

**SA Language Rights Bulletin**  
**Volume 2 Issue 6**  
**February 2008**

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

Editors: Johan Lubbe & Susan Lombaard  
© ULM

## Contents

1	Aim .....	2
2	Data .....	3
3	Media coverage on language issues during February 2008.....	3
3.1	Focus on name changes .....	7
3.2	Focus on language problems.....	8
3.3	Focus on language promotion .....	9
3.4	Focus on language research .....	10
3.5	Focus on language renovation .....	10
4	Reflection on language rights issues covered during February 2008.....	10
4.1	Linguistic human rights .....	10
5	Concluding remarks .....	11

## 1 Aim

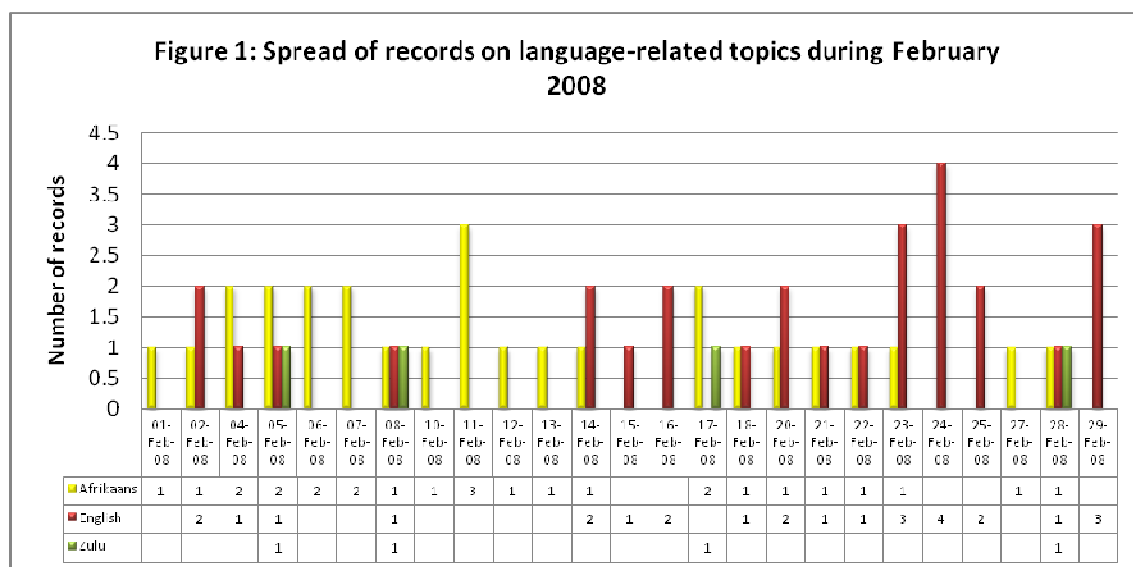
The aim of the South African Language Rights Bulletin (SALRB) is to present an overview of language rights issues in South Africa, primarily as reflected in data from the printed media, obtained from SA Media. Data are only collected from the newspapers supplied to SA Media, except in the case of the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

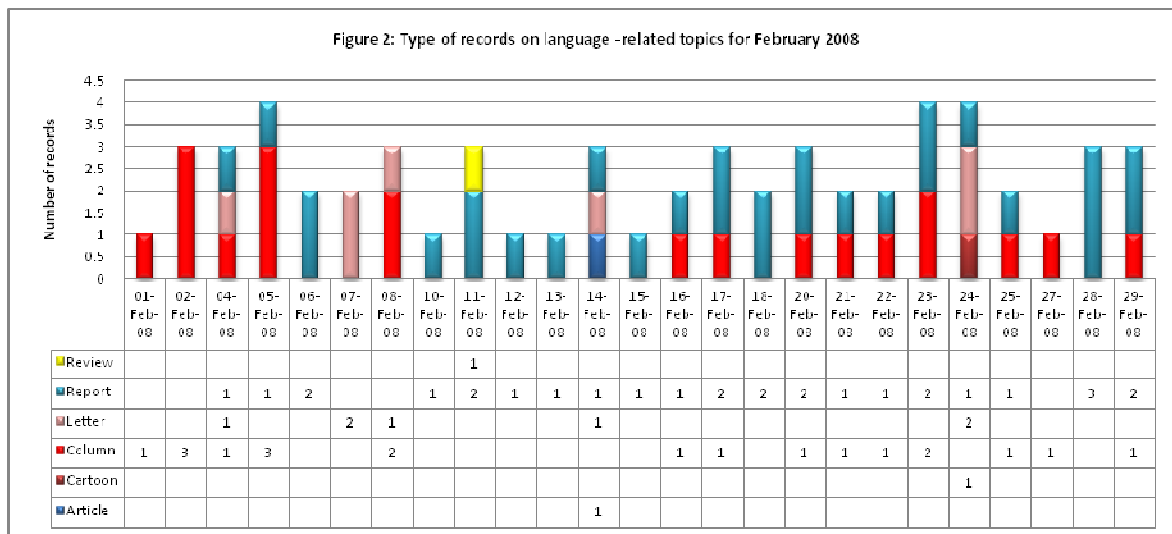
Printed media records are drawn from the SA Media database on the basis of the standard subject topics used by the archives. Cross-checking is always carried out against clippings made by the project staff from daily and weekly newspapers. Records exclude reviews, which usually comprise the bulk of printed 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 2008/02/25. 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 February 2008

