Political power, national identity, and language: the case of Afrikaans*

P. ERIC LOUW

Abstract

Afrikaans is the home language of 5.9 million people. During the 1980s, Afrikaans was the dominant state language and a widely-used lingua franca in South Africa and Namibia. But by the end of the twentieth century, English had replaced Afrikaans as the dominant state language and a decline in the use of Afrikaans was in evidence, even among native Afrikaans speakers. An examination of this language's twentieth-century journey helps illustrate the relationship(s) between political power, national identity, and the growth and / or decline of languages.

1.   Introduction

Theorists such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson have argued that the promotion of a codified language is a central part of building a nation state. A codified language becomes simultaneously a crucial administrative tool for bureaucratically holding a state together, and the fulcrum within which a national identity can be built. Consequently, any language associated with a nation-building project and / or state power will presumably prosper because such a language benefits from political patronage. The question is what happens to a language associated with a nation-building project when the political power underpinning that project is lost. And what happens to the "national identity" associated with a language losing political patronage. The fate of Afrikaans and Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa provides some answers to these questions for the following reasons:

–   From 1948 to 1990 an Afrikaner-nationalist–run nation-building project actively promoted the use of Afrikaans as a legal / bureaucratic language.

– However, the post-apartheid context has seen Afrikaners marginalized within the South African political process; and Afrikaans dropped as a language of state administration.

Examining Afrikaans during the twentieth century is thus an excellent vehicle for considering the relationship between language, power, and nation building.

2.   Afrikaans during the twentieth century

During the twentieth century, Afrikaans passed through three phases.

Following Britain's victory in the Boer War (1899–1902), English was imposed as the language of commerce, industry, and state administration across British-ruled Southern Africa. Lord Alfred Milner also pursued a policy of Anglicizing white Afrikaners (Headlam 1933: 242–243). This included, for example, forbidding the speaking of Afrikaans in schools. The reaction against Milnerism led to the growth of Afrikaner nationalism — that is, an Afrikaner elite emerged who struggled against Anglicization (De Klerk 1975: 119). This nationalist elite struggled for:

– Afrikaans to become an official language alongside English;
– the right of Afrikaners to send their children to Afrikaans-language schools (i.e., ending Milner's Anglicization policy in the schools. Early in phase one, this saw the creation of church-hosted Afrikaans-language ["Christian-national"] schools); and
– the principle of bilingualism within the state bureaucracy.

This first phase (1902–1947) was effectively a struggle against Anglo cultural imperialism.

The second phase (1948–1990) involved a peculiarly South African form of nation building associated with apartheid. An Afrikaner nationalist elite (mobilized around the National Party / NP) captured the state and set about systematically building a nationalist state. But this elite faced the problem that Afrikaners were only one of many ethnic groups in South Africa, and indeed were a minority of the population. So the Afrikaner nation-building program involved seeking mechanisms for "separating" Afrikaners from Anglos, South Africa's black ethnic groups and colored Afrikaans speakers. The Afrikaner sense of "minority-ness" led, in particular, to a fear of black majoritarianism, and so much of apartheid was about trying to find mechanisms for geographically delineating a secure "national territory" within which an Afrikaner (Euro-African) national state could function. The result was apartheid (based

on the Dutch *verzuiling* model) which aimed to "separate-out" the different groups so Afrikaners would be left with their own "national space" (Cronje 1945).

During phase two, the Afrikaans language received significant political patronage from the NP-run state. Apartheid simultaneously constructed separate (cultural and political) "spaces" for nine black ethnic groups — based on the principle of *eiesoortigheid* ("own-ness"), wherein each "group" had its own "space." A system of state patronage was built to encode and promote South Africa's nine black languages (but this patronage was not as lavish as that afforded to Afrikaans). Apartheid was thus, in many ways an attempt to resist the processes of cultural homogenization, and Anglo-American cultural imperialism set in motion by the Atlantic Charter. As a state-sponsored attempt to actively halt the Anglicization of South Africa, apartheid contradicted the core principles of Atlantic Charter modernization and assimilationism. As such it flew in the face of the trajectory of the post-World War II world, and so was bound to generate significant opposition.

