



Language Policy Implementation for Service Delivery: A Case Study of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa



Khayelihle Phumlani Nkosi¹  & Thabo Ditsele¹ 

¹ Department of Applied Languages, Faculty of Humanities, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

South African local authorities (i.e., local government sector) have a responsibility to develop and strengthen Southern Bantu languages as prescribed by the country's Constitution. This was done to make sure that all official languages in the country are equitably used and developed as scientific languages in all government spheres. The purpose of this study was to examine challenges faced by the community in terms of implementing language policy for service delivery at a municipality level. The study selected Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) in Gauteng as a research site. This was a qualitative study, and document analysis and interviews were utilised to gather data from the selected participants. The study found that despite EMM having a multilingual language policy, it overwhelmingly favoured using English at the expense of other languages it gave official status. Hence, the municipality did not do justice to most of its residents who cannot communicate in English as a home language, thereby did not service them well, at least as far as communicating with them was concerned. EMM has taken a step in the right direction by giving Southern Bantu languages official status and such a step can be enhanced by developing clearly spelt out language policy implementation strategies that unambiguously outline how it will further develop isiZulu, Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Sesotho. Official languages chosen by EMM had also been chosen by its neighbouring metropolitan municipalities in Gauteng, that is, Johannesburg and Tshwane, and by collaborating with the two, EMM can improve its offering to its residents by communicating with them more meaningfully in those Southern Bantu languages.

Correspondence

Thabo Ditsele

Email:

ProfDitsele@outlook.com

Publication History

Received:

30th January, 2025

Accepted:

2nd May, 2025

Published:

3rd June, 2025

Keywords: *Language policy and planning, language implementation, multilingualism, service delivery*

INTRODUCTION

According to Aziakpono, “multilingualism refers to the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to regularly engage with more than one language in their daily lives.”¹ Aziakpono goes on to explain that implementing multilingualism at the municipal level aims to encourage “more effective participation and civic engagement by removing language barriers to communication between local government and its community, improving communication within local government, and promoting

¹ Meshach Jesse Aziakpono, “Financial And Monetary Autonomy And Interdependence Between South Africa And The Other Sacu Countries,” *South African Journal of Economics* 76, no. 2 (June 17, 2008): 189–211, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1813-6982.2008.00173.x>.

cultural and linguistic diversity.”² In South Africa, such is encouraged by the meaningful use of Southern Bantu languages.³

South African local government (which municipalities fall under) is tasked with the responsibility to make sure that Southern Bantu languages are equitably utilised in all government spaces.⁴ EMM is one of the municipalities that has implemented its language policy, and it did so in November 2007. Its language policy states the languages which must be used for formal communication. However, a visit to some of its municipal offices painted a different picture regarding implementing a multilingual language policy for service delivery, for example, municipal notices, utility bills and other important information between EMM and residents were only in one language. Notwithstanding the fact that their language policy states that communications within the EMM jurisdiction should be in English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Sesotho.

The main aim of this study is to assess challenges related to implementing the language policy for service delivery, focusing on one of the major municipalities in South Africa, that is, the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) in Gauteng province of South Africa. It also aims to assess policy decisions relating to implementing language policy and the consideration of multilingualism in municipalities for service delivery. It is prudent to establish which language(s) EMM uses when communicating with its residents in the delivery of services. This study examines the challenges that hamper the implementation of a multilingual language policy for the delivery of services by EMM. That examination will be done by answering the following research question:

1. How does EMM implement its multilingual language policy for the provision of services?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multilingualism in South Africa

Several researchers have tried to come up with a universally agreed-upon definition of multilingualism. Pennycook argues that “an accurate description of the term is difficult to pin down because the term refers to ever-changing sets of practices determined by context and time, rather than a fixed entity can always be used in a similar pattern.”⁵ According to Nakata, some scholars evaluate “the notion of multilingualism as if languages were floating in a vacuum, set in a system of phonetic, grammatical and lexical forms and detached from the social context in which speech is uttered.”⁶ They added that, this perception is not only narrow-minded, but also flimsy because people must consider time as well as space, history, and place.⁷ When people communicate, they do not apply context and time to language, but they apply the language to the above units. Languages change whenever the context (e.g., the setting, the participants and their relationships) or the time referred to within the context (past, present and future) changes.