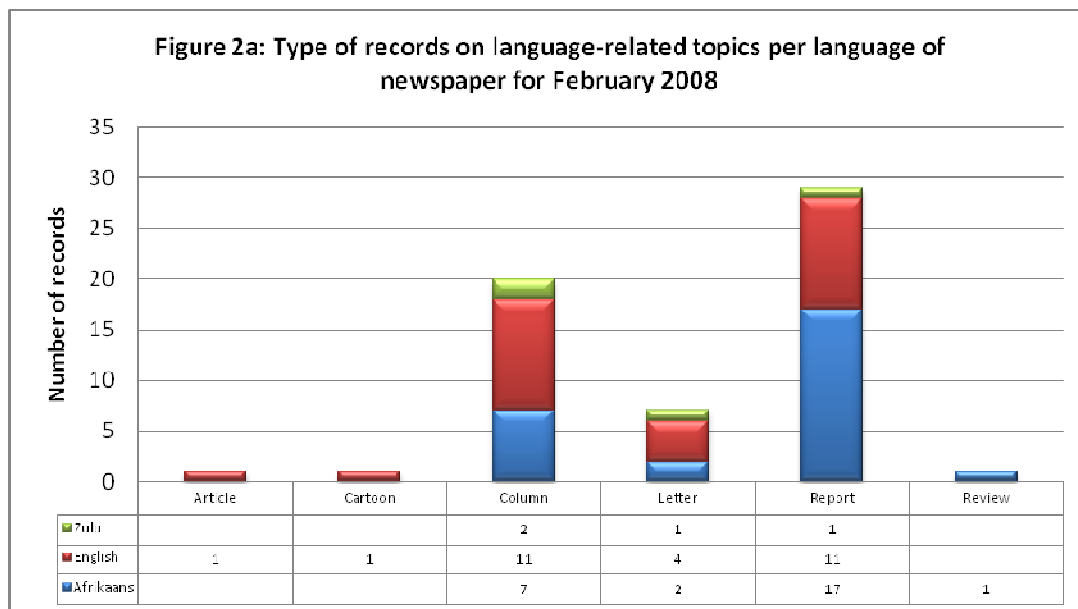
During February 2008, as in January 2008, a total of 59 records were obtained from SA Media. Four language-related records were published by *Isoleswe*, a Zulu newspaper, in comparison with the one record published by *Isoleswe* during January 2008. Figure 1 provides an indication of the spread of records during the month, as well as the distribution between Afrikaans, English and Zulu records.