During phase two, Afrikaner nationalists assertively diffused the use of Afrikaans throughout South Africa and Namibia. The principle of 50–50 Afrikaans-English bilingualism was legally enforced within the state bureaucracy, signage, and product-labeling. Afrikaner cultural forms and the Afrikaans language were actively promoted by the state through the building of infrastructures like Afrikaans-medium schools, universities, and colleges. This spawned an Afrikaans book-publishing industry. Expanding literacy in Afrikaans led to the growth of an Afrikaans newspaper and magazine industry. The SA Academy for Language, Literature and Art (*SA Akademie*) promoted Afrikaans through developing dictionaries, codifying grammatical and spelling rules and ensuring the ongoing development of scientific, technical, and legal terminology. The state also built a multilingual electronic media infrastructure broadcasting in eleven languages. The South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) national Afrikaans radio service and national television service (broadcasting 50% of its programs in Afrikaans) did much to promote the use and status of Afrikaans. Advertisers on SATV Channel One were required to produce all advertisements in both English and Afrikaans, and the state sponsored the translation of overseas television programs into Afrikaans and subsidized the production of Afrikaans television programming, Afrikaans films and theatre. All this significantly enhanced the status of Afrikaans and increased its use (including as a lingua franca among non-Afrikaners).

With the ending of apartheid in 1994, Afrikaners became a South African minority group, marginalized within a political process geared to

"black empowerment." The new ruling elite is dominated by Westernized black South Africans who have forged a corporatist alliance with Anglo capital. This (Anglo-educated) elite deploys English as a language of state administration and lingua franca, and has effectively promoted Atlantic Charter modernization and assimilationism. The collapse of Afrikaner political power has initiated a third phase — the decline of Afrikaans. The following developments are associated with it:

– Afrikaans has been dropped as a language of the state's bureaucracy. Central, provincial and local governments have switched to function virtually exclusively in English; as have the parastatals; and government research institutes (Van Rensburg et al. 2001).

– State-owned enterprises are now forbidden from using previously well-known Afrikaans acronyms, for example SAUK (now SABC/ South African Broadcasting Corporation); SAL (SAA/South African Airways); and YSKOR (ISCOR / Iron and Steel Corporation) (Lewis 2002: 6).

– There are pressures to downgrade Afrikaans within the legal system. Hence, although the courts still function in a multiplicity of South African languages, the Ministry of Justice declared in 2002 that it would move toward using only English as its language of record (Lewis 2002: 16).

– There has been a dramatic decline in Afrikaans usage on television, with English growing to be the dominant television language (Du Plooy and Grobler 2002).

– Afrikaans has effectively been abandoned as a language of signage, product labeling, and announcements at airports, railway-stations, etc. With the abandonment of enforcing bilingualism, has come (English) unilingualism in signage and product labeling (Lewis 2002: 6).

– The decline of Afrikaans as a language of commerce, industry and advertising (due to economic cost and the "political liabilities" to using Afrikaans in the current context). Afrikaner-owned companies — for example Volkskas Bank) are even changing their names to hide their Afrikaans character (Lewis 2002: 5). In addition, companies that previously ran their operations in Afrikaans are switching to English. In part, this is happening because the government's "Black Empowerment" policies are forcing companies to employ black managers who then insist on everyone using English (Lewis 2002: 5).

– There are state pressures to convert Afrikaans universities, colleges, and schools into English-medium institutions to provide "access" to non-Afrikaners. Afrikaans schools are being pressured to adopt English (Lewis 2002: 11), and Afrikaans universities are being Anglofied

through enforced mergers with English-medium universities (Lewis 2002: 10). The state has also closed six Afrikaans teacher-training colleges, thereby generating shortages in Afrikaans-speaking teachers (Lewis 2002: 9).

– There has been a significant decline in the use of Afrikaans for scientific / academic publication (Van Rensburg et al. 2001: 65).
– Sports organizations (e.g. the Rugby Board) no longer use Afrikaans in meetings or for rule-books (Lewis 2002: 12).

During phase two, Afrikaner nationalists confidently and assertively constructed Afrikaner national identity. The identity constructed during this assertive phase is now under pressure in phase three; Afrikaners not only have to come to terms with a loss of state patronage, but also face a degree of state hostility directed at their language and cultural forms. Whether this will erode Afrikaner cultural identity, or simply generate a mutation in this identity is a moot point. Whether the loss of state power will necessarily translate into a loss of Afrikaner cultural identity is not yet clear. Predicting what will happen, in part, hinges upon how one conceptualizes national identity and its origins.