Cenoz observes that “past studies on multilingualism have focused on linguistic distinctness, that is, they viewed the world as a neat patchwork of separate monolingual, geographic areas populated almost exclusively by monolingual speakers.”⁸ Many organisations or institutions, such as universities, have employees who are fluent in several languages. Apart from individuals being multilingual, society itself is multilingual because people migrate from other places bringing other languages where other languages already exist.

Pennycook views multilingualism not as a practice that focuses on the presence of a language in shared or contested linguistic landscapes, but “as a practice that focuses on the unity relationship

² Aziakpono, “Financial and Monetary Autonomy and Interdependence between South Africa and the Other SACU Countries.”

³ In pre-1994 South Africa, “Bantu” was a derogatory reference for black Africans. However, outside South Africa, the reference did not have any negative connotations; it was accepted as a reference for various black Africans with a common linguistic history. In this article, “Southern Bantu language” has been used in a linguistics context and not a pre-1994 political science one.

⁴ Republic of South Africa, *The White Paper on Local Government* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1998).

⁵ Alastair Pennycook, *Language as a Local Practice* (Routledge, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203846223>.

⁶ Martin Nakata, “The Cultural Interface,” *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 36, no. S1 (July 1, 2007): 7–14, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004646>.

⁷ Felix Banda, “Critical Perspectives on Language Planning and Policy in Africa: Accounting for the Notion of Multilingualism,” *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus* 38, no. 0 (May 16, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.5842/38-0-5>; Alastair Pennycook, *Language as a Local Practice* (Routledge, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203846223>; Nakata, “The Cultural Interface.”

⁸ Jasone Cenoz, “Defining Multilingualism,” *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 33 (March 29, 2013): 3–18, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026719051300007X>.

portrayed in the messages of all languages.”⁹ Therefore, correct translation of the message in the source language and culture into the target language and culture is a necessity rather than an accessory. Languages are unfixed, autonomous and limited entities whose nature cannot be disturbed. Instead, they are flexible entities that can be reformed, rearranged, and recreated to fit new communication contexts. This is consistent with Nakata’s assertion that “linguists’ separate language from people; they separate the act of speaking from what is spoken.”¹⁰

According to Pennycook, a person cannot separate the role played by the factors underlying “the speech act from language, for language is a product of social action, not a tool to be used.”¹¹ This premise underscores the importance of the role that speakers of different languages around the world play in creatively producing new languages. Pennycook adopts the notion of language modelled after Heller. Heller views “language as a social practice, speakers as social actors, and borders as products of social action.”¹²

The above views on multilingualism are closely related to Banda’s perspective on how the notion of multilingualism is perceived and presented in postcolonial-era studies. Banda expresses concern about the fact that many scholars studying the “field of multilingualism consult the field with the biased notion of what ideal multilingualism should look like.” According to Banda, “this perspective is flimsy as it is not always possible to find compatible multilingual practices in contexts” drawn from different linguistic backgrounds because the situation in one multilingual classroom context will not be the same as in another. He illustrates this premise by comparing Western and African bilingual and multilingual situations in his study.¹³

Cruz-Ferreira breaks new ground and takes a different dimension from other scholars when she argues that “multilingualism is about human beings, and not the language because languages cannot be multilingual.” She notes that many scholars find it difficult to make a distinction between multilingualism and monolingualism.¹⁴ In most studies conducted in the field of multilingualism and monolingualism, scholars expect multilinguals to behave like monolinguals and have an orderly and clean pattern of languages used in parallel when speaking, while multilinguals cannot speak like monolinguals. Unlike monolinguals, multilinguals can switch between languages.

Language Planning in South Africa

As a head start in restoring linguistic equality in the South African context, other language development initiatives were launched on the day of the Language Plan Task Group conference.¹⁵ Initiatives have included scholarship programs to promote the study of Southern Bantu languages and thereby create career opportunities in those respective languages. In addition, programs to improve terminology have also been launched.

These programs should be responsible, among other things, “for the creation of terminology for different areas of study in Southern Bantu languages: law, commerce, education, science and health, Kaschula also notes. Language and development centres were also established as part of the government’s initiative to preserve and promote Southern Bantu languages. Such centres would be responsible for researching and creating new terminologies to intellectualise Southern Bantu languages and make them available for formal and official use. According to Kaschula, “This initiative forms the basis of the implementation process.”

Beukes criticises the role played by the state in fulfilling national language policy goals. To emphasise the importance of each individual national official language, in its argumentation, it focuses on all aspects that led to the elaboration of such a language policy. It refers to an apartheid regime and

⁹ Pennycook, *Language as a Local Practice*.