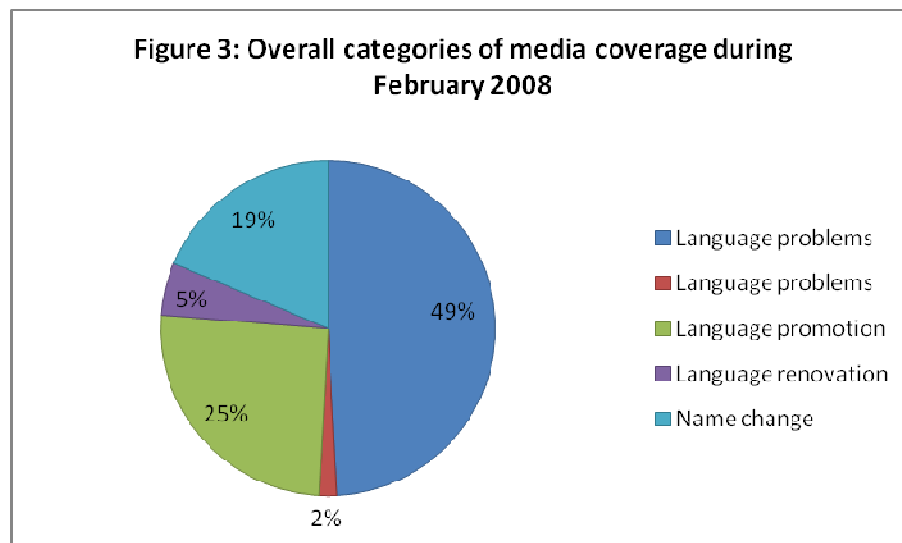
- Language division: 45.76% Afrikaans, 47.46% English and 6.78% Zulu. An almost equal number of Afrikaans records and English records were received, in comparison with the four Zulu records.
- Coverage of language-related matters occurred on 25/29 days (86.2%), at an average of 2.03 records per day.
- Four records in each case were published on 5, 23 and 24 February 2008. Three records were published on 9 days, evenly spread over the month in question.
- The majority (29) of the records dealt with language problems. Fifteen records dealt with language promotion, while 11 referred to name changes.



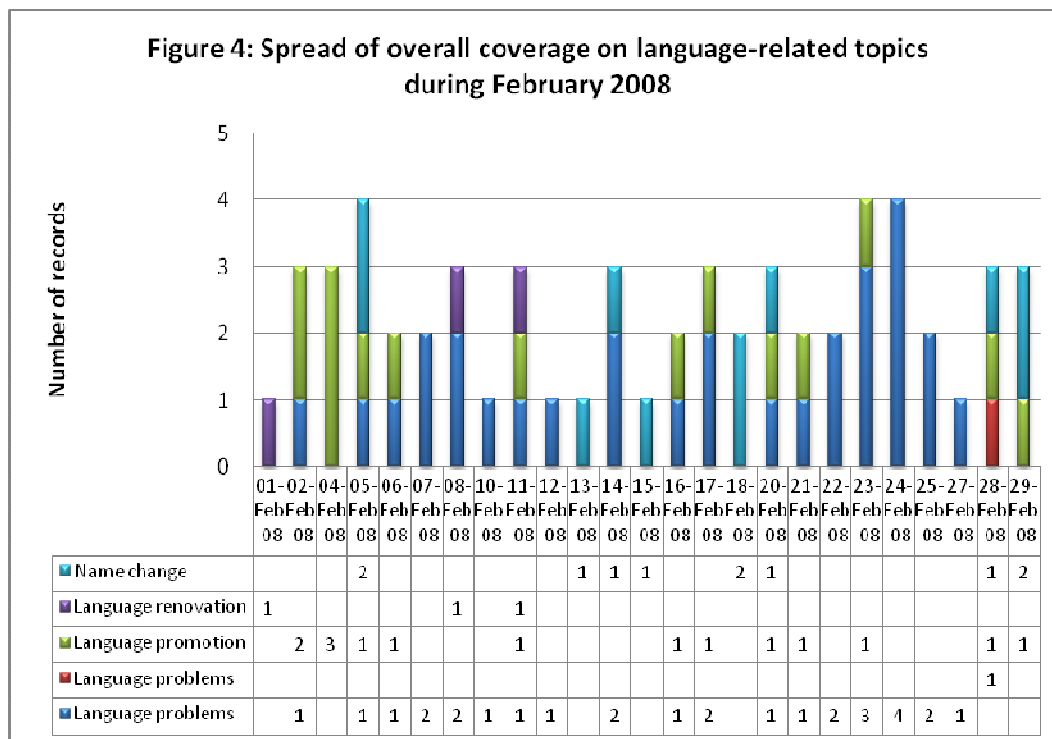
- As in the case of January 2008, newspaper reports accounted for nearly half (49.2%) of the records on language-related topics. 33.9% of the records for February were derived from columns, 11.9% from letters, and 1.7% in each case from articles, cartoons and reviews. The high incidence of reports and columns covering language matters points towards a sustained interest in language matters on the part of newspapers.



