

**SA Language Rights Bulletin**  
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**Prepared for the**  
**Pan South African Language Board**  
**by the**  
**Unit for Language Management**  
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## 1 Aim

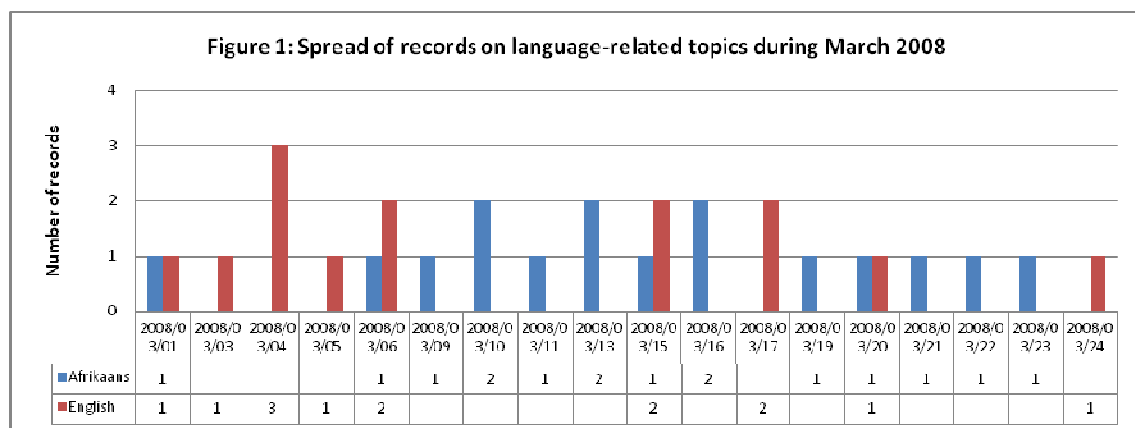
The aim of the South African Language Rights Bulletin (SALRB) is to present an overview of language rights issues in South Africa, primarily as reflected in data from the printed media, obtained from SA Media. Data are only collected from the newspapers supplied to SA Media, except in the case of the two Zulu newspapers. 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

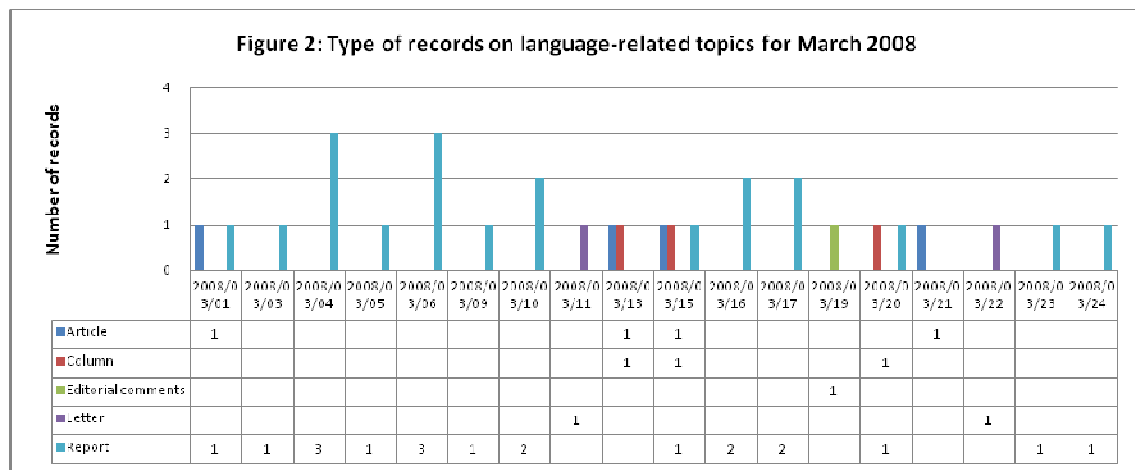
Printed media records are drawn from the SA Media database on the basis of the standard subject topics used by the archives. Cross-checking is always carried out against clippings made by the project staff from daily and weekly newspapers. Records exclude reviews, which usually comprise the bulk of printed 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 2008/04/24. 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 March 2008

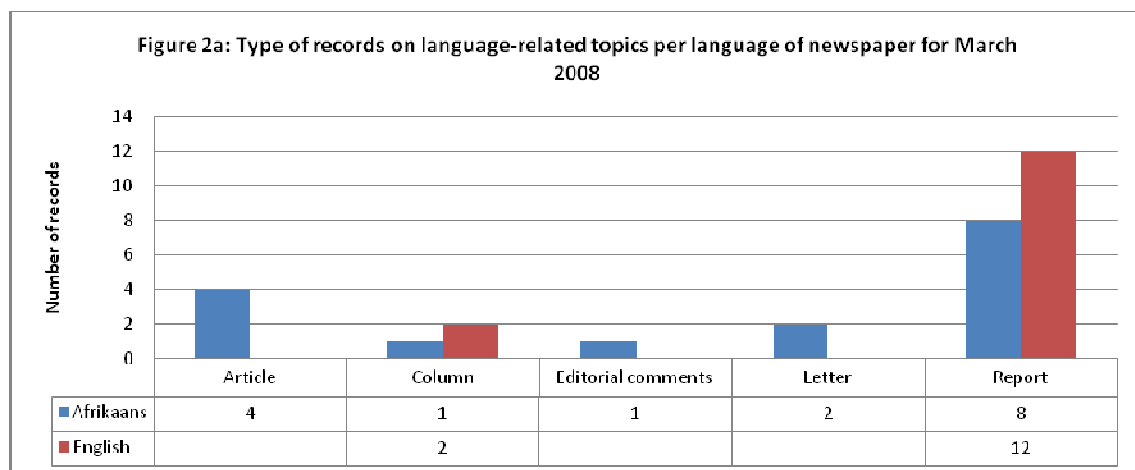
During March 2008, a total of 30 records were obtained from SA Media. No language-related records were published by *Ilanga* or *Isoleswe*. Figure 1 provides an indication of the spread of records during the month, as well as the distribution between Afrikaans and English records.



