

**SA Language Rights Bulletin**  
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**Prepared for the**  
**Pan South African Language Board**  
**by the**  
**Unit for Language Management**  
**University of the Free State**

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## 1 Aim

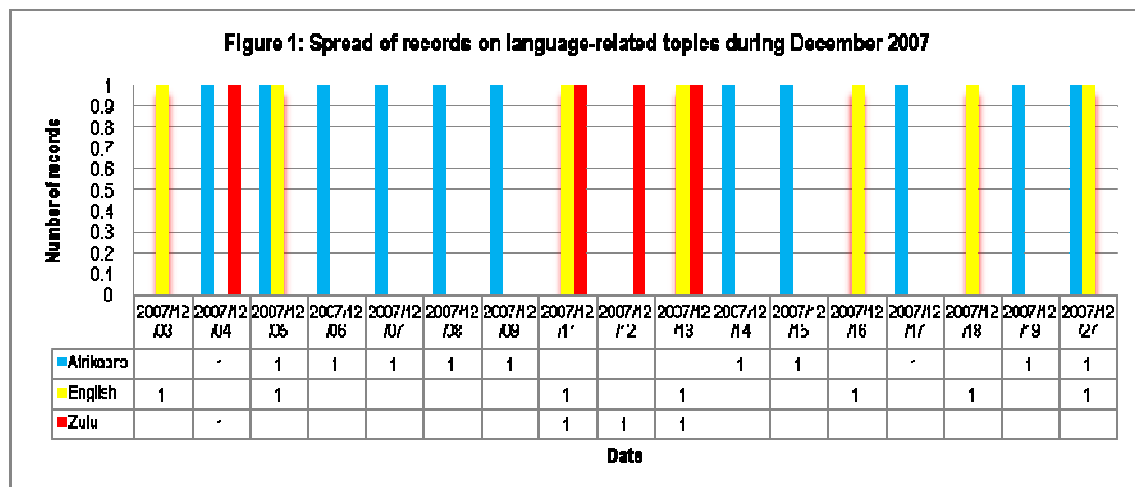
The aim of the South African Language Rights Bulletin (SALRB) is to present an overview of language rights issues in South Africa, primarily as reflected in data from the printed media, obtained from SA Media. Data are only collected from the newspapers supplied to SA Media. However, relevant data from other sources are also reflected. The objective of such an overview is to assist the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) to remain abreast of language rights developments in the country, and to provide the Board with the opportunity to intervene on a timely basis, should this be required. Although the focus is on language rights, the overview also covers language issues in general.

## 2 Data

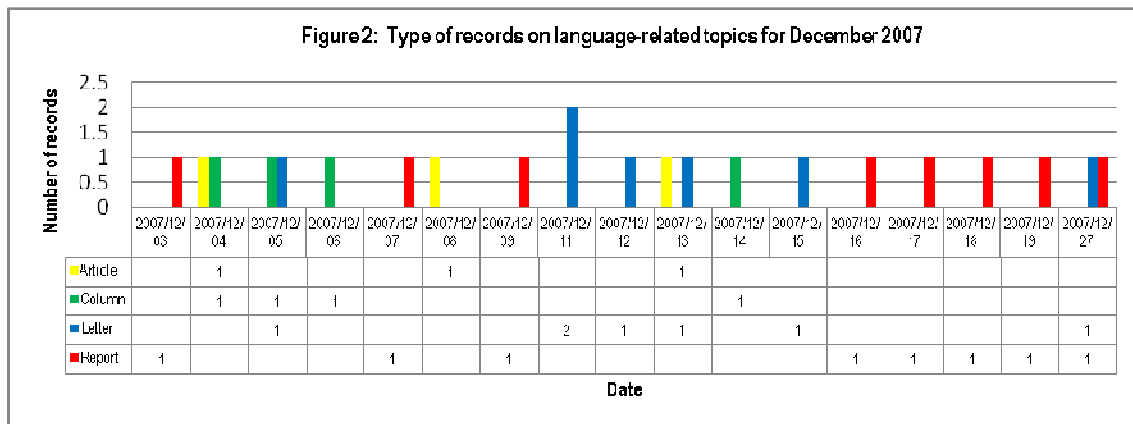
Printed media records are drawn from the SA Media database on the basis of the standard subject topics used by the archives. Cross-checking is always carried out against clippings made by the project staff from daily and weekly newspapers. Records exclude reviews, which usually comprise the bulk of printed media records. (Reviews will only be considered for the purposes of the annual South African Language Rights Monitor. However, reviews that are directly relevant to language rights have been taken into account.) Owing to the complex data-processing system of SA Media, the collection of printed media records presented in this Bulletin may not be complete. The cut-off date for records provided by SA Media for this Bulletin was 2008/01/31. Conclusions reached in this report are of a preliminary nature. Corrections and adjustments will be made in the corresponding annual South African Language Rights Monitor, which will be prepared for PanSALB once the data-collection process has been completed and the data have been verified. Other information is collected via the Sasol Library at the University of the Free State.