- A total of 29 **reports** were received for the month of February 2008. Most of these reports appeared in the Afrikaans press (17), as against 11 in the English press, while one Zulu report was published.
- Altogether, 7 **letters** were received, of which 4 appeared in the English press, while 2 appeared in the Afrikaans press and one in the Zulu press.
- In contrast to January 2008, when only 5 columns appeared, 20 **columns** were published in February 2008. This category thus comprised the second largest group (33.9%) after reports (29 – 49.2%). Of these 20 columns, 11 (55%) were published in the English press, 7 (35%) in the Afrikaans press and 2 (10%) in the Zulu press. The English columns dealt mainly with the use of the “k”-word by Irvin Khoza, chairperson of the 2010 World Cup Local Organising Committee.
- Only one newspaper **article** on language-related matters was published during the month of February 2008 (in the English press).
- No **editorial comments** were received for February 2008.
- One **cartoon** was published in the English press during the relevant month, on the use of the “k”-word by Irvin Khoza.
- One Afrikaans **review** was published, relating to language renovation.

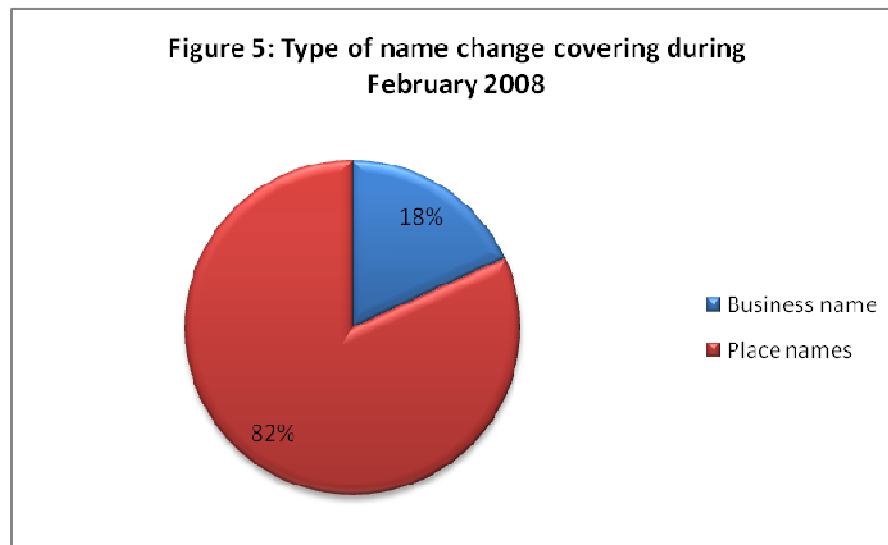


- As can be seen in Figure 3, matters related to **language problems** in South Africa received prominent coverage during February 2008, accounting for 31 (51%) of the 59 records. Of these 31 records, 6 dealt with language rights, 10 with language prestige and 15 with linguistic issues.
- The number of records dealing with **name changes** was lower than in the case of the previous month. Eleven records on name changing were received for February, as against the 19 received for January. Most of the records referred to proposed changes to street names in Cape Town. Two records dealt with the changing of an institutional name.
- Fifteen records (25.4%) were related to **language-promotional matters**. Of these, 5 focused on language awards and prizes, 3 on language materials and products, 2 on language awareness, one on language personalities and one on language education.
- **Language renovation** was covered in 3 records, all in the Afrikaans press.
- **Language research** received no coverage during February 2008.