- Language division: 53% Afrikaans, 47% English. An almost equal number of Afrikaans records and English records were received.
- Coverage of language-related matters occurred on 18/24 days (75%), at an average of 1.67 records per day.
- Three records in each case were published on 4, 6, and 15 March 2008. The majority (5) of these records dealt with language problems, while language promotion was the subject of 2 records. Two of the records published on 4 March referred to name changes.

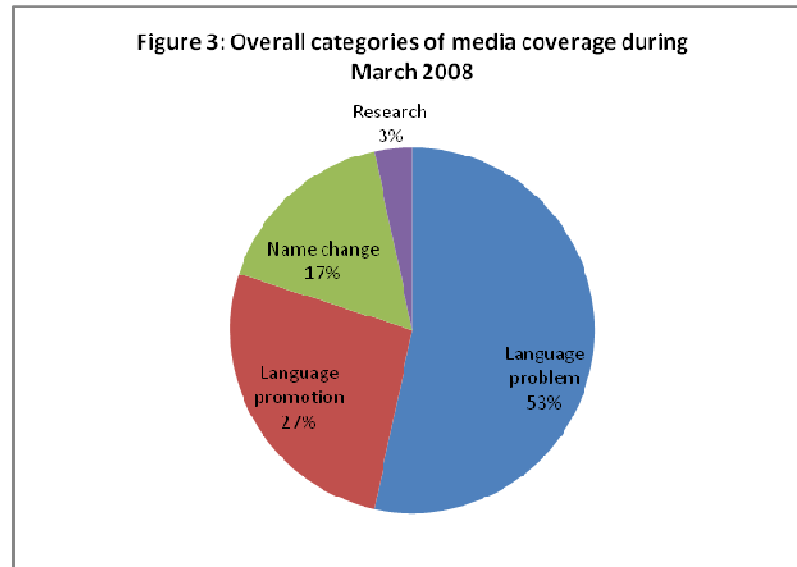


- As in the case of February 2008, newspaper reports accounted for the majority of the records on language-related topics – 67%. 13% of the records for March were derived from articles, 10% from columns, 7% from letters and 3% from editorial comments.
- The high incidence of reports covering language matters points towards a sustained interest in language-related issues on the part of newspapers.

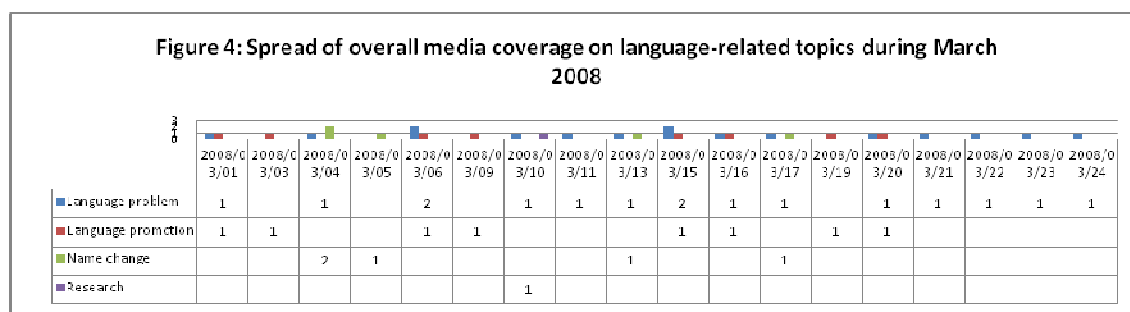


- A total of 20 *reports* were received during the month of March 2008. The number of English reports was higher than the number of Afrikaans reports (12 English – 60%, 8 Afrikaans – 40%), while no Zulu reports were published.
- A large percentage of the reports dealt with language problems – 9 out of 20 records in total. Of these, 5 appeared in the English press and 4 in the Afrikaans press. Six reports – 3 in the Afrikaans press and 3 in the English press – dealt with language promotion. Four reports – all in the English press – focused on name changing. Language-related research (comprising a student dissertation on Afrikaans advertising) was mentioned in one Afrikaans report.
- Two *letters* were received, both of which appeared in the Afrikaans press. Both letter-writers alluded to language problems.
- Three *columns* were published. Two appeared in the English press and one in the Afrikaans press, and all three dealt with language problems.