¹⁰ Nakata, “The Cultural Interface.”

¹¹ Pennycook, *Language as a Local Practice*.

¹² Monica Heller, *Bilingualism: A Social Approach* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

¹³ Banda, “Critical Perspectives on Language Planning and Policy in Africa: Accounting for the Notion of Multilingualism.”

¹⁴ Madalena Cruz-Ferreira, *Multilingualism, Language Norms and Multilingual Contexts, Multilingual Norms* (Peter Lang, 2010).

¹⁵ Russell H Kaschula, “South Africa’s National Language Policy Revisited: The Challenge of Implementation,” *Alternation* 11, no. 2 (2004): 10–25.

the legacy of misery it left behind, particularly linguistic misery.¹⁶ Beukes argues that “it is the duty of language practitioners and language stakeholders to make sure that South Africa’s language policies are implemented appropriately” and adds that the government abandoned this role for a full 20 years.

Beukes also argues that “the desire for a constitution that treats languages as equals has remained only in principle, as no action has been taken to implement it.”¹⁷ She reports on the whole process as a member of a panel of experts selected to make sure that the principle of a multilingual language policy is enshrined. She notes that a committee of researchers and the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) have been brought on board to identify the shortcomings of previous language policies in actual contexts. After intensive research, the following challenges emerged according to Beukes:

1. General disregard for the principle of linguistic equity by Parliament at all three levels of government, a lack of public service commitment to implement multilingualism policies, and a discernible trend towards monolingualism among political, economic and educational leadership.
2. The continued legitimacy of monolingualism and arguments regarding the superiority of English as an international language have been popular, as has the accessibility the language affords through its technological advances and commercial advantages, and perceived cost benefits of using a language understood by all South Africans.

Language Policy for Municipalities in South Africa

According to Cloete, prior to 1996, the government of South Africa showed little interest in local affairs and never did much to develop appropriate systems of local government and administration for the country’s urban areas.¹⁸ Although already established in 1993 by the Interim Constitution of South Africa, and Chapters 2 and 7 of the South African Constitution, the basic principles of development-oriented local government have been laid down.¹⁹

Shohamy argues that language is often used as a symbolic tool to manipulate political, social, educational, and economic agendas, particularly in the context of political entities such as a state and believes that “language policies are mainly manifestations of intentions, while less attention is paid to implementing policies in practice.”²⁰ However, given the multilingualism of South Africa’s population, a language policy that attempts to encourage multilingualism is considered best.

In the context of this study which focuses on the municipal level, multilingualism refers to the use of several official languages that a municipality has chosen for written and/or oral communication be it internally (i.e., by its employees) or externally (i.e., when communicating with residents). South Africa’s Constitution provides that such a policy would facilitate equal access to government services, knowledge and information, and respect for language rights. Banda argues that language is an extremely powerful tool that can be used in various ways, consciously or unintentionally, to exclude certain individuals.²¹

Nel conducted a study that touched on the challenges and opportunities of implementing Western Cape language policies. His findings show that implementing the Western Cape’s language policy has been hampered by a number of factors, including widespread ignorance of the policy, the dominance of the province’s languages over others, the balance of power within the governmental structures, and the relatively inflexible language ideologies of those entrusted with policy implementation at various levels.²² This study was necessary to examine the implementing language policy of a municipality because as far as authors could establish, there were no studies in South Africa that focused specifically on implementing a multilingual policy for service delivery.

¹⁶ Anne-Marie Beukes, “Language Policy Implementation in South Africa: How Kempton Park’s Great Expectations Are Dashed in Tshwane1,” *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics* 38, no. 0 (December 1, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.5774/38-0-20>.

¹⁷ Beukes, “Language Policy Implementation in South Africa: How Kempton Park’s Great Expectations Are Dashed in Tshwane.”

¹⁸ Jacobus Johannes Nicolaas Cloete, *South African Municipal Government and Administration* (Van Schaik Publishers, 1997).

¹⁹ Republic of South Africa, *Interim Constitution, Act No 200 of (1993)* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1993); Republic of South Africa, *Constitution, Act 108 of 1996* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996).

²⁰ Elana Shohamy, *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches* (Routledge, 2006).

²¹ Banda, “Critical Perspectives on Language Planning and Policy in Africa: Accounting for the Notion of Multilingualism.”