3.   Afrikaner national identity: constructed, imagined, consumed, or pre-existing?

National identity can be conceptualized as arising in one of four ways. Each conceptualizes the impact of political power on language differently.

Firstly, some argue that nations "exist" in a natural, organic, and essentialist way. If nations are viewed as primordial "naturally-existent" entities (Smith 1998: 23), national identity is not deemed to be "constructed;" it is deemed to simply "exist." Such essentialism proposes that we identify with nations because they exist, and that we are naturally members of them. During the heyday of Afrikaner nationalism, essentialist reasoning was often mobilized — the Afrikaner nation was seen to have organically arisen from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century experiences of Dutch, French, and German settlers living in Africa and intermarrying. Significantly, the essentialist view pays no attention to the impact of the following within the process of identity formation:

– The role of political power on cultural resource flows, and how individuals construct their identities in relationship to available resources.
– How individuals construct their identities in relationship to contextual power relationships.
– The role played by an active elite (of intellectuals and political actors) struggling over resources, worldviews, and policies.

Because essentialist nationalists do not reckon with the role of contextually-based power relationships as regards their picture of national identity, they fail to consider the impact that a loss of power will have on a particular national identity. Conceivably, NP negotiators at South Africa's 1990s constitutional negotiations gave away too much because they were essentialist nationalists. This would have led them to take for granted that Afrikaner national identity was "a given" and therefore had an organic existence independent of contextual power relations. This meant a loss of political power would not be seen to constitute a threat to future Afrikaner national identity.

A second approach to national identity is that of the modernists. Modernists argue that nations do not just "exist." Instead they propose nations are communicatively constructed. Modernists place great emphasis on the role played by the media and intelligentsia (such as intellectuals, teachers, and journalists) in the formation of nations and identity. For modernists, nations are invented as modernist projects. These projects construct language-based communities into which people are socialized. Literacy and the print media have been centrally implicated in constructing these national identities. Gellner offers the classic statement of the constructivist argument. Gellner argued that nation states were the necessary outgrowth of capitalist industrialization, because states are the administrative units within which such economies can be organized most efficiently. Modernizing states effectively organized people into "large, centrally educated, culturally homogeneous groups" (Gellner 1983: 35) — groups bound together not by the old feudal loyalties (of monarchy or religion), but by "culture" (Gellner 1983: 36). Significantly, the earliest national cultures were constructed by print media circulating texts not in Latin (the trans-European language of feudal elites), but in local languages spoken by burgher-merchants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (e.g. English, Dutch, and French). Literacy provided access to these representations (and practices and rituals). Around these codified vernaculars grew language-centered "national" identities. Once burgher hegemony was achieved, literacy was deliberately diffused (through centralized and standardized education systems) so as to systematically incorporate the masses into the "cultural identity" being constructed within each nation. Mass education simultaneously inculcated practices and values useful for industrialization; and taught literacy (so enabling mass "access" to the common culture). Literacy also facilitated the emergence of mass newspapers — which disseminated the national cultures being constructed.

The story of Afrikaans provides an almost classic illustration of the modernist understanding of the relationship between language and nation building. During the early twentieth century, Afrikaner middle-class