- Four newspaper *articles* – all in Afrikaans – were published during the month of March 2008. Language problems were discussed in 2 articles, while the third article was concerned with language promotion and the fourth with name changing.
- A single language-related *editorial* appeared during March 2008. Published in the Afrikaans press, it focused on language awards and prizes (language promotion).
- No relevant *cartoons* or *reviews* were received.

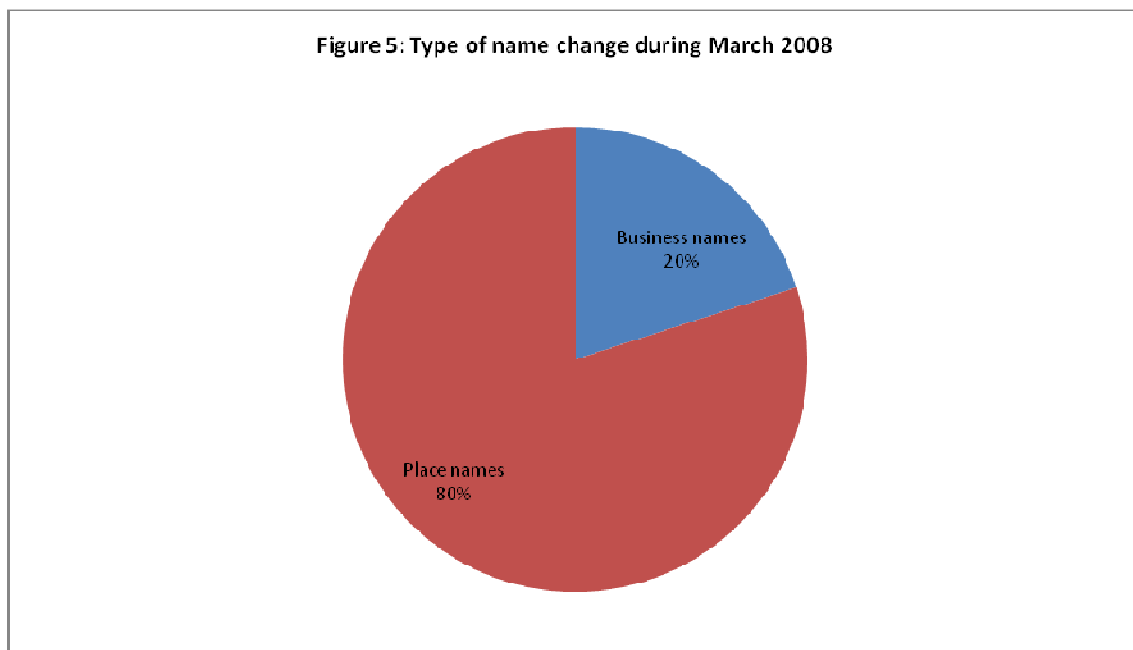


- As can be seen in Figure 3, matters related to *language problems* in South Africa received prominent coverage during March 2008, accounting for 16 (53%) of the 30 records. Of these 16 records, 8 dealt with linguistic issues, 5 with matters related to language maintenance, and one each with language acquisition, language prestige and language rights.
- The number of records dealing with *name changes* was significantly lower than in the case of the first two months of the year. Five records (17%) on name changing were received for March, as against 19 for January and 11 for February. These records related mainly to the changing of place names.
- Of the 8 records (27%) relating to *language-promotional matters*, 3 focused on language awards and prizes, 3 on language education, one on a language product and one on a language organisation.
- *Language renovation* was not covered in any of the records.
- *Language research* received coverage in one record (3%) during March 2008.

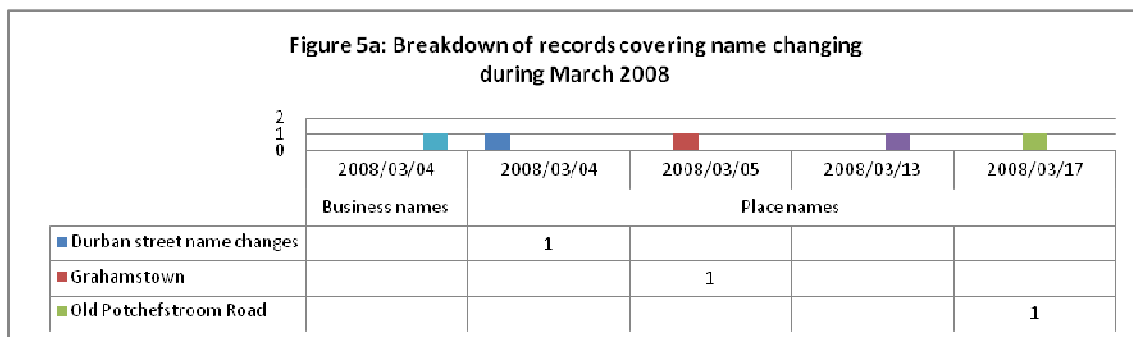


- Coverage of *language problems* occurred throughout the month, with 2 records published on 2 particular days, early in the month and towards the middle of the month respectively (6 and 15 March 2008). The records that appeared on these days covered aspects related to linguistic issues (3 records) and language maintenance (one record).
- Coverage of *language promotion* occurred throughout the month, with one record published on each of 8 days. Specific topics included language awards and prizes (3 records), language education (3 records), language materials and products (one record) and language organisations (one record). Five of the 8 records were concerned with Afrikaans as a primary language, one with Tswana and one with Zulu. One record (*Cape Argus*, 03/03/2008) reported that Neville Alexander, director of Praesa, had received the annual Linguapax Award for outstanding work in the field of linguistic diversity/multilingual education at a ceremony in Barcelona.
- Five records covering *name changing* were published during March.