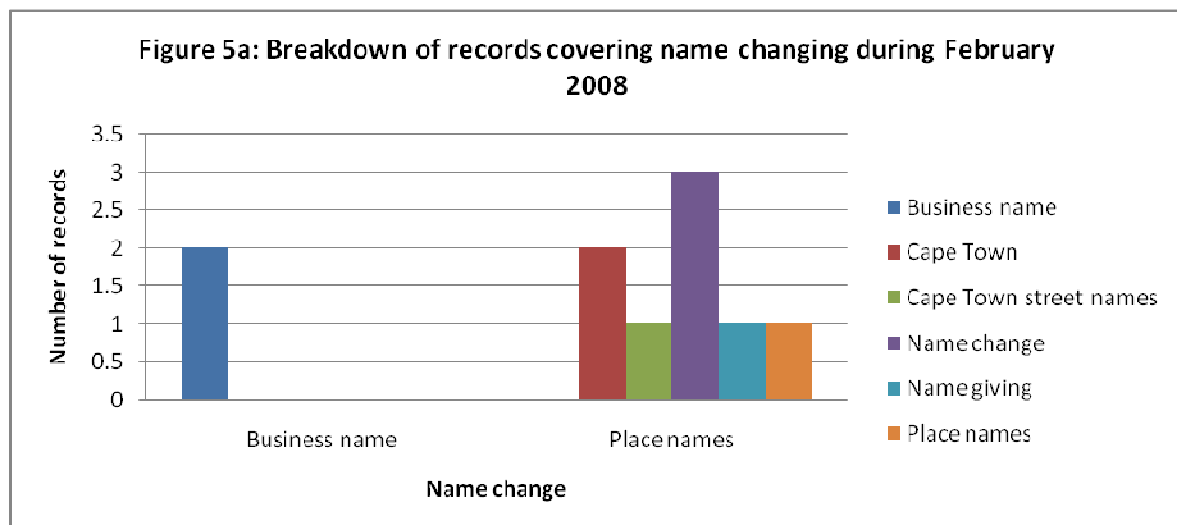


- Coverage of *language problems* occurred throughout the month. On one particular day (24 February 2008), 4 records were published, all in the English press. These consisted of 2 letters, a cartoon and a report, all of which were concerned with the use of the “k”-word by Irvin Khoza.
- Coverage took place over 18 days.
- The coverage of *language promotion* consisted of 15 records published on 12 days, including 3 records on 4 February 2008. The first of these 3 records comprised a plea by a letter-writer for the teaching of African languages as mother tongues. The second was concerned with a plea by the Dutch Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to Mr Pallo Jordan, Minister of Arts and Culture, for the improvement of the position of Afrikaans in South Africa because of its role as a lingua franca; while the third record dealt with an award made by PanSALB to an Afrikaans writer. Seven of the 15 records were concerned with Afrikaans as a primary language; one with English; 3 with African languages; 2 with language in general; one with mother-tongue issues; and one with Dutch.
- Eleven records covering *name changing* were published during February 2008, with a higher concentration in the middle of the month. The latter records (4 in number) related mainly to the proposed changing of street names in Cape Town.

### 3.1 Focus on name changes



- A total of 11 records in the database for February 2008 covered aspects related to *name changes* in South Africa. The majority of records concerning this topic dealt specifically with changes to place names (82%), while the changing of institutional names accounted for 18% of the records.



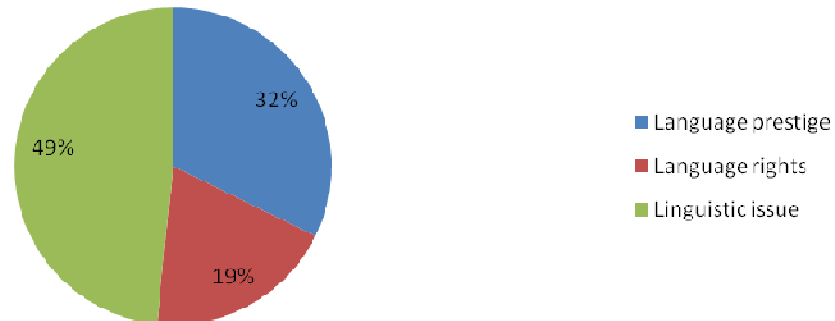
- Four records on proposed changes to street names in Cape Town were published. The provincial leader of the Freedom Front Plus (FF+), Dr Corné Mulder, pointed out that Afrikaans historical figures are being eliminated by Cape Town's name-changing process (*Die Burger* 13/02/2008, *Cape Argus* 15/02/2008). No explanations are offered as to why certain names have to be changed, whereas motivations are given with regard to new names. Some motivations are absurd, according to Mulder – as in the case of the proposed renaming of Tulbagh Avenue as Janfrederik Avenue because the Janfrederik bird is common to the area. He added that one might as well argue that Otto du Plessis Drive should be changed to Seagull Avenue. The proposed renaming of Otto du Plessis Drive as

Ikhwezi Avenue also makes no sense, since Otto du Plessis Drive runs along the West Coast, where the sun only sets. (“Ikhwezi” is the Xhosa word for “rising sun”.)

