cohen (1994:129) and Melber (1979:91) these were mere superficial changes. The syllabi still supported White domination and the content referred to South Africa rather than to Namibia. Although the number of Black and Coloured pupils beginning their schooling increased dramatically in that time, it must be kept in mind that only a minority obtained their school-

leaving certificate as illustrated in Table 1 below.[106] In addition, the decrease in the number of White pupils shown in Table 1 was a consequence of the exodus of Whites from Namibia during the 1970s.

TABLE 1. SCHOOL ENROLMENTS AND SCHOOL LEAVERS

	1971			1981		
Std	B	C	W	B	C	W
Sub A	30 103	3 682	2 318	55 101	5 261	1 712
Std 10	44	53	778	346	282	990

Source: Cohen 1994:132

In 1980 the Representative Authorities Proclamation - also known as AG 8 - was proclaimed according to which each ethnic group had its own legislative and executive powers. South West Africa (Namibia) thus had more than 11 Education Departments. A division along ethnic lines now replaced the segregation into Black, Coloured and White. As Government was confronted with the "embarrassing fact that a larger number of Namibians outside the country were receiving university, tertiary and skills training than those inside Namibia" (Cohen 1994:171) the Academy for Tertiary Education was established in Windhoek. Despite all justified criticism, it must be born in mind that for the first time in South West Africa's history students were offered tertiary education not based solely on the foundation of Bantu Education (ibid.:178).

It was only with independence, on 21 March 1990, that the constitution of the Republic of Namibia stated in Article 20:

1. All persons shall have the right to education.
2. Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge.
3. Children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of sixteen (16) years, whichever is the sooner. ...
4. All Persons shall have the right, at their own expense, to establish and to maintain private schools ... (GRN n.d.:12-13).

During the 1980s SWAPO had stated officially that it favoured English as the official language for Namibia, for the following reason: "The aim of introducing English is to introduce an official language that will steer the people away from lingo-tribal affiliations and differences and create conditions conducive to national unity in the realm of language" (UNIN 1981 Foreword).

Despite criticism by local as well as international linguists, such as Cluver (1989), Harlech-Jones (1989, 1990) and Pütz (1995) - to name but a few - Article 3 of the constitution declares English to be the official language. The new government, in particular the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport had the daunting task of integrating the inherited and very different Education Departments into one in an effort to provide what is known as Education for All

[106] Sub A represents the first year at school while Std 10 represents school leavers. 'B', 'C' and 'W' represents Black, Coloured and White pupils respectively.

Fortunately officials in this ministry, coming from all sections of society, were aware of the divided expectations:

> On the one hand, the majority marginalised in the old system demands the redress of unequal allocations and social disadvantages: education for all. On the other hand, there persists concern, even fear, among the privileged minority that this redress may lead to declining quality in education and other adverse effects for them and their children (MEC 1993:21).

With regard to the language situation and policy in Namibia, English is the official language and by 1995 it had become the main medium of instruction in Grades 4 through 12 in all promotional subjects. However, all non-promotional subjects may be taught in a national language. National languages are all languages traditionally spoken in Namibia; including German and Afrikaans. The policy further states that:

- All national languages are equal regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of a particular language.
- All language policies must regard language as a medium of cultural transmission.
- Language policy should promote national unity (MEC 1993:65).

To sum up, the educational development in Namibia had resulted in the marginalisation of African cultures and languages. Education was invariably used as a political tool to realise ideological goals and served to promote Western/European culture as the 'true culture' (see Viljoen 2000). As Melber (1979:91) and Cohen (1994:129) have pointed out, what was taught in schools did not always seem relevant to the learners.

WHY AND HOW SHOULD EUROPEAN LANGUAGES BE TAUGHT IN NAMIBIA

As becomes apparent from the Draft Report of the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training (GRN 1999) the languages policy of Government has "caused a great deal of apprehension". Some of the problems are:

- lack of competencies to teach through the medium of English;
- multi-cultural communities where children can not be taught through the medium of their mother-tongue; and
- parents who press for an English-only curriculum, "believing that this will be an advantage for their children, irrespective of the learning difficulties" (ibid.: Chapter 7).

There is no doubt about the fact that the African languages in Namibia need to gain a broader base, or as Ohly (1993:100) says, African languages should be modernised, "to such a degree that their speakers would be able to render all possible social situations in these languages [and] would become equal counterparts of official English in the communication process". In order to realise this goal not only is a policy needed but also a lot of hard work must go into modernising the languages. This does not compare favourably to the continuous efforts to keep up with technological developments and find equivalent terms in Afrikaans, which unlike German, does not accept most new English words into its vocabulary. It is important that people realise that their language 'works' on all levels, not just the personal one and that they have every reason to be proud of it. It is absolutely necessary to develop all these languages to the levels of the Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE).