### 3.1 Focus on name changes

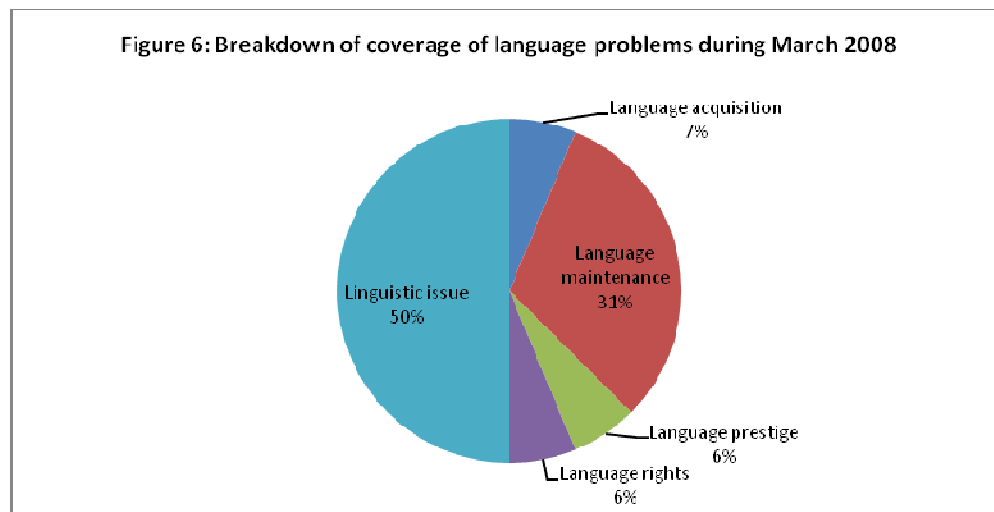


- Of the 5 records in the March database that covered aspects related to name changes in South Africa, the majority (80%) dealt with changes to place names, while the changing of business names accounted for 20% of the records.