- Other records dealt with Pretoria/Tshwane (once again) (*Beeld* 05/02/2008), Grahamstown/iRhini (*Daily Dispatch* 20/02/2008) and Potchefstroom/Tlokwe (*Beeld* 18/02/2008).

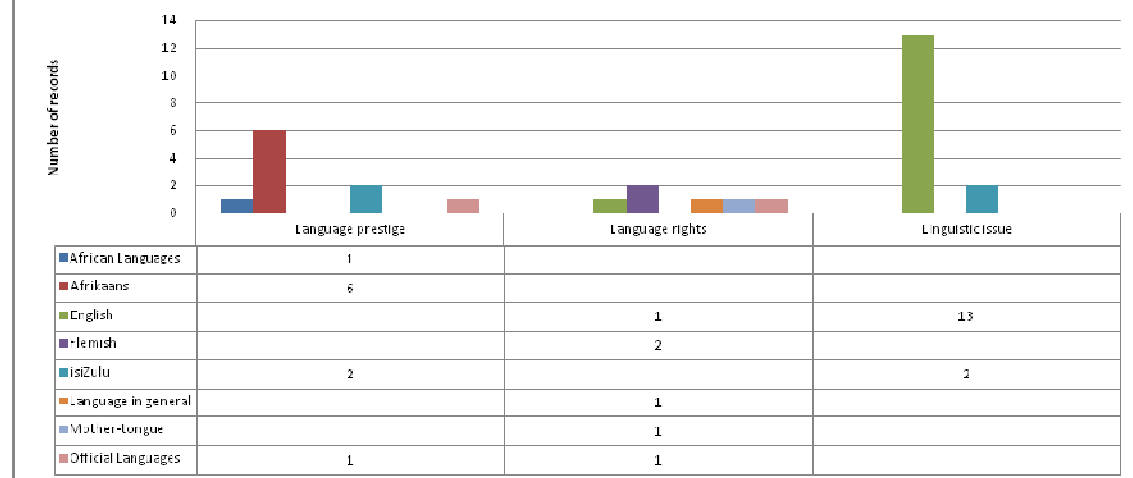
### 3.2 Focus on language problems

Figure 6: Breakdown of coverage of language problems during February 2008



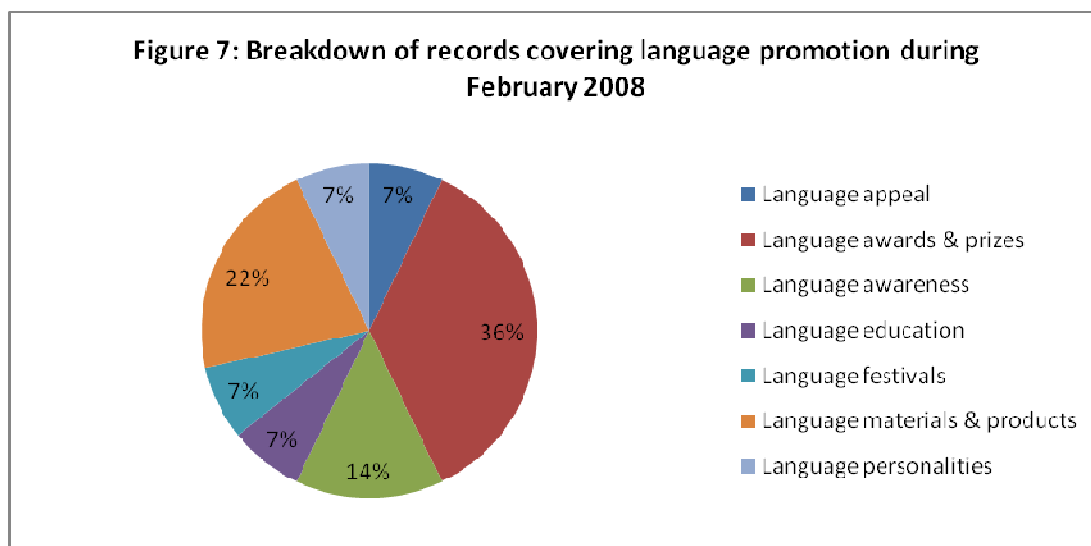
- The 31 records dealing with *language-related problems* covered issues such as language rights, language prestige and linguistic issues.
- Linguistic issues (15 records) received the greatest amount of media coverage during February 2008. Language prestige was covered in 10 records, while language rights received coverage in 6 records.
- The records dealing with language rights issues related mainly to the importance of mother-tongue education.