²² Jan Hendrick Nel, “Developing a Labour Relations Model of Employee Engagement in a Unionised Environment” (North-West University (South Africa), 2020).

Authors moved from the premise that any attempt to develop and implement a language policy for an institution should consider the literacy levels of its staff, failing which, it may not successfully be used in delivering services to its targeted population. A language policy should serve the people, but if the people to be served cannot read the language(s) stated in the language policy, then that language policy would not serve its purpose. Information on the residents of EMM states that only 77% of them could read and write English and addition to their home languages (in cases where English was not their home language), while 33% of them could not read their home language.²³

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study employed a qualitative research approach. The instrumental case study was utilised to develop a full understanding of the critical language policy implementation and practices of the selected municipality. The authors found the instrumental case study design to be the most appropriate to assess implementing multilingual language policies for service delivery.

A case study was selected as the research design because “the case involved decision-making regarding communication with other stakeholders, but the case could not be viewed out of context.”²⁴ EMM was selected as the case for this study due to its geographic location and historical background.

Data Collection

This study is qualitative, and a case study design was followed. Using a convenient sampling approach, authors gathered data from 20 participants (all EMM officials) between January and September 2019 in the following towns: Bedfordview, Edenvale, Germiston and Kempton Park. Semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather data from the selected participants. Document analysis of EMM’s language policy and other documents utilised to communicate with the community form part of the data for this study. Data collected through interviews were thematically analysed, and content analysis was utilised to analyse data gathered from documents.

Data Analysis

Data was gathered through document analysis and interviews to obtain insight into what was done practically in the municipality regarding language policy implementation for service delivery is discussed in this section.

Document analysis

The study chose document analysis as one of its data collection methods. One of the documents authors analysed was the language policy of EMM. The authors did content analysis by looking at whether the official documents of EMM accommodated different official languages used by residents of the municipality. Specifically, this was done to establish the extent to which EMM used Southern Bantu languages it gave official status to, in communicating with its residents. In this regard, the following documents were analysed:

1. EMM language policy
2. Signage
3. By-laws
4. Circulars, newsletters, advertisements, notices, and tender invitations.

Ethical Considerations

The research ethics committee at Tshwane University of Technology approved this study on 25 March 2019 and allocated it this reference number: FCRE/APL/STD/2019/03.

²³ Statistics South Africa, *Census in Brief* (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2003).

²⁴ Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, “Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers,” *The Qualitative Report*, January 14, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573>.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The study intended to establish the extent to which EMM’s multilingual policy adhered to Section 6(2) of the South African Constitution which states that all official languages must “enjoy parity of esteem” and be treated equitably, thereby enhancing the status and use of the Southern Bantu languages, with the government taking “legislative and other measures” to regulate and monitor the use of disadvantaged Southern Bantu languages.²⁵

It is important to establish whether EMM’s language policy uses all its official languages when providing services to its residents, that is, whether circulars, newsletters, advertisements, notices and tenders targeting the residents were released in languages understood by residents.

The authors found that EMM did not adhere to its promise of promoting multilingualism. Instead, it overwhelmingly used English in its circulars, newsletters, advertisements, notices, and tender invitation documents. The preference for English went against EMM’s commitments of intending to promote and develop historically marginalised Southern Bantu languages it selected as its official languages.

Data from Interviews

Three interview questions were posed to the following employees of EMM (see Table 1):

1. One English speaker (M1) and two Northern Sotho speakers (M2 and M3) from the Head of Communication, both males from the age range of 25 to 30.
2. One isiZulu speaker (M4), one Setswana speaker (M5) and one Northern Sotho speaker (M6) from the Office of the Municipal Manager. All the ages of the males ranged from 25 to 30.
3. One Xitsonga speaker (M9), one Tshivenda speaker (M8) and one isiNdebele speaker (M7) from the Information Office were interviewed all of whom were males with an age range of 35 to 60.
4. Two English speakers (F1 and F2) and one isiXhosa speaker (F3) from the Office of the Executive Mayor. All three of them were females and their ages ranged from 40 to 50.
5. Two Northern Sotho speakers (F4 and F5) and one isiZulu speaker (F6) from the Office of the Speaker. All three of them were females with ages ranging from 25 to 40.
6. One Xitsonga speaker (F7) and one Sesotho speaker (F8) from the Office of the Chief Whip. They were both females with ages ranging from 35 to 50.