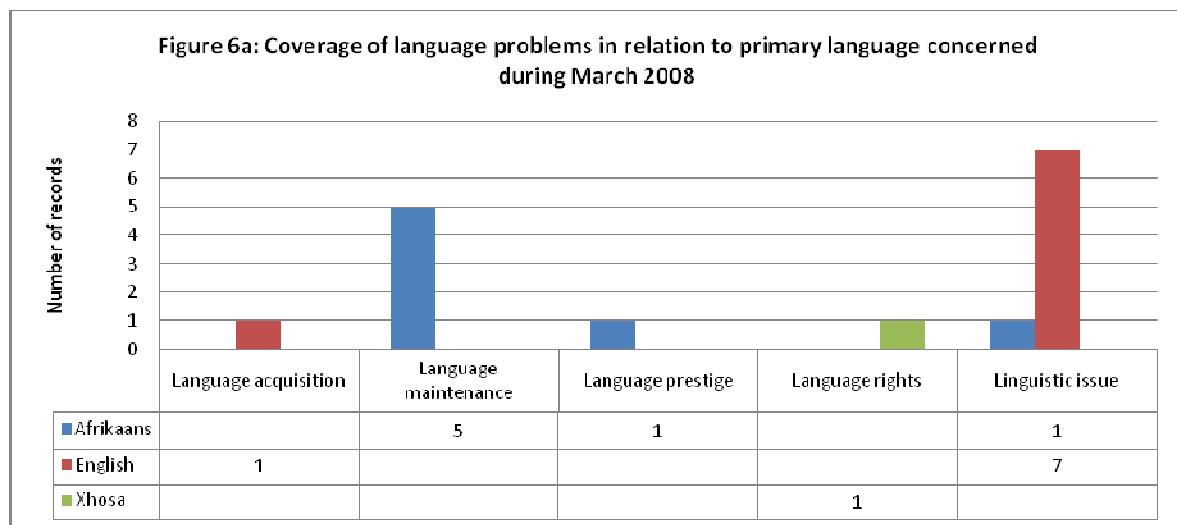


- The name of Pretoria/Tshwane featured once in the Afrikaans press (in the mouthpiece of the HNP, namely the *Afrikaner*, 13/03/2008). The English press covered three other cases relating to place names. These cases involved Durban street names (*Daily News*, 04/03/2008), Grahamstown/iRhini/Makana (*Daily Dispatch*, 05/03/2008) and the Old Potchefstroom Road in Soweto (*Sowetan*, 17/03/2008).
- According to the *Afrikaner* (13/03/2008), the changing of the name of Pretoria to Tshwane was among the issues dealt with in the 2008 report of the HNP. In the view of this far-right-wing party, the retention of the name, Pretoria, was a crucial part of white (and specifically Afrikaner) resistance against “the ANC regime”. HNP activism included support for a GHA (*Genootskap vir die Handhawing van Afrikaans*) petition, support for litigation in relation to this matter, and participation in a demonstration on 24 September 2007. During the protest march in Auckland Park, the HNP sported the old South African flag and “took the lead in singing *Die Stem*”.
- The renaming of certain Durban streets after revolutionaries such as Fidel Castro and Andrew Zondo – a project spearheaded by the Masakhane Committee – was postponed, pending further negotiations between the ANC and other political parties. Prior activism by the DA and the IFP included an unsuccessful application for a court interdict and a protest march. The DA’s position was that renaming should be conducted in the interest of nation-building. The Minority Front complained that it had been excluded from negotiations (*Daily News*, 04/03/2008).
- In Grahamstown, the Makana Municipality Name-Changing Indaba held on 1 March 2008 ended with opposing parties accusing one another of racism. According to the ANC – which controlled 11 of the 12 wards in the district – no final decision had been made to change Grahamstown’s name (*Daily Dispatch*, 05/03/2008).
- Joined by the PAC, Azapo opposed the suggested renaming of the Old Potchefstroom Road in Soweto after former MK commander, Chris Hani. The PAC’s standpoint was that the ANC “should acknowledge all liberation heroes, irrespective of political affiliation”. Arguing that the Chris Hani-Baragwanath Hospital is situated along the Old Potchefstroom Road and that “there are other heroes”, Azapo suggested the names of Tsietshi Mashinini and Kgotso Seathlolo – both leaders of the 1976 student uprisings – as possible alternatives (*Sowetan*, 17/03/2008).
- Early in March 2008, a business name was changed for business reasons. After having suffered continual losses, the recapitalised enterprise, Wellco Health, changed its name to BioScience Brands, in order to restore its reputation with shareholders (*Star*, 04/03/2008).

### 3.2 Focus on language problems



- The 16 records dealing with language-related problems covered aspects of language use (linguistic issues), language maintenance, language acquisition, language prestige and language rights.
- During March 2008, as in February 2008, linguistic issues accounted for the highest number of records pertaining to language problems (8 records – 50%). The amount of media coverage received by linguistic issues was equal to the joint amount of coverage accorded to language maintenance, language acquisition, language prestige and language rights respectively.
- Language maintenance was covered in 5 records (31%), while language acquisition, language prestige and language rights were covered in one record each.

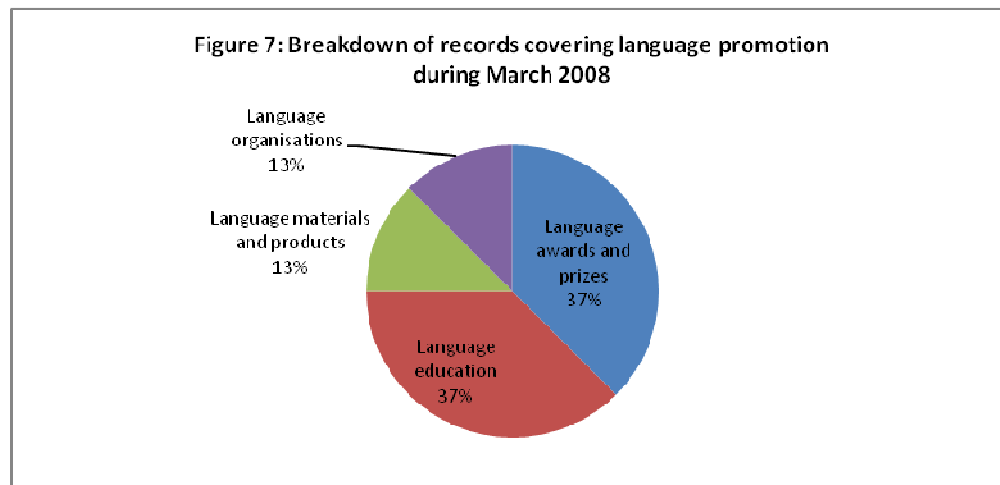


- An almost equal number of the records covering language problems were concerned, respectively, with Afrikaans and English as primary languages (division: 44% Afrikaans, 50% English), while Xhosa was the primary language concerned in one record (6%). Language use (that is, a specific linguistic issue) was the topic of 7 of the 8 English-related records. By contrast, only one record which referred to Afrikaans as a primary