Figure 6a: Coverage of language problems in relation to primary language concerns during February 2008



- In February 2000 – perhaps for the first time – English, and not Afrikaans, was the primary language of most of the 31 records covering language problems, viz. 14 (45.2%). Of these 14 records, 10 referred to the use of the “k”-word by Irvin Khoza, chairperson of the 2010 World Cup Local Organising Committee. This comprised the subject of various columns, e.g. those by Sandile Memela (*Saturday Star* 23/02/2008), Jonty Mark (*Saturday Star* 23/02/2008) and Fikile Moya (*Mail and Guardian* 02/02/2008). In another column (*Weekend Post* 16/02/2008), Raymond Hartle criticised President Mbeki’s use of English in his annual State of the Nation address, e.g. his reference to a report that “would be availed”. The author contended that speaking to someone in his/her home language is a means of connecting with the listener, but that, if one is not fluent in the language of one’s interlocutors, one runs the risk of “mangling” the language and actually offending one’s hearers.
- A report written by Leopold Scholtz regarding a visit by the Dutch Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to Pallo Jordan, Minister of Arts and Culture, appeared in both *Beeld* (11/02/2008) and *Die Burger* (12/02/2008). The Dutch Minister argued that the association of Afrikaans with apartheid must be broken and that reconciliation must take place. Afrikaans did not belong to the apartheid regime; rather, it belongs to the different population groups. The role of Afrikaans as a lingua franca of the Dutch, the Flemish, the Namibians and the South Africans is not sufficiently well-known.
- isiZulu was the primary language in the case of 4 records. In a letter published in *Isoleswe* (08/02/2008), the standard of isiZulu spoken on the SABC’s television channels, e.g. in the soap opera, *Generations*, is criticised. Also in *Isoleswe* (19/02/2008), in a column, the relevance of isiZulu is highlighted and the frequent use of English terms criticised. *The Sowetan* (25/02/2008) reported on the plea of the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Arts, Culture and Tourism for greater efforts on the part of multiracial schools to ensure that isiZulu is taught and given priority as a subject.

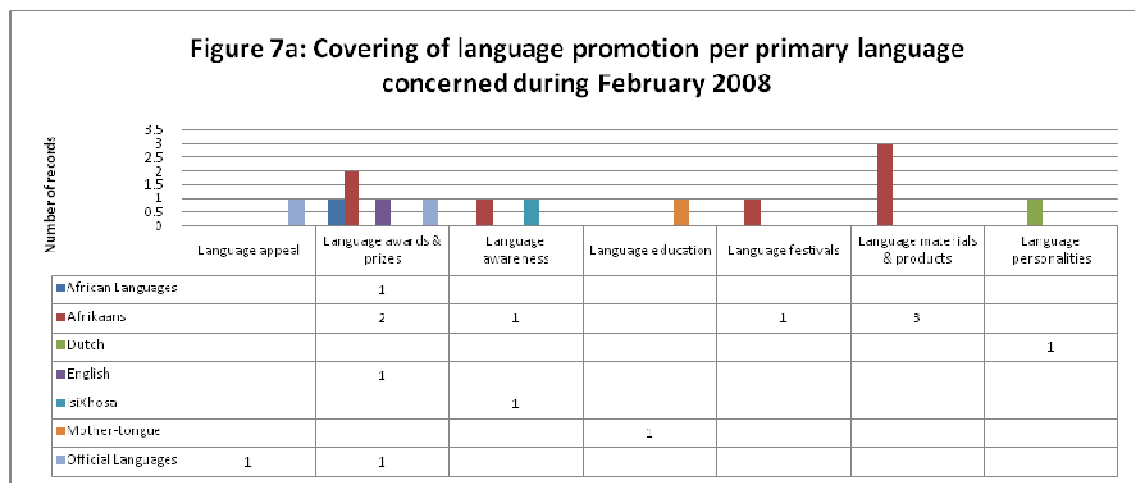
### 3.3 Focus on language promotion



- Fifteen records dealt with aspects of language promotion, viz. language awards and prizes (5), language materials and products (3), language awareness (2), language appeal (1), language education (1), language festivals (1) and language personalities (1).
- Two of the 5 records referring to language awards and prizes focused on Afrikaans. Mr Boshoff, sub-editor of *Business 24*, won the PanSALB prize for the Afrikaans writer of