## 3 Media coverage on language issues during December 2007

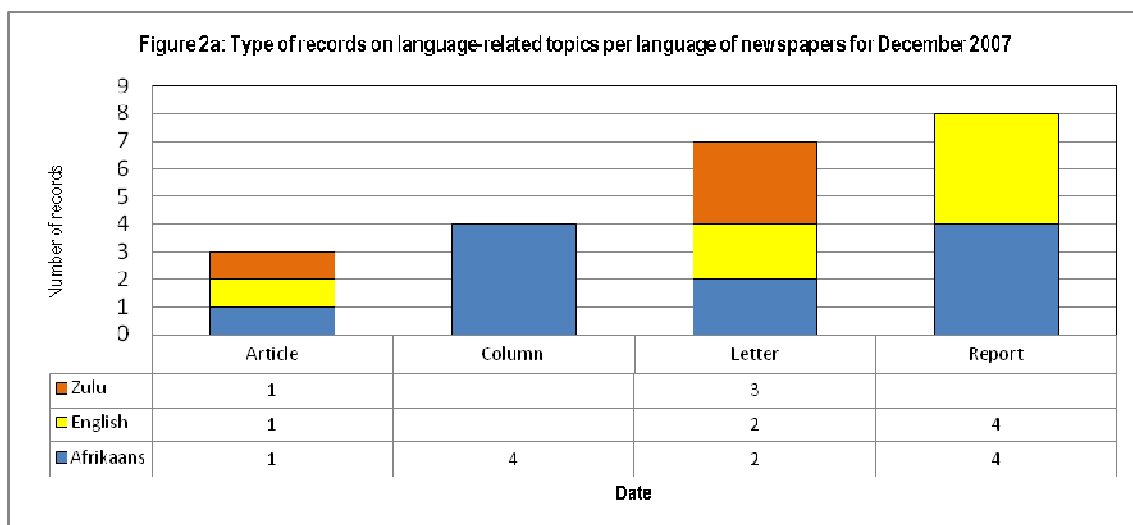
During December 2007, a total of 22 records were obtained from SA Media. Three language-related records were published by *Isoleswe*, a Zulu newspaper, in comparison with the four records published by that newspaper during October 2007. No language-related records were published in the Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga*. Figure 1 provides an indication of the spread of records during the month, as well as the distribution between Afrikaans, English and Zulu records.



- Language division: 50% Afrikaans, 18.18% English and 18.18% Zulu. There was a predominance of Afrikaans records in comparison with the number of English records and Zulu records.
- Coverage of language-related matters occurred on 17/31 days (54.83%), at an average of 1.29 records per day.
- Two records in each case were published on 4, 5, 11, 13 and 27 December 2007. Eight of these records dealt with language problems, while 2 records (13 and 27 December) referred to name changes.