cultural activists promoted the codification of Afrikaans as a language distinct from Dutch. Newspaper and magazine journalism played a crucial role in this process, as did the production of an Afrikaans-language Bible. These cultural activists forged an alliance with nationalist politicians and succeeded in having Afrikaans made one of South Africa's official languages in 1918. (In 1925, they further succeeded in having Afrikaans replace Dutch as an official parliamentary language.) After Afrikaner nationalists won the 1948 election, they set about simultaneously "Afrikanerizing" (de-Anglicizing?) South Africa and building a modernist nation state, which, from the 1960s onward, involved rapid industrialization. But the NP invented a new kind of nation-building process. Instead of organizing South Africans into a single culturally homogeneous state to service the administrative needs of a single capitalist state (i.e., the US model of nation building and Third World development), the NP tried to deconstruct the (British-made) South African unified capitalist state. Apartheid attempted to create a "Euro-African state" (which would be demographically dominated by the "Afrikaner-nation" that the nationalists were busy constructing). This "Euro-African state" was to be surrounded by "independent" black national states. This involved attempting to build "black homeland" states, encoding nine (print-based) African languages (e.g., Zulu, Xhosa, and Tswana), and building national identities around these homeland states / languages. The latter project was never successfully implemented. However, the NP did succeed in building both a "core" modernized industrial-capitalist state, and an Afrikaner national group with a powerful sense of possessing an autonomous identity. A cohesive Afrikaner group emerged around a language-centered "national" identity. The codified/standardized vernacular of Afrikaans, and Afrikaans literacy, was deliberately diffused through a standardized education system. State-run ("Christian-national") mass education helped to systematically "gather together" the full class spectrum of Afrikaners, and to "incorporate" them into the constructed "cultural identity" of "being Afrikaans." This identity was attached to the notion of "South African nationhood" (which excluded the black homeland states). By the 1970s, this constructed Afrikaner group was cohesive and confident enough to forge a hegemonic alliance with SA-Anglos to run the "core" industrial state. This "core" state provided considerable patronage to Afrikaans in the form of:

– resources, for example educational infrastructures, radio and television facilities, and cultural subsidies;
– bilingualism being legally enforced (one of the consequences of this being the growth of an educational industry engaged in teaching

Afrikaans to non-Afrikaners, which also stimulated the production of Afrikaans books, dictionaries, etc.); and
– status to be derived from the fact that the political elite, bureaucrats, and judiciary used Afrikaans.

But ultimately, Afrikaans/Afrikaner identity's relationship to this state power was to prove a double-edged sword. During the period of NP rule it guaranteed a valuable flow of patronage, resources, and status. However, it simultaneously left a legacy of resentment among Westernized urban black South Africans — a group the apartheid project never accommodated. It is this urban black group who are currently at the heart of the new ANC ruling elite, and they have terminated the NP's Afrikaner nation-building project, and terminated the flow of patronage to Afrikaans. The effects on Afrikaans have been dramatic. Those adopting a modernist view would not be surprised by this — as they would expect a language that is detached from a nation-building project and/or state patronage to suffer decline.

A third approach to national identity is the postmodernist position. Postmodernists see nations as the outcome of a process of contextually-bound semiosis. Nations are linguistic representations, arising as people relate to each other within a matrix of power relations. Hall (1996), for example, argues our identities mutate as we shift our relational positions, producing a multiplicity of fragmented identities. In essence, we continually construct and reconstruct ourselves as we live our lives. From Hall's perspective, ''national identity'' becomes simply another form of ''temporary attachment'' to discursively constructed ''subject positions.'' For postmodernists, the media have become key vehicles for the circulation of the discourses/representations individuals use to invent their identities.

A postmodern view of Afrikaner identity would stress the contextual power relationships within which this identity emerged, grew, and mutated; and examine how subject positions were constructed by individuals within, and due to, these contextual arrangements. For example, immediately after the Boer War, Afrikaner subject positions encoded trauma, caused by their defeat and by Milner's Anglicization policy. Those experiencing this trauma constructed subject positions stressing both ''victim-hood'' and ''African-ness'' as a marker of difference from Anglo-colonial settlers. Between 1902 and 1948, this postwar identity mutated with an emerging struggle against Anglo-hegemony and Anglicization pressures; coupled with the experience of Afrikaner impoverishment (within the mining-capitalist economy built by the British following the Boer War). From these experiences were constructed subject positions based on