Table 1: Participants

No.	Participant Code	Age Range	Home language	Workplace/Office
1	M1	25-30	English	Head of the Communication
2	M2	25-30	Northern Sotho	Head of the Communication
3	M3	25-30	Northern Sotho	Head of the Communication
4	M4	25-30	isiZulu	Office of the Municipal Manager
5	M5	25-30	Setswana	Office of the Municipal Manager
6	M6	25-30	Northern Sotho	Office of the Municipal Manager
7	M7	35-40	isiNdebele	Information Officer
8	M8	55-60	Tshivenda	Information Officer
9	M9	30-35	Xitsonga	Information Officer
10	F1	40-50	English	Office of the Executive Mayor
11	F2	40-50	English	Office of the Executive Mayor
12	F3	40-50	isiXhosa	Office of the Executive Mayor
13	F4	25-40	Northern Sotho	Office of the Speaker
14	F5	25-40	Northern Sotho	Office of the Speaker
15	F6	25-40	isiZulu	Office of the Speaker
16	F7	35-50	Xitsonga	Office of the Chief Whip
17	F8	35-50	Sesotho	Office of the Chief Whip

Source: Authors

²⁵ Republic of South Africa, *Constitution, Act 108 of 1996*.

Question 1: How does EMM implement and adhere to the South African Constitution?

M1 responded:

EMM's Language Policy builds on the Constitution's Section 6. The language policy of EMM is not silent on the fact that the area is multilingual. It is, therefore, important to make it fair to all citizens to access services in their preferred languages.

He further stated that:

The directive stipulates that the principle of multilingualism should be observed when naming streets and advertisements. Information should be made available in all languages that are best understood by residents of EMM. This should include even the road signs and billboards. People with disabilities also need to be taken care of when it comes to communication of information. This includes the deaf, dumb, and even the visually impaired.

M1 noted:

The municipality should prioritise the basic needs of society, which are social demands like building houses, roads, water, clinics, etc. These are basic needs. I think language development should follow these basic needs to successfully serve people. I think we can survive if there's no language development like we are experiencing right now. Language development is not the focus of social demands.

Responding to the same question, **M2** mentioned the following:

The municipality is considering approaching SALGA to provide community assistance in formulating policies and reinforcing the implementing language policy. The government also needs to set aside a budget that would cater to implementing language policy by the local authority.

The greatest challenge in implementing language policy in EMM seems to be poorly qualified staff or under-qualified implementers. To answer the same question, M3 and M4 were interviewed because they were responsible for policy evaluation in the municipality.

M3 posited that:

As part of the consolidated project, several capacity-building initiatives have been implemented in the community for effective language policy implementation, particularly for service delivery. Again, the expectation of the community is that the community will be sufficiently capable after the SALGA intervention as we are still a developing country.

M4 said:

Council members and staff are well-trained to address the community in their home languages and the community's official languages, particularly when we hold community meetings. They do use their respective languages, but the problem is sometimes, if they try to address them in a language like isiZulu in a place where isiZulu is spoken by a minority, they get laughed at as some of them don't speak the language spoken to this community. Anyone who follows the activities of the community group daily can improve their language experiences, which are primarily a matter of chance. The community's language can be an issue of empowerment, but many community members consider other languages to be a minefield, so we don't have qualified staff in other languages.

As can be seen from the answers above, EMM has evidently sought to uphold the government's efforts to promote multilingualism. However, the analysis indicates that the municipality has no coordinated or documented plan for implementing a language policy that promotes multilingualism.

Question 2: What is your view regarding EMM's decision to approve English as the only working language and language of record?

F1 said:

The selection of an English-only or mainly English-based policy comes from both economic and ideological sources. On the surface, it seems to those who can communicate in English, an international

language, that the most parsimonious language policy is to encourage or even force everyone to learn English, even at the expense of their home language. It is believed that such a policy will cost much less than a multilingual policy involving thousands of translators and interpreters, among others. Ideologically, those who know English possess invaluable cultural capital. There are no limits to high-paying jobs and career opportunities in the context of poverty and inequality. I felt that EMM was violating the rights of non-English speakers because not everyone understood English. In fact, the English dehumanises people and tramples on their culture, reminding them to be uncivilised; it also reminds them that they are colonised. It is disrespectful to communicate with people in a language you are sure they do not fully understand. Therefore, it is better to teach everyone to communicate in the language they want or to learn the language they use.