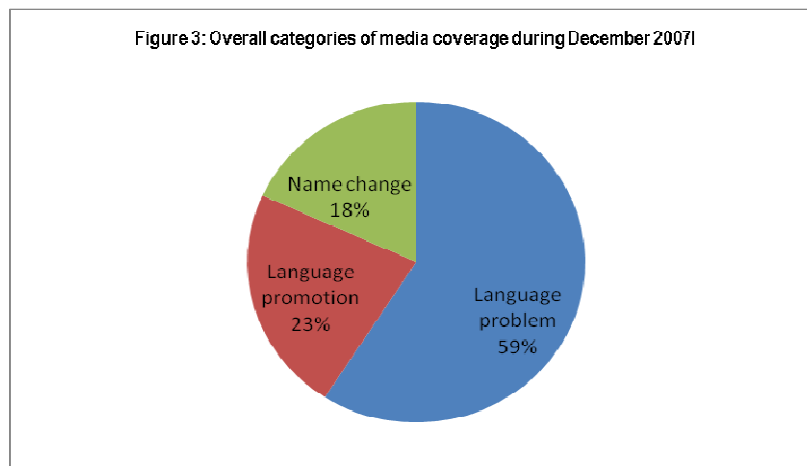


- As in the case of November 2007, newspaper reports accounted for the greatest percentage of the records on language-related topics – 36.36%. 31.82% of the records in December were derived from letters, 18.18% from columns and 13.63% from articles.
- The high incidence of reports covering language matters points towards a sustained interest in language matters on the part of newspapers.

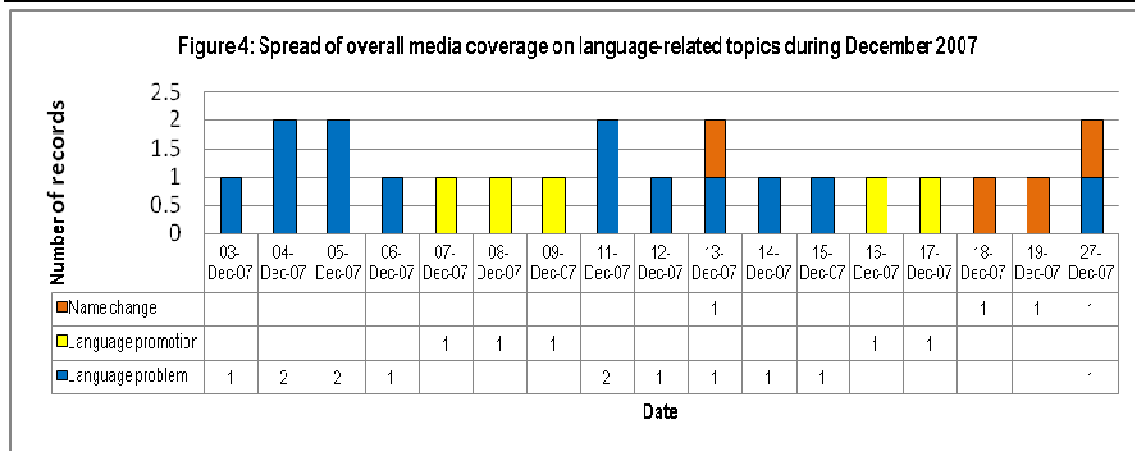


- A total of 8 *reports* were received during the month of December 2007. An equal number of English and Afrikaans reports were published (4 in each case, i.e. 50%), while no Zulu reports were published.

- Half of the reports dealt with language promotion – 4 out of 8 records in total. Of these, 3 (37.5%) appeared in the Afrikaans press and 1 (12.5%) in the English press. Three reports – 2 in the English press and one in the Afrikaans press – focused on name changing. One report dealt with language problems. This report was published in the English press and related to the dominance of English in the business world.
- Altogether, 7 *letters* were received, 2 (28.5%) of which appeared in the Afrikaans press and 2 (28.5%) in the English press, while 3 (42.5%) appeared in the Zulu press. All of the letters alluded to language problems. Two letters were published in the English press, 2 in the Afrikaans press and 3 in the Zulu press. All the *columns* (4) were published in the Afrikaans press.
- All of these columns dealt with language problems, including 3 that focused on language prestige issues.
- Three newspaper *articles* were published during the month of December 2007. One article in each case was published in the Afrikaans, the English and the Zulu press. The Afrikaans article was related to language promotion; the English article to name changing; and the Zulu article to language problems.
- No editorial comments were published.
- No cartoons were published in the relevant month.