resentment — the self was defined as "the other," in opposition to (Anglo) colonial occupation. Afrikaner nationalist politicians learned to mobilize this resentment to systematically encourage an anti-imperial nationalism. Once these (NP) nationalists came to power they created an altered set of conditions (during the 1950s) within which new subject positions could grow. The NP government allocated resources to Afrikaner institutions, and implemented a program of affirmative action to upgrade an Afrikaner working class and *Lumpenproletariat* impoverished by Anglo-capitalism. Effectively they built the foundation infrastructures of an Afrikaner nation-building project which created the material for a range of new Afrikaner (and non-Afrikaner) subject positions. In particular, the construction of "assertive" Afrikaner nationalist subject positions was facilitated. During the 1950s, Afrikaners constructed identities encoding a form of catharsis (of the sort described by Fanon 1965) derived from the experience of regaining political power. However, because Anglo-power was far from a spent force in the 1950s, early Afrikaner nationalist identities also encoded an "insecurity." This led to deliberate attempts to build "non-Anglo" cultural forms and practices in order to provide the "resources" from which "autonomous" and "confident" Afrikaner identities could be constructed. Then, during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the context and power relationships shifted again, such that Anglos/Anglicization was no longer considered the key threat to Afrikaner identity. Decolonization pressures and the threat of black majority rule set the new contextual framework within which Afrikaners constructed their identities. This led to the creation of a militarized state (to defend the Afrikaner nation) underpinned by a strong industrial base. This saw the emergence of Afrikaner subject positions strongly enmeshed with actively participating in a state- and nation-building project and with Praetorianism (defending the state). Postmodernists would not be surprised to discover that when this Afrikaner nation-building project and its accompanying militarization were ended in 1994, Afrikaners experienced significant trauma and identity "dislocation." Essentially, post-1994 power relationships have impacted upon the "spaces" available for constructing subject positions — on the one hand, the former Afrikaner nationalist position has been dealt a major blow. On the other hand, "space" and "resources" have emerged for the construction of assertive black nationalist subject positions. (The 1990s black nationalist subject positions resemble, in many ways, 1950s Afrikaner nationalist subject positions).

A fourth approach to national identity is Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities." Anderson (1991: 44) notes how print capitalism effectively "assembled" vernacular "national languages" and

"nationally imagined communities;" and notes the powerful relationship existing between imagined communities and print languages (Anderson 1991: 133–134). He discusses, for example, the role that newspapers (which served different economic zones) played in building South American nations (Anderson 1991: 52–53). Anderson (1991: 119–123) also examines how the Dutch East Indies (literacy-focused) education system similarly assembled the Indonesian imagined community. Anderson's understanding of national identity remains grounded in a modernist view that nations are constructed. However, Anderson moves some way toward the postmodernist notion of nations as linguistic representations — that is, he hybridizes the modernist idea of an elite-constructed, communication-based project of nation building with the postmodernist idea of semiotic "imaginings." Hence, national identities are not reducible to modernist constructions. But neither are they simply reducible to subjectivist "unreality." For Anderson, communities can be "invented" and "imagined," but that does not mean they are not experienced/perceived as intensely "real" for those inside them. Anderson's work does not fall into the trap of regarding national identity as simply some form of "false consciousness" or "mystification." Rather, the "imagined community" notion makes it possible to regard national communities as valuable entities which can assist their members to interact more effectively with each other and the environment. Anderson's work is also useful for grappling with the role of "identity" within the political process, and for examining how identity formation and maintenance emerges from the complex interplay between politicians and their hype industry, the media, the intelligentsia (journalists and educationists), and (mass and niche) publics. Effectively, Anderson recognizes imagined communities are not simply reducible to manufactured "external" entities that position and construct citizens, because people can enter into subjective relationships with these communities — that is, they effectively and actively construct their own "selves" in relationship to these entities. In this way, Anderson recognizes the dual nature of national identities — i.e. although identities can be invented and constructed by an intelligentsia/elite, these identities/representations can also become detached from intelligentsia inventions, and develop a self-sustaining popular life of their own.

Deploying Anderson's approach leads to recognition of the significant (and conscious) role played by a middle-class Afrikaner intelligentsia in constructing Afrikaner national identity. This intelligentsia (journalists, academics, ministers of religion, the literati, and teachers) consciously constructed an Afrikaner nationalist identity by:

- encoding a new language;
- having this language deployed within an education system so as to create a literate community able to consume the texts encoding nationalist messages;
- popularizing the notion of an "African identity" requiring an African language (Afrikaans) distinct from Dutch (and English);
- mobilizing latent anti-Anglo resentments and enhancing and directing these into a coherent worldview which demanded a "separate" Afrikaner "cultural space" autonomous from (and protected from) Anglo culture;
- devising a plan to end Afrikaner (post-Boer war) poverty, thereby replacing Afrikaner working-class and *Lumpenproletariat* support for the communist party with support for Afrikaner nationalism (O'Meara 1983);
- building a set of cultural spaces (newspapers, magazines, schools, universities, radio, television, books, theater, etc.) within which, and through which, an Afrikaner identity and community could be imagined (i.e. encoded and decoded); and by
- encoding a set of narratives, discourses, and symbols from which Afrikaners could construct their individual identities and sense of group cohesiveness.