F1 said:

I felt that we were violating the rights of non-English speakers because all residents have a right to information, and if information is sent in a language that residents do not understand, then the message is useless.

M5 noted that:

Not everyone speaks English and not everyone understands English. Therefore, this is a violation of residents' rights. There are people who have not been exposed to the language and have difficulty understanding English or communicating in English at all. This then cuts off many people in the church, and the church then serves the minority, not the majority, of its population.

Below is a representation of participants who, in the follow-up question, disagreed that they only use English when communicating with residents. EMM did not violate the rights of those whose home language was not English. The answers come from the information officer.

M6 said:

I feel that EMM does not violate the rights of those whose home language is not English, as English is a language of international communication, so if there are more people who understand a language, why not use it as the city's only official language? In so doing, Defendant was referring to Section 7.4a of the Language Policy.

M7 remarked:

English does not maintain the privileged status of an elite class; on the contrary, it promotes structural economic development and social interactions between groups and individuals, which are important components for reconciliation and growth in a post-apartheid country. Despite postcolonial criticism from language activists, English does not regulate or reproduce an unequal distribution of power and resources between groups, as South African speakers of English are not defined based on language. All South Africans have access to English and a Southern Bantu language. As such, they may choose to claim any of the official languages as theirs.

Question 3: Are there language policy implementation strategies for service delivery at EMM?

M8 mentioned that:

Language awareness campaigns are necessary to generate public interest in language issues. Therefore, we have short-term and long-term strategies. Strategies such as the following have been implemented: (i) Active promotion through the print, radio and electronic media. (ii) The distribution of relevant material to the public, such as books and dictionaries.

F2 stated that:

The context of the communication, the available resources and the linguistic target group determine the choice of the language or languages to be used. This means that not all languages spoken by the EMM community are considered, as some may not have large enough audiences to be eligible for selection. In

the implementation, the municipality is committed to promoting functional multilingualism. The proposed language policy is an important step in the right direction. However, step-by-step implementation strategies are conspicuous by their absence in EMM's language policies.

The same view was held by **F3**, who stated that:

The municipality includes linguistic diversity in its language policy. EMM recognises linguistic diversity as a resource for creativity and cognition to be protected. However, the linguistic diversity in Gauteng is the most virulent challenge and the greatest obstacle to language policy decisions for the community. This is because many home languages are spoken by staff and residents at EMM. This complicates the decisions the institution must make about which language(s) to develop and use, as no choice is likely to meet the needs of all residents of EMM. However, due to the prevalence of isiZulu and Sesotho in the immediate area surrounding the community, it would be ideal and conducive to encourage and support the development of the two most widely spoken languages in the community.

Based on the answers above, the authors concluded that the major problem facing EMM was the lack of monitoring of language use by employees when providing services to community members.

DISCUSSION

According to the participants, by giving official status to some of the languages spoken in Ekurhuleni, EMM had adhered to the South African Constitution whose spirit advocates for the promotion of social cohesion and nation-building through support for multilingualism. However, they argued that in terms of implementation of EMM's language policy, the municipality maintained the status quo of the pre-1994 era by using English in the main and Afrikaans to a lesser extent, and did not use the previously marginalised languages, that is, isiZulu, Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Sesotho in a meaningful way that demonstrated its commitment to their further development, use and promotion.

With regards to EMM's decision to approve English as the only working language and language of record, participants understood the rationale for this decision but argued that it violated the linguistic rights of residents who could not communicate in English. Some of them felt that the use of English for the two purposes (i.e., being the only working language, and being used as the language of record) solidified the perception that it is not only the most powerful language in South Africa but in the world as well. EMM's language policy implementation strategies for service delivery were not clearly spelt out despite its intention to promote the use of isiZulu, Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Sesotho.

In answering the research question "How does EMM implement its multilingual language policy for the provision of services?", data showed that despite EMM having a multilingual language policy, it overwhelmingly favoured the use of English at the expense of other languages it gave official status to. In so doing, the municipality did not do justice to most of its residents who cannot communicate in English as a home language, thereby did not service them well, at least as far as communicating with them was concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The EMM must develop clearly spelt out language policy implementation strategies that unambiguously outline how it will further develop isiZulu, Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Sesotho so it can use them in communicating with its residents during the delivery of services to them. One of the options available to EMM is to collaborate with neighbouring metropolitan municipalities such as Johannesburg and Tshwane where Southern Bantu languages also have official status in those metropolitan municipalities. During its review of its language policy, it should add some of the best practices it would have learned from Johannesburg and Tshwane. In doing so, it would improve its service delivery to residents who cannot communicate in English and Afrikaans.