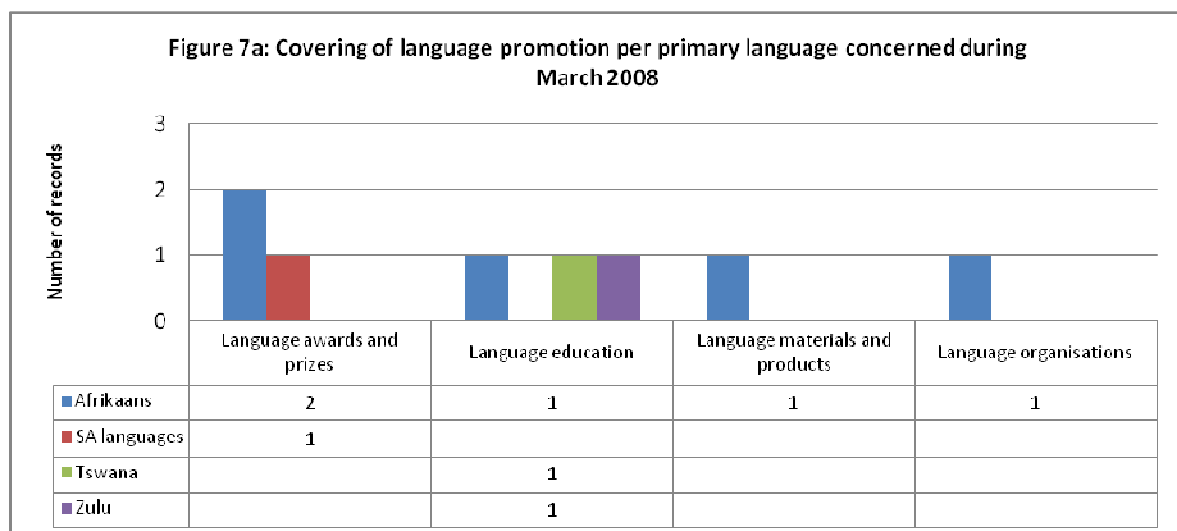
language addressed a linguistic issue. In the Afrikaans-related records, language maintenance was a recurrent theme.

- Racist hate speech – more specifically the Irvin Khoza case – was the topic of 3 of the records featuring a *linguistic issue* (8 in total). The case was brought to a close in March. On the first of the month, the *Saturday Star* reported that Khoza, chairperson of the 2010 World Cup Local Organising Committee, had refused to apologise for telling a journalist to “stop thinking like a kaffir”. The Human Rights Commission (HRC) demanded an apology, arguing that Khoza’s conduct conflicted with the constitutional values of human dignity and equality. Prompted (by his own account) by the racist video that had surfaced at the University of the Free State (UFS), Khoza eventually did apologise to all South Africans for using the “k”-word. His intention, he claimed, had been to “shock a brother to his senses”. On 6 March, both *Beeld* and *The Times* reported that the HRC considered the case to be closed.
- In other records pertaining to language use, it was reported, firstly, that police officers had been accused of abusing people verbally and physically during a raid on a Stellenbosch night club. According to an eyewitness report published in *Die Burger* on 10 March, officers repeatedly used the word “fuck” in its Afrikaans and English forms. Secondly, an incident of a somewhat less serious nature occurred at Ellis Park. Timekeepers were reported to be reluctant to lay a formal complaint against Sharks coach Dick Muir, who had called them “fucking cheats” (*Witness*, 17/03/2008).
- A report in *Business Day* (04/03/2008) revealed the existence of a document entitled “Browse Mole”, in which Jacob Zuma was accused of an attempted coup. According to the journalist, the document was alarmist, irrational and – on a linguistic level – incoherent. In another record pertaining to language use in politics, a *Saturday Star* columnist expressed the view that public statements by the ANC leader lacked coherence and clarity (15/03/2008).
- With a single exception, the underlying concern in records pertaining to *language maintenance* was the maintenance of Afrikaans at historically white universities. The database for March 2008 includes 2 responses to Carien du Plessis’s article, “Swart Maties sukkel nog”. A letter-writer suggested that Afrikaans was being undermined “from the outside” at the University of Stellenbosch (US) – that is, by means of government grants to non-Afrikaans-speaking students (*Burger*, 11/03/2008) – while the author of an article, Marco Botha, criticised the black activism on the US campus led by one of Du Plessis’s interviewees (*Burger*, 15/03/2008). Botha also expressed his reservations about the so-called T-option, as did another letter-writer who rejected Anton van Niekerk’s argument that the parallel-medium system at the UFS had indirectly led to the Reitz House incident (*Burger*, 22/03/2008).
- The maintenance of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools was the focus of a report published in the *Rapport* on 16 March. At a conference of Gauteng school principals, it was suggested that steps should be taken to ensure an adequate supply of Afrikaans teachers in the future. These measures could include marketing and recruitment campaigns, as well as financial assistance to students.
- In a report pertaining to *language acquisition*, former teacher Marelle Janse van Vuuren (who uses the Literati-4-Tots project developed by Hough & Horne to improve the linguistic skills of pre-schoolers) argued that a switch from the mother tongue to English in the first school year can leave a learner without any linguistic foundation. She pointed out that this has serious implications for academic performance (*Rapport*, 23/03/2008).
- *Language rights* were the implied concern in a report on the shortage of educational psychologists (especially Xhosa speakers) in the Western Cape (*Cape Times*, 24/03/2008).

### 3.3 Focus on language promotion



- Eight records relating to language promotion were received. Three (37%) of these referred to language awards and prizes and 3 (37%) to language education. Language materials and products received coverage in one record, as did language organisations (13% in each case).
- The majority of the records (5) were concerned with Afrikaans as a primary language. Tswana and Zulu were the primary languages concerned in two further records. One record referred to South African languages in general.