But by the 1970s, an Afrikaner "imagined community" existed autonomously of the conscious work of a nationalist intelligentsia. This imagined community acquired a self-sustaining dynamic (and "taken-for-grantedness") based upon an existent pool of Afrikaans-literate people who could produce and consume Afrikaans (print and electronic) texts — and hence imagine themselves into a relationship with a community that encoded a sense of "group-ness" tied to geographical boundaries, an in-group solidarity, a worldview and / or set of myths and beliefs, and a distinctive set of practices and discourses. Significantly, this imagined community was directly tied to a state formation (the Republic of South Africa), and Afrikaner identity encoded into itself a powerful sense of attachment to (even "ownership" of ?) this state.

The post-1994 state positions Afrikaners quite differently. The new state promotes assimilation into a common South African imagined community. This emergent imagined community encodes a strong sense of black African nationalism, "Afrocentricism" and antipathy to "Eurocentric" cultural forms and practices. This new imagined community is associated with an identity grounded in Gauteng's urban culture, where economic forces brought a diversity of African ethnic groups together. Gauteng culture, which uses English as a lingua franca, is emerging as

the new dominant cultural formation in South Africa, and is closely associated with the ANC ruling elite. Not only do Gauteng culture's dominant codes, practices, and discourses differ from (clash with?) those of Afrikaner codes, practices, and discourses, but also Gauteng culture's use of English fundamentally challenges a seminal element of Afrikaner identity — namely the rejection of Anglicization. This has generated a significant identity crisis for Afrikaners whose identities were constructed within the pre-1994 imagined community. This crisis has been exacerbated by:

–   the severing of the subjective (nationalist) connectedness between the Afrikaner imagined community and the state;
–   the ending of state patronage, which is starving Afrikaner cultural formations of resources; and
–   de-Afrikanerization pressures emanating from the state.

This poses the question — will the Afrikaner imagined community simply be deconstructed over time, and its members assimilated into the new common South African imagined community currently being constructed by the ANC's nation-building endeavors? Alternatively, will the Afrikaner imagined community mutate by adjusting itself to the new contextual pressures?

4.   Post-1994 pressures on Afrikaans and Afrikaner identity

Anderson's hybridization of modernist and postmodernist thinking on national identity creates a framework for understanding how damaging the post-1994 context is for both Afrikaner identity and the Afrikaans language. The post-1994 context undermines the previously constructed Afrikaner imagined community (and its associated language) in the following ways.

Firstly, 1994 saw the abandonment of the variety of nation building associated with apartheid. After 1994, the NP's nation-building project was replaced with the Atlantic Charter model of nation building. From the mid-twentieth century, the USA set about imposing a particular nation building model onto the rest of the world as (Atlantic Charter driven) decolonization unfolded and European imperial possessions were incorporated into a system of US neocolonialism. The US/Atlantic Charter nation-building model promotes a vision of "national" political participation that transforms Anglo-derived governance, value systems, and economic models into a "pan-human universalism" (Greenfeld 1993: 446). Within this model, unified nation states are created as territorially defined

administrative entities and all citizens assimilated into a single (homogenizing) national identity serving this economic-administrative entity. The Atlantic Charter nation-building model promotes assimilation into a single South African (Anglicized) cultural formation, and so necessarily advantages Gauteng culture and the creation of a single dominant "national language." Minority languages (and their associated identities) will find it enormously difficult to resist assimilation pressures within such national building projects. The result will be de facto Anglicization.

Not surprisingly, Gauteng culture is emerging as a highly assertive cultural formation in post-1994 South Africa, partly because it is a culture that meshes with the needs of the new nation-building project. For this reason it, not surprisingly, receives state patronage (for example, via SABC programming). It also meshes with the imperatives of Anglo-American (economic and cultural) globalization, unlike the "exclusivist" cultures encouraged by apartheid, which contradict the integrative and cosmopolitanizing imperatives of globalization.