CONCLUSION

It is natural for human beings to stick to what they know and have always been practising. In the case of language policy implementation for service delivery in South Africa, many municipalities, including EMM, fall short when it comes to opening the space to allow the meaningful use of Southern Bantu

languages. Be that as it may, EMM had taken a step in the right direction by choosing four Southern Bantu languages (viz., isiZulu, Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Sesotho) as official languages. Its next objective should be to come up with strategies to reach out to its residents through the use of these languages. By doing so, it shall have played its part in fostering social cohesion and nation-building which are espoused in the South African Constitution.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aziakpono, Meshach Jesse. "Financial and Monetary Autonomy and Interdependence between South Africa and the Other SACU Countries." *South African Journal of Economics* 76, no. 2 (June 17, 2008): 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1813-6982.2008.00173.x>.
- Banda, Felix. "Critical Perspectives on Language Planning and Policy in Africa: Accounting for the Notion of Multilingualism." *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus* 38, no. 0 (May 16, 2012). <https://doi.org/10.5842/38-0-50>.
- Baxter, Pamela, and Susan Jack. "Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers." *The Qualitative Report*, January 14, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573>.
- Beukes, Anne-Marie. "Language Policy Implementation in South Africa: How Kempton Park's Great Expectations Are Dashed in Tshwane." *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics* 38, no. 0 (December 1, 2012). <https://doi.org/10.5774/38-0-20>.
- Cenoz, Jasone. "Defining Multilingualism." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 33 (March 29, 2013): 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026719051300007X>.
- Cloete, Jacobus Johannes Nicolaas. *South African Municipal Government and Administration*. Van Schaik Publishers, 1997.
- Cruz-Ferreira, Madalena. *Multilingualism, Language Norms and Multilingual Contexts. Multilingual Norms*. Peter Lang, 2010.
- Heller, Monica. *Bilingualism: A Social Approach*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- Kaschula, Russell H. "South Africa's National Language Policy Revisited: The Challenge of Implementation." *Alternation* 11, no. 2 (2004): 10–25.
- Nakata, Martin. "The Cultural Interface." *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 36, no. S1 (July 1, 2007): 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004646>.
- Nel, Jan Hendrick. "Developing a Labour Relations Model of Employee Engagement in a Unionised Environment." North-West University (South Africa), 2020.
- Pennycook, Alastair. *Language as a Local Practice*. Routledge, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203846223>.
- Republic of South Africa. *Constitution, Act 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996.
- . *Interim Constitution, Act No 200 of (1993)*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1993.
- . *The White Paper on Local Government*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1998.
- Shohamy, Elana. *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches*. Routledge, 2006.
- South Africa. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, Act No 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996.
- Statistics South Africa. *Census in Brief*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2003.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Dr Khayelihle Phumlani Nkosi is a Sociolinguist and holds the position of Lecturer at University of Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He holds four qualifications in English/Linguistics from Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in Gauteng, South Africa (viz., a three-year national diploma, a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree, and a Doctoral degree). He has presented papers at conferences and workshops in Africa. He is also a Language Practitioner specialising in English and isiZulu. His research work is on multilingualism and language policy and planning.

Prof. Thabo Ditsele is a Sociolinguist and a Linguistic Anthropologist with a C2 rating at the NRF (National Research Foundation of South Africa). He holds the position of Full Professor at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). He obtained a BA (in Communication and Setswana), and a B Admin

Honours (in Industrial Relations) from North-West University. He also holds an M Phil (in Second Language Studies) from Stellenbosch University, and a D Tech (in Language Practice) from TUT. He has read more than 40 papers at conferences, seminars, and workshops in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America. He is a leading researcher on Sepitori and has published nearly 30 articles in peer-reviewed journals, as well as a book chapter on Sepitori in a book titled: *Global perspectives on youth language practices* (2022). He has received two research grants from the NRF, for Tsotsitaal (2014-2016) and for Sepitori (2019 to 2021). As a fiction and non-fiction writer, he has published a Setswana novel titled: *Maile maila boganana* (2008), two Setswana short stories in an anthology titled: *Pelo e ganne molora* (2008), and his memoir in English titled: *From an obscure village to around the world: Volume 1, Americas* (2020).