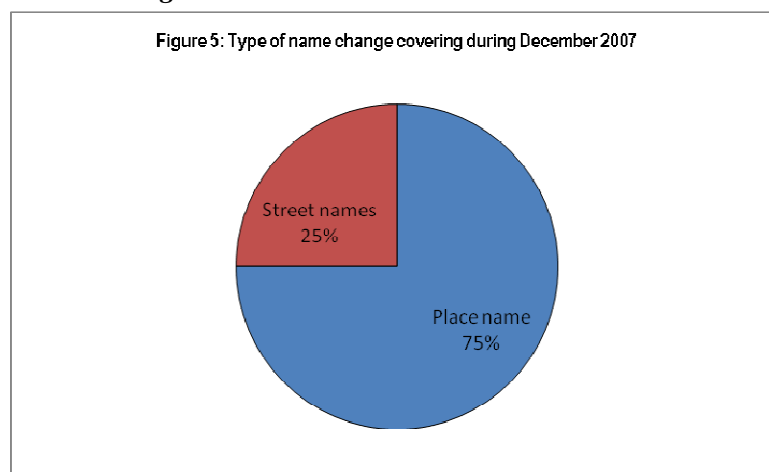


- As can be seen in Figure 3, matters related to *language problems* in South Africa received prominent coverage during December 2007, accounting for 13 (59.09%) of the 22 records. Of these 13 records, 6 dealt with language use, 5 with language prestige and 2 with language maintenance.
- The number of records dealing with *name changes* was lower than in the case of the previous month. Only 4 records on name changing were received for December, as against the 23 of the previous month. The changing of place names featured in 3 records. One record dealt with changes to street names.
- Of the 5 records (23%) relating to *language-promotional matters*, 2 focused on language materials and products, 2 on language personalities and one on language education.
- *Language renovation* and *language research* did not receive coverage during December 2007.

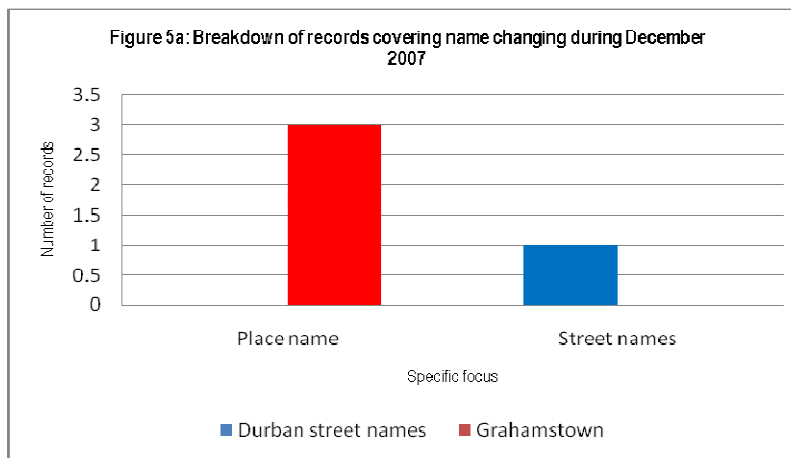


- **Coverage on language problems** occurred during the beginning and middle of the month, with one record published at the end of the month. Coverage took place over 10 days, with the highest number of records being published on 4, 5 and 11 December 2007 (2 records in each case). Records on these 3 days covered aspects related to language use and language prestige, with specific reference to the use of Zulu and the prestige of Afrikaans.
- Coverage of **language promotion** occurred towards the middle of the month, with one record published on each of 5 days. The records for these days gave coverage to language materials and products (2 records), language personalities (2 records) and language education (one record). Four of the 5 records were concerned with Afrikaans as a primary language.
- One record covering **name changing** was published in the middle of the month, with 3 records on the same topic appearing towards the end of the month. These records were published on 4 different days, and related mainly to the changing of place names (Grahamstown – 3 records) and Durban street names (one record).