TABLE 2. HOME LANGUAGE STATISTICS (1997)

Language	Grade 1-3: Home language-Medium of Instruction	%	Junior Certificate	IGCSE	HIGCSE
Afrikaans	6 574	60	2 204	902	480
English	720	83	328	167	128
German	551	93	123	26	110
Khoekhoegowab	6 083	33	125	0	0
Oshikwanyama	35 024	82	3 401	I 672	0
Oshindonga	22 083	90	9 299	3 353	0
Otjiherero	4 531	39	711	141	0
Rugciriku	5 107	88	388	65	0
Rukwangali	11 266	88	908	316	0
Setswana	201	38	0	0	0
Silozi	I 428	84	2 194	1 122	0
Thimbukushu	2 890	80	345	0	0

Source: EMIS 1998

Equally important is the fact that these languages must also be offered as second and foreign languages, preferably up to the HIGCSE-level. Only once all national languages of Namibia are elevated languages, will their future be more secure (see Table 2 for home language statistics).

The question often asked is 'Why should Namibians learn German or any other seemingly foreign European language apart from English?' This paper will concentrate on the reasons for learning German in Namibia because its circumstances are exceptional. Against the sketched background of separate development and the fact that German is as much a national language as an international one, the teaching of German in Namibia offers unique possibilities. These should and must be consciously utilised to a much greater extent than is done at the moment. It seems that some of the potential in teaching German in Namibia has been overlooked, that is, its function in the process of building one Namibian nation.

The everyday life of many Namibians is still influenced by German, because German is part of Namibia's past and present. This extends from the German newspaper, to the German Radio service, the variety of typical German imported as well as locally produced articles and German restaurants with their intrinsically German menus. On account of these visible facts and the ever increasing number of German tourists coming to Namibia, learning German in Namibia not only provides the learners with knowledge about a country some 11 000 kilometres away, but it also provides the opportunity for all Namibian learners to obtain relevant information about their own country through the medium of this language. German tourists are conspicuously present everywhere and most learners who study German as a foreign language have come into contact with them.[97] During their German classes, learners of course, also learn about the Federal Republic of Germany, about Switzerland and Austria. In this way, they will be equipped with intercultural competencies that will in turn prepare them for encounters with another culture.

More significantly though, during their classes they will also collect and discuss information

[97] At present German is taught in all the bigger cities and town in Namibia, see Zappen-Thomson 2000

about the various tourist attractions in Namibia, the historical background and the people living here. In other words, the learners will became familiar with the diversity of the country within which they live. By enabling them not only to discuss what can be seen, but also by relating this to the history and various traditions and cultures of Namibia, learners will gain a clearer picture of who they are themselves. Learners, consequently, have the opportunity to obtain relevant knowledge about their own country through the German language. As far as the classroom situation is concerned, this means that children from totally different cultural backgrounds have the chance to look at themselves and their 'own' culture with different eyes but at the same time also look at the 'other' with new eyes, without stereotypes blurring their vision. It must be born in mind, that learners are not be compelled to take German as a subject at school. It is their choice. It is encouraging to note from Table 3 below, that the interest in German as a foreign language has shown a steady increase over the years since independence.

TABLE 3. NUMBER OF GERMAN LEARNERS IN NAMIBIA

Year	Number of learners taking German as a foreign language at school
1992	1 986
1993	2 372
1994	2 547
1995	2 217
1996	2 452
1997	2 475
1998	3 340

In order to answer the question 'How European Languages should be taught?', the new syllabus for German-as-a-foreign-language for the H/IGCSE mentions important and truly challenging aims. These are to:

- develop the ability to use the language effectively for purposes of communication on different levels and for different purposes **within the country of residence**, where appropriate, and **in all the countries where the language is spoken**;
- offer **insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries** where the language is spoken - this may include literature where appropriate;
- encourage **fuller integration into the local community**, where relevant;
- encourage **positive attitudes towards foreign language learning and towards speakers of foreign languages** and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations (UCLES 1994:1).

It would be of great benefit to the Namibian people if what has been sketched above would find its way into all other language classes as well, whether they be other European languages or, most importantly, African languages as foreign language classes.

CONCLUSION

As happened during the European Renaissance, national languages in Namibia should all claim their rightful place in society, however, what needs to be guarded against is that this development not only involve an elite. We should all be proud of our cultural backgrounds, and

thus also see to it that all national languages in Namibia are developed further. As has been reported recently in Namibia, "Oliver Stegen, a language expert with the Summer Institute of Languages (SIL), says the advancement of local languages is crucial because children understand better if they are taught in their first languages" (*The Namibian Weekender* 14 April 2000). The article says that Stegen further believes that, "Developed countries advance faster because they use their own languages" (ibid.). If this is the inspiration we can obtain from the European Renaissance, we must embrace it.

If an African Renaissance proves itself to be the 'true' liberation that rejoices in diversity, it will be necessary for all the peoples of Africa regardless of their race or colour to strive for the 'restoration of the dignity' of all concerned, then I am of the opinion that we must give this movement - different as it may be, indeed possibly must be from the European Renaissance - a chance.

It is not my intention to claim that Namibia is a country with no racial conflicts, however, our young people are learning how to live with each other in harmony partly because of learning a different language. In this case, German is used to inform learners about each other. Namibians coming from different cultural backgrounds, although having shared a 'common' history from about 1884 onwards, were never in a position to live together - they have lived next to each other - but have never come to know each other. However, through the changes that have taken place in the society at large and in education in particular, Namibians now have the chance not only to meet but also to learn from each other. With the increased knowledge about each other will come a deeper understanding of 'who' we are and thus greater respect for each other. This, to me, seems as good a reason as any to realise the dream of an African Renaissance.

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