

Translation as an activity of language policy implementation: A myth or reality at the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality

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Abstract

This paper examines how the translation services, as articulated in the language policy and plan of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, is used as a language policy implementation strategy and in facilitating public participation. The development of South African official languages is seen as critical in ensuring participatory democracy, where citizens are expected to participate meaningfully to ensure equity of access (South African Municipality Systems Act of 2000). Whereas the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality has done some noticeable work about the promotion of multilingualism and the usage of official languages within the City, lack of visibility of translated documents amongst residents and in its offices needs to be revisited. The key question that this paper asks is 'whether citizens can access or are provided with information they need in the language they understand so that they can take part in the public decision-making in a meaningful way'.

The key question is answered by analysing data from the various interviews conducted with the residents from the various regions of the municipality and staff in the language unit of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan municipality and document analysis of the various language documents. Some of the key findings in the paper indicate that translation is not properly used as a tool to facilitate equitable access to municipal information and services. The findings of this paper give policymakers and those tasked with language policy implementation in municipalities proper guidance on how to assess and determine the extent to which translation activities contribute to corpus planning thus ensuring the right of citizens to participate in, and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of South African society.

Key Words: Culture, Diversity & Inclusion, Economic , Heritage, Language Policy, Political, Service Delivery, Translation

Table 1. Background to the Problem Detection using PICOC Framework (Costa, 2020)

Problem	Language is still a barrier of access to information for citizens with no or limited proficiency in English in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (Seshoka, 2013).
Indicator	The City of Tshwane has adopted 8 languages as official languages; namely English, Afrikaans, Sepedi, Setswana, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, IsiZulu, and IsiNdebele, however after years of implementation of the language policy, translation and editing policies in English and Afrikaans continue to dominate the written communication and translation of documents in the municipality (Seshoka, 2013; City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, 2012).
Context	The development of the South African languages is seen as critical in ensuring participatory democracy especially in municipalities, where citizens are expected to participate meaningfully to ensure equity of access and participation (Government Gazette, 2003).
Objective	Proper language use and the provision of translation services can assist in ensuring that participatory democracy is achieved correctly thus ensuring that most of the citizens take part in the municipality processes and gain an appropriate understanding, as postulated in Local Government: Municipal Systems Amendment Act (Government Gazette, 2003).
Change	Municipalities must take into consideration the language usage and preferences of their residents when engaging with them (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996)

Framework for Implementation

In view of the problem and indicators above, the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality requires to implement a responsive framework with clear implementation guidelines for the purposes of answering the research question in this research. Aldrich & Martinez