### 3.1 Focus on name changes

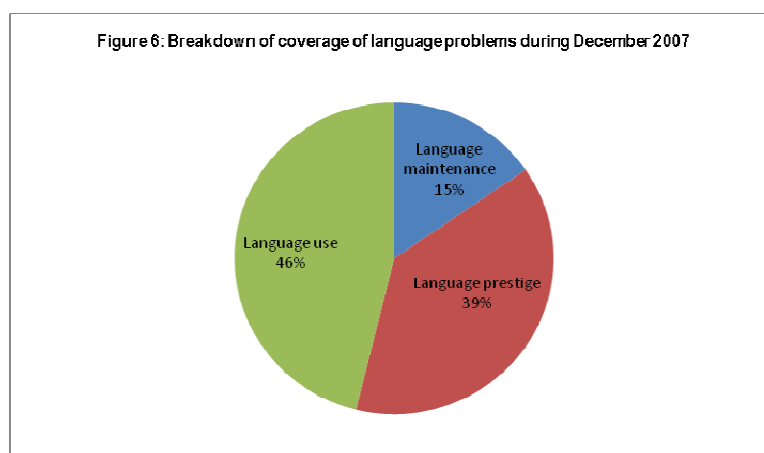


- Only 4 records in the database for December 2007 covered aspects related to **name changes** in South Africa. The majority of records concerning name changes dealt specifically with changes to place names (75%), while the changing of street names accounted for 25% of the records.

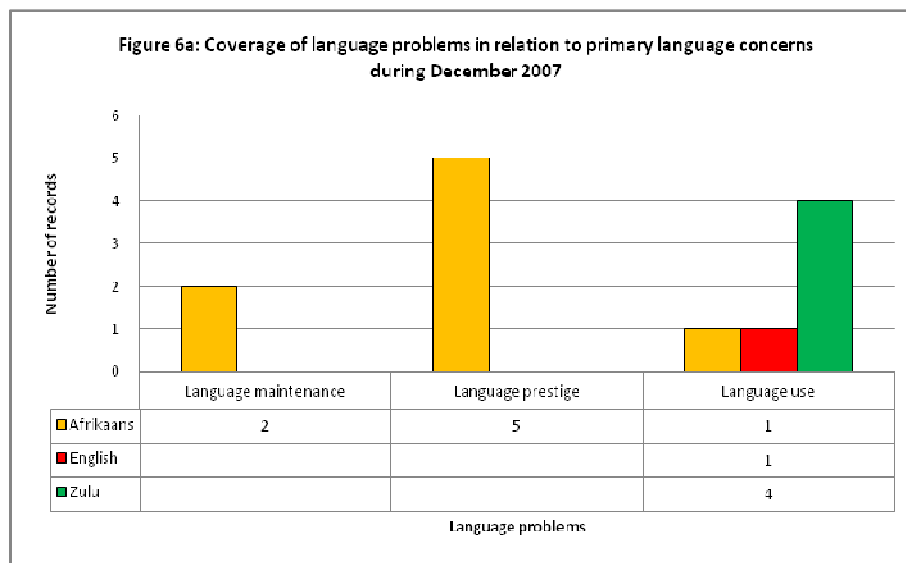


- Only 2 topics relating to name changes featured in the records for December: proposed changes to the name of Grahamstown (3 records), and changes to Durban street names (one record).
- *The Herald (EP Herald)* reported on 18/12/2007 that the Keep Grahamstown Grahamstown (KGG) campaign had criticised the Makana municipality for stalling on the issue of the name change. The spokesman of KGG, Sigidla Ndumo, pointed out that more than a month had elapsed, and still no response had been received regarding the submission of the petition for the name to be retained, bearing more than 5 000 signatures. In response, the municipality stated that the process was still under discussion and that public meetings would be conducted. However, the mayor, Phumelelo Kate, insisted that Grahamstown's name should be changed to Rhini as soon as possible (*Beeld*, 19/12/2007). In reaction to this, the KGG campaigners stated that they were considering legal action, in order to block the bid to change the name of the town. According to Jock McConnachie, the council had announced the name change before consulting with the community (*The Herald (EP Herald)*, 27/12/2007).
- Changes to street names in Durban were discussed in an article reflecting on the preceding year in eThekweni Municipality. It was envisaged that by the end of January 2008, Durban and its suburbs would have a set of new street names (*Daily News*, 27/12/2007).

### 3.2 Focus on language problems



- The 13 records dealing with *language-related problems* covered issues such as language maintenance, language prestige and language use.
- *Language use* (6 records) and *language prestige* (5 records) received the greatest amount of media coverage during December 2007, together accounting for 85% of the above-mentioned records. *Language maintenance* was covered in 2 (15%) of the records.
- *Language rights issues* were dealt with in the records above, relating mainly to the diminished use of Afrikaans.

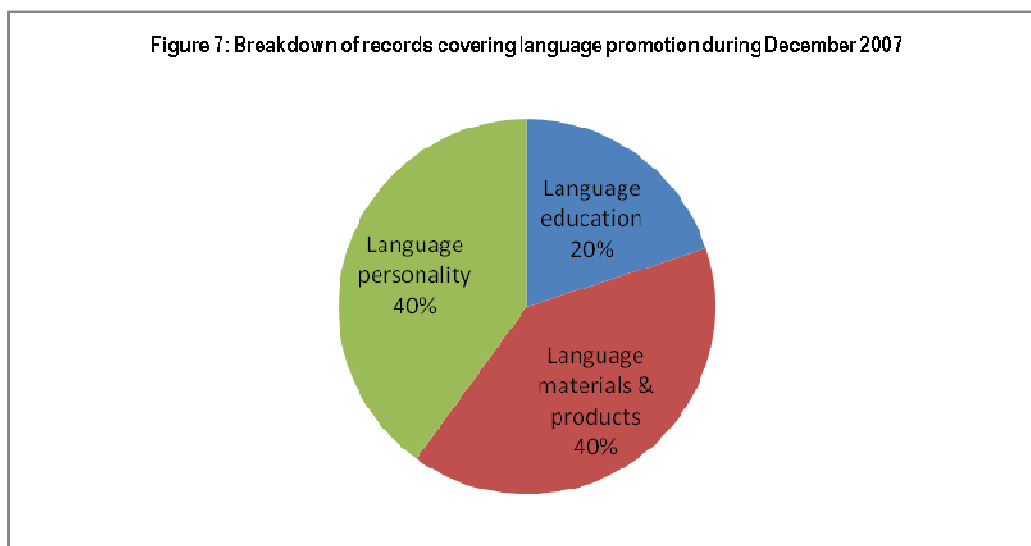


- Once again, most of the 13 records (61.5%) covering language problems were concerned with Afrikaans as a primary language, while 4 records (30.76%) were concerned with Zulu. One record (7.69%) referred to English as a primary language.
- Two records focused on the *maintenance of Afrikaans*. Sasol shareholders approved a decision to the effect that the group’s memorandum and articles of association would be written in English. This heralded the end of the 57-year reign of Afrikaans as the language of the group’s legal founding documents. Shareholders and other role-players expressed their disappointment at this move against Afrikaans (*Star*, 03/12/2007). The second record relating to the maintenance of Afrikaans was a letter expressing concern about the use of English only in SuperSport broadcasts. The writer alleged that Afrikaans is being “murdered” by English monolingualism (*Burger*, 27/12/2007).
- Six records referred to *language use*. Four of these records related to the correct use of Zulu, especially in the context of translating from English into Zulu. Often, a single word in Zulu is used in different contexts and has different implications. Apparently, incorrect words are sometimes used in translations (*Isoleswe*, 04/12/2007). Concern was also expressed in letters from Zulu speakers regarding the correct pronunciation of words. If the word is pronounced wrongly, this can change the meaning of the word. The letter-writers encouraged people to speak Zulu correctly (*Ilanga*, 10/12/2007 and *Isoleswe*, 11/12/2007 and 13/12/2007). One letter pointed out that certain English newspapers tend to repeatedly make the same language errors. Since children are exposed to this incorrect usage, their use of English could be affected (*Daily Dispatch*, 05/12/2007). The one record that focused on Afrikaans as a primary language, referred to complaints by the public in the Eastern Cape regarding the