the decade, for his contribution to multilingualism and nation-building (*Beeld* 04/02/2008). It is Boshoff's aim to build bridges between Afrikaans-speaking and other cultural and linguistic groups by means of translations. The other record referring to Afrikaans is a column by Lindile Sifile in the *Daily Despatch* (02/02/08), discussing the popularity of the SABC2 music show, *Noot vir Noot*. In December 2007, the 400<sup>th</sup> episode of this show was screened, making it South Africa's longest-running game show, which is currently gaining additional momentum with the inclusion of black audiences.

- The awarding of bursaries by PanSALB to matriculants who had excelled in an African language as a first or second language was reported on in a Free State local paper, the *Express* (29/02/2008). PanSALB also designated *Radio Kansel* (Radio Pulpit) as the South African public communication medium which had made the greatest contribution towards promoting multilingualism and nation-building on radio and television (*Rapport* 17/02/2008).
- The three records covering language materials all referred to Afrikaans. Joan Hambidge examined the quality of some recently-published Afrikaans books (*Die Burger* 02/02/2008). The publication of the first Afrikaans Bible for the Deaf received coverage in *Beeld* (06/02/2008), while a grant of R400 000 awarded by a Dutch charity organisation to a community radio station in Vredendal, Western Cape, in order to improve the broadcasting (which is mainly presented in Afrikaans), was reported on in *Die Burger* (21/02/2008).



### 3.4 Focus on language research

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

### 3.5 Focus on language renovation

Three records were received regarding issues related to language renovation. Two of these records were published in the *Volksblad* (01/02/2008, 08/02/2008) as part of a regular column written by Anton Prinsloo, in which the correct use of Afrikaans words and phrases is discussed.

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

### 4.1 Linguistic human rights

A strong appeal for the right to mother-tongue education was made by Dr Michael le Cordeur, chairman of the Western Cape Language Commission, and the manager of education for the

Stellenbosch region. He stressed the importance of mother-tongue education for speakers of black indigenous languages and Afrikaans. “It is not a privilege”, he said, “[i]t is a basic human right. Worldwide it is seen as a non-negotiable educational principle. Research has shown that forced foreign-language teaching by non-mother-tongue teachers to non-mother-tongue learners causes extensive unliteracy (*sic*)”. A column following the same line of argumentation appeared in *Business Day* (14/02/2008), written by Johann Rossouw, executive officer of the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations (FAK). He pointed out that, if the state is to fulfil its responsibility to provide quality education, it must realise that such education stands or falls by its provision of (or failure to provide) mother-tongue instruction for at least the first seven school years.

## 5 Concluding remarks

The single incident that received the most prominent coverage during the month was the use of the notorious “k”-word by Irvin Khoza, chairperson of the 2010 World Cup Local Organising Committee. The matter was not only reported on, but was also the subject of discussion in various columns. Moreover, Khoza’s utterance was criticised in letters to the media, and was even commented on in a cartoon (*Sunday Tribune* 24/02/2008). The reaction shows how sensitive language issues are, and underscores the fact that all language matters should be treated with caution.

A noteworthy aspect pertaining to this month was the attention given to Dutch and Belgian matters. The Dutch Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs paid a visit to Pallo Jordan, Minister of Arts and Culture, and argued in favour of the improvement of the position of Afrikaans in South Africa, because of its role as a lingua franca. In addition, various columns discussed the language conflict in Belgium and what South Africa can learn from it.

Prizes awarded by PanSALB for the promotion of nation-building and multilingualism received positive coverage (*Beeld* 04/02/2008, *Rapport* 17/02/2008, *Express* 29/02/2008). More controversial, however, was PanSALB’s award to the Tshwane Metro Council for its contribution to nation-building during the past decade (*Beeld* 05/02/2008).