Secondly, national projects "assemble" vernacular "national languages." Imagined communities emerge from these "assembly" projects as language communities. The new South African national project is assembling its imagined community around the vernacular of South African English as witnessed by the adoption of English as the language of state administration and commerce and by pressures promoting English as the core language of the education system. Further, because English is also the language of globalization and Anglo-American cultural products (especially television and films) are so readily available, the pressures on young South Africans to use English are enormous. Anglicization is the outcome.

Thirdly, success in modern societies / economies requires literacy. In post-1994 South Africa, success requires being literate in English. Afrikaans literacy is no longer an asset in the state and commercial sectors — in fact, conceivably using Afrikaans might be a handicap in interactions with certain sections of the post-1994 political elite. Young non-English–speaking South Africans (including Afrikaners) need to become English-literate if they are to be successful (or even functional) in post-1994 South Africa. This implies a form of socioeconomic pressure against using a South African indigenous language like Afrikaans. It is a pressure which many young people are likely to succumb to. But as soon as a language-as-coding-system is abandoned in favor of another, an identity shift also takes place — that is, if Anderson is right, switching to South African English will, over time, likely become synonymous with emersion into an imagined community constructed around the Gauteng cultural formation, or emersion into a globalized (Anglo) cultural formation.

Fourthly, (related to the above), in multilingual environments, languages occupy positions in a status hierarchy. In post-1994 South Africa, English acquired the highest status because it is the language of state administration and commerce, of global interaction, and of popular US television and Hollywood products. In a secondary development, the shift of political power into black hands improved the status of languages like Xhosa or Zulu as witnessed by the fact that English-speakers increasingly learn Xhosa or Zulu (as a second language) in preference to Afrikaans. This post-1994 Afrikaans status loss could conceivably trigger a reduction in the use of Afrikaans for tertiary study as young Afrikaners see a "status" benefit in studying in English. This would enhance the drift toward joining a new imagined community.

Fifth, both Gellner and Anderson note the central role played by an intelligentsia in:

- encoding vernacular languages (which also entails ensuring coding systems are renewed to match socioeconomic contextual developments);
- communicatively constructing symbols and narratives around which national identity can congeal; and
- encoding (within the vernaculars) the discourses, practices, and media products which individuals use to construct their identities.

But intelligentsia infrastructures and resources are required for this; and post-1994 South Africa has witnessed the defunding of Afrikaner intelligentsia infrastructures — most visible at the SABC, but also evident in pressures to de-Afrikanerize education. The defunding of these infrastructures necessarily impacts upon the communication resources (e.g. television programs) available for constructing "Afrikaner identities." As significant, there has been a post-1994 resource shift into those (English-language) intelligentsia infrastructures promoting a single South African (Anglicized) cultural formation. The effect on the "cultural milieu" within which South Africans construct their (individual and collective) identities is necessarily profound.

Sixth, an especially important cultural infrastructure is the media. Gellner and Anderson stress the importance of the print media in national-identity construction. In this regard, the continued existence of an Afrikaans newspaper and magazine industry is significant. However, in the contemporary era it could be argued television is as important — television texts having become core resources used by individuals to construct their identities. In this regard, Du Plooy and Grobler (2002) note that Afrikaans has become a very marginal television language in post-1994 South Africa, and no longer constitutes a cultural resource

from which young Afrikaners can construct their identities. The lack of Afrikaans television texts, films and Internet resources does much to undermine the status of Afrikaans and reduces the role of Afrikaans-rooted narratives within the process of identity formation of the next generation.

The rapidity with which the usage and status of Afrikaans have declined since 1994 bodes ill for the future of this language (and for the cultural identity associated with this language). The rapidity of the decline suggests that without the support of an Afrikaner nationalist state, Afrikaans may have a troubled future. If Afrikaans is to survive, the Afrikaner intelligentsia will presumably need to:

– find new ways of sustaining an Afrikaans cultural infrastructure in the absence of state funding;
– overcome the declining status of the language;
– challenge pressures from South Africa's political elite and business elite to abandon Afrikaans; and
– deliver Afrikaans-language narratives (in both print and electronic formats) that are engaging for young people.

If this is not done, the next generation will not construct their identities from Afrikaans-derived codes, discourses, and practices. Failure to do this may see Afrikaans, like so many other minority languages around the world, become yet another victim of the linguistic homogenizing pressures of Anglo globalization.

University of Queensland

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