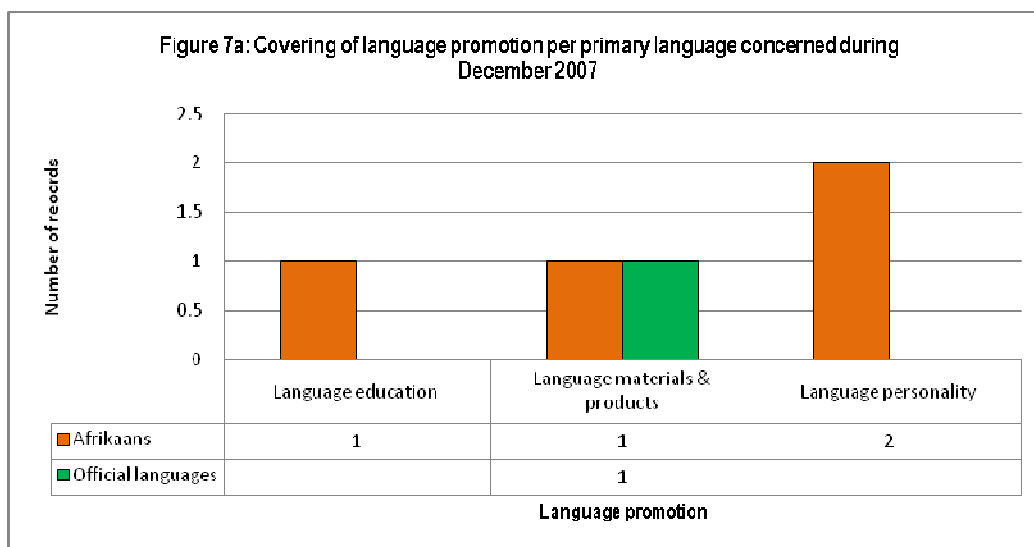
wording on posters, which was described as offensive and obscene (Burger, 14/12/2007).

- Five records relating to *language prestige* were published during the month of December. All of these records pertain to Afrikaans as a primary language. The records include 3 columns, which focus on the argument that poverty is the reason why some intellectual coloured people do not speak Afrikaans. According to Abraham Phillips, there is a definite link in this regard. On the other hand, Richard van der Ross contests this argument, claiming that it is not true in practice. According to Leopold Scholtz, there is a world-wide connection between poverty and language discrimination (*Beeld*, 04/12/2007, 05/12/2007 and 06/12/2007). With reference to language prestige, a report in the *Business Day* of 11/12/2007 claimed that the language issue in SA has been “comfortably solved” by the universal adoption of English, adding that Afrikaans was “an invention of the National Party”, while the other nine languages were “the pernicious creations” of missionary grammarians. A letter pertaining to language prestige was also received, in which the writer referred to his Afrikaner heritage and history, asserting that he is an Afrikaner and proud of Afrikaans as his mother tongue (*Burger*, 15/12/2007)..

### 3.3 Focus on language promotion



- Five records relating to language promotion were received. Two (40%) of these referred to language materials and products; 2 (40%) to language personalities; and one (20%) to language education. Altogether, 4 of the records were concerned with Afrikaans as a primary language, while one record concerned official languages.