- In the Afrikaans press, 2 **language-related awards and prizes** made the headlines during March 2008. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Rapport* announced the ATKV's annual awards ceremony for Afrikaans media personalities and journalists (*ATKV-Mediaveertjie*) – the biggest event of its kind, which was to take place on 18 April in Midrand.
- Following the award of the Hertzog Prize to the Afrikaans poet Breyten Breytenbach, *Beeld* (19/03/2008) called on the former language activist to “come home” (literally and figuratively). The editorial described Breytenbach's love-hate relationship with South Africa, the Afrikaners and the Afrikaans language as regrettable.

- On 3 March the *Cape Argus* reported that the Linguapax Institute – a Spanish-based NGO dedicated to the protection and promotion of linguistic diversity – had honoured Neville Alexander for his outstanding work in the field of linguistic diversity/multilingual education.
- Three records on **language (in) education** were published concerning Afrikaans, Tswana and Zulu respectively. The *Rapport* of 16 March published a positive assessment of the status of Afrikaans as a second language in the Western Cape. According to various commentators, Afrikaans has become a language of emancipation and an instrument of nation-building. The economic value of the language has contributed to its spread. Two language promotion projects among non-Afrikaans-speaking children were mentioned: a school project of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and a development project of the US. The report quoted Michael le Cordeur, chair of the Western Cape Language Board, who warned against the exclusionary promotion of Afrikaans.
- In accordance with the pro-multilingual Kimberly declaration and in cooperation with the Assmang Mine Group, the Laerskool Postmasburg [Postmasburg Primary School] offers Tswana as an examination subject for first- and second-language speakers, according to a report that appeared in the *Volksblad* on 20 March under the headline “Afrikaanse leerlinge gooi die Tswana”. In KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), however, the picture seems less rosy. Prompted by complaints from the KZN Language Committee about the way in which Zulu is taught in suburban schools, KZN MEC for Arts, Culture and Tourism, Weziwe Thusi, called for indigenous South African languages to be taught as first languages. Welcoming this appeal, the isiZulu National Language Body and the KZN Education Council also raised concerns about the quality of African-language teaching in South Africa (*Witness*, 06/03/2008).
- One record relating to **language materials and products** was published. It announced that *Intiem* – a magazine focusing on sex from a Christian perspective, which targets Afrikaans women from a Calvinistic background – was to be translated and adapted for a multicultural English-speaking audience, owing to popular demand (*Saturday Weekend Argus*, 15/03/2008).
- One record pertaining to **language organisations** was published. Arguing that the preservation, both of culture (i.e. the Afrikaans culture) and of nature, was the responsibility of the ATKV, Hans du Plessis encouraged positive rather than negative activism in an article in *Taalgenoot* (01/03/2008). The article included an open letter to Robertson Spices about the virtual lack of Afrikaans on product labels. It was argued that this did not make economic sense, since further activism might result in a consumer boycott.

### 3.4 Focus on language research

One record in the database for March mentioned language research. Kate Butcher, student winner of the *Pendoring* award in 2007, claimed in an interview with *Beeld* (10/03/2008) that the competition enhances the quality of advertising in South Africa. Butcher is the author of a dissertation on Afrikaans advertising. What makes advertising in this language unique, she said, is the strong sense of identity that is formulated around language as the main unifying factor.

### 3.5 Focus on language renovation

No records on language renovation were received for the month of March.

## 4 Reflection on language rights issues covered during March 2008

### 4.1 Linguistic human rights

According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1995:7), the right to use and promote one's mother tongue is "a self-evident, fundamental, basic linguistic human right". One implication is that everybody should have the opportunity to *study* his/her mother tongue *as* a mother tongue. In South Africa, as we have seen, this is not always the case. While the Postmasburg Primary School (in cooperation with the Assmang Mine Group) is setting an excellent example by offering Tswana as an examination subject for first- and second-language speakers (*Volksblad*, 20/03/2008), the situation in most suburban schools in KwaZulu-Natal (and, one can safely assume, in many other schools) is a cause for concern. Of particular concern is the standpoint of the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie [South African Teachers' Union], as explained by Dr Gustaw [sic] Niebuhr in an interview with *Witness* (06/03/2008). Niebuhr is quoted as saying that African languages should only be taught for communication purposes and not as first languages. The shortage of Xhosa-speaking educational psychologists in the Western Cape is a further example of the way in which children's linguistic human rights are being affected in South Africa (*Cape Times*, 24/03/2008).