- In one of the 2 records referring to *language materials and products*, reference is made to “Litnet-Akademies”, the new Afrikaans on-line academic journal that will be awarding R 8 000 for research articles that are published in the journal. According to the editor, this will promote research publications in Afrikaans (*Volksblad*, 07/12/2007). In the second article, it is reported that Wikipedia’s founder, Jimmy Wales, announced that plans are under way for the launching of different language versions of the encyclopaedia in developing countries. All South Africa’s official languages are the focus of Wiki projects. Wales also pointed out that Wikipedia is available in more than 200 languages (*Sunday Times*, 16/12/2007).
- Two records referring to *language personalities* were published. *Die Burger* (08/12/2007) honoured Prof. Elize Botha for her contribution towards Afrikaans literature. (She had recently passed away at the age of 77.) The second record honoured an Afrikaans specialist and former employee of *Die Burger*, Dalene Muller, who wrote the book “Skryf Afrikaans van A tot Z”, which was published in 2003. Muller passed away during mid-December (*Burger*, 17/12/2007).
- One record relating to *language education* was published. The record stated that the Salverus Trust had donated an amount to the “Rapport Teachers Fund”, specifically for the training of Afrikaans teachers (*Rapport*, 09/12/2007).

### 3.4 Focus on language research

No records on language research were received for the month of December.

### 3.5 Focus on language renovation

No records were received regarding issues related to language renovation.

## 4 Reflection on language rights issues covered during December 2007

Records relating to the diminishing use of Afrikaans are interesting from a language rights perspective, as the cases in question refer to civil language rights and not to human linguistic rights *per se*. The case of SASOL demonstrates the impact of language politics on decisions regarding language rights. On the other hand, the case of SuperSport highlights questions

regarding language treatment within the broadcasting media. In neither of these cases can absolute language rights be claimed.

The opinion expressed in *Business Day* on the role of English and the history and status of the other official languages raises a number of questions, and warrants a closer study. A reaction of some kind might be required.

## **5 Concluding remarks**

The increase in the number of records received from Zulu newspapers during December 2007 is notable. In fact, the overall increase in coverage on language usage issues is particularly interesting. It is noteworthy that the Zulu records primarily focus on the issue of language purism, whilst very little coverage of this aspect is encountered in Afrikaans and English newspapers.

An important language promotional development concerns the multilingualisation of Wikipedia and the inclusion of South African languages. As in the case of so many other private initiatives, this development represents bottom-up intervention. Several similar bottom-up initiatives regarding the Afrikaans language are also currently receiving attention in the media.

## SALRB2007Dec

Date	Title of record	Subtitle of record	Source	Source
03-	Tongues wag as Sasol opts for English language		Star	13
04-	A wide usage of the Zulu words		Isoleswe	4
04-	Beeld-forum	Geld, nie taal, is sukses-simbool. Afrikaans nie gesien as	Beeld	16
05-	Beeld-forum	Agter taalsaak skuil klasverskil. Die dat Engels so	Beeld	18
05-	Bungling the commas		Daily Dispatch	9
06-	Beeld-forum	Engels praat was vorm van verset. Afrikaans is as	Beeld	24
07-	Navorsing kry hupstoot op Litnet		Volksblad	5
08-	Hoe sal ons eendag doodgaan	Elizabeth Eybers	Burger	14
09-	Trust gee baie		Rapport	2
11-	Learn to speak correct Zulu		Isoleswe	11
11-	SA is not one nation but many		Business Day	10
12-	May I please be assisted with the correct pronunciation of		Ilanga	31
13-	Pronounce isiZulu words correctly		Isoleswe	15
13-	The year in eThekweni Municipality	Issues, trials and tribulations	Daily News	10
14-	Ombudsman	Knap woordspeling bly 'n kuns in goeie plakkate	Burger	23
15-	Ek wil sterwe as 'n Afrikaner		Burger	2
16-	The Wiki way of doing things	Founder of Wikipedia has plans to take on Google	Sunday Times	8
17-	Afrikaanse taalreus sterf		Burger	3

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title of record</b>	<b>Subtitle of record</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Source</b>
18-	Makana Municipality blamed for stalling name change issue		The Herald (EP Herald)	2
19-	Grahamstad mot Rhini heet, se 1ste burger		Beeld	3
27-	G'town name campaigners considering legal action over		The Herald (EP Herald)	3
27-	Tyd vir taaltansformasie		Burger	19