### 4.2 Language rights

During March, language rights did not comprise the explicit focus of any of the records received. However, underlying the ongoing debate about language policy and practice at historically Afrikaans universities is a conflict between two constitutionally protected rights: the right to receive education in the official language(s) of one's choice, on the one hand, and the right "to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible" (SA Bill of Rights, Article 29(1)), on the other. Against this background, Michael le Cordeur's warning is a timely one:

*"Afrikaans is deesdae 'n meganisme om studente uit die bruin gemeenskap te trek, maar dit moet nooit as 'n hefboom gebruik word om swart studente met 'n swart inheemse moedertaal uit te sluit nie. 'n Instelling soos die Universiteit van Stellenbosch behoort strukture agtermekaar te kry om sulke studente te akkommodeer, al kos dit wat"* ["These days, Afrikaans is used as a mechanism to attract students from the coloured community; but it should never be used as a lever for the exclusion of black students who speak an indigenous African language as their mother tongue. An institution such as the University of Stellenbosch should ensure that well-ordered structures are in place to accommodate such students, no matter what it costs to do so"] (*Rapport*, 16/03/2008).

## 5 Concluding remarks

March 2008 saw the end of the language-use debacle that featured prominently in the South African newspapers during February. Prompted by the Reitz House video, Irvin Khoza finally apologised for telling a journalist to "stop thinking like a kaffir".

As was the case in previous months, language-in-education policy and name changes were recurrent themes in the print media. A noteworthy factor regarding this month is that, quite often, Afrikaans was not the primary language concerned in reports on these matters. On the issue of name changes, the Afrikaans press was unusually quiet. The cases that came to the fore during March suggest that the conflict about place names is a conflict between ideological rather than linguistic opponents. The opposing parties in the rows about street names in Durban and Soweto were political parties and not necessarily speakers of different languages. DA opposition to the naming of a street after Fidel Castro had little to do with

language. The same can be said of the reaction of the PAC and Azapo to the proposed renaming of the Old Potchefstroom Road as Chris Hani Road. The problem, as the PAC expressed it, was that the ANC “should acknowledge all liberation heroes, irrespective of political affiliation”.

## References

Source	Date	Page	Author	Title of record
<i>Saturday Star</i>	01-Mar-08	1	Thabiso Thakali	K-word: Khoza off hook for now
<i>Taalgenoot</i>	01-Mar-08	44	Hans du Plessis	Bewaring
<i>Cape Argus</i>	03-Mar-08	4	Staff writer	City prof wins top language award
<i>Business Day</i>	04-Mar-08	12		The Browse Mole blues
<i>Daily News</i>	04-Mar-08	2	Heinz de Boer	Brakes on street renaming
<i>Star</i>	04-Mar-08	5	Sindile Khanyile	Recapitalised Wellco breaks with frail past
<i>Daily Dispatch</i>	05-Mar-08	3	David Macgregor	Racial tension rises over G'town name change
<i>Beeld</i>	06-Mar-08	1	Leané du Plessis	Video open Khoza se oë oor k-woord
<i>The Times</i>	06-Mar-08	4	Sashni Pather	Reitz uproar prompts apology from Khoza
<i>Witness</i>	06-Mar-08	6	Bongani Hans	'IsiZulu must be taught as a first language'
<i>Rapport</i>	09-Mar-08	2	Chantelle Nicholas	Vere vir radio-, TV-mense
<i>Beeld</i>	10-Mar-08	6	Wilma de Bruin	Pendoring maak reklamedeure oop, sê studentewenner Kate
<i>Burger</i>	10-Mar-08	2	Jason Boswell and Stephan Matthee	Ooggetuies vertel van 'Bos-chaos
<i>Burger</i>	11-Mar-08	13	J.C. (Koos) Kotzé	Vrae oor dié studente aan US
<i>Afrikaner</i>	13-Mar-08	8	HNP	Toestande in Suid-Afrika en die wêreld, en die optrede van die HNP
<i>Afrikaner</i>	13-Mar-08	8	Sarel	Engelstalige pers maak fees van Kowsie-video
<i>Burger</i>	15-Mar-08	5	Marco Botha	My swart vriend het wel 'n naam
<i>Saturday Star</i>	15-Mar-08	14	Jabulani Sikhakhane	Eloquence continues to elude ANC leader, so find him a minder
<i>Saturday Weekend Argus</i>	15-Mar-08	11	Justine Gerardy	Demand for Christian sex magazine soars
<i>Rapport</i>	16-Mar-08	2	Carien Kruger	Skole sal self onnies moet probeer werf
<i>Rapport</i>	16-Mar-08	11	Marlene Malan	Yebo vir Afrikaans, sê skool
<i>Sowetan</i>	17-Mar-08	7	Kingdom Mabuza	Hani name rejected
<i>Witness</i>	17-Mar-08	1	Ken Borland	Coach's swearing at match officials likely to go unpunished.
<i>Beeld</i>	19-Mar-08	24		Breyten
<i>Citizen</i>	20-Mar-08	12	John Moody	How others see it
<i>Volksblad</i>	20-Mar-08	1	André Botha	Afrikaanse leerlinge gooi die Tswana
<i>Kerkbode</i>	21-Mar-08	1	jean@tydskrifte.co.za	NGK wil rassisme aandurf
<i>Burger</i>	22-Mar-08	18	Non Sequitur	Van Niekerk femel oor T-opsie
<i>Rapport</i>	23-Mar-08	1	Helen Ueckermann	Onderrigtaal belangrik vir sukses
<i>Cape Times</i>	24-Mar-08	3	A'eysha Kassiem	Not enough educational psychologists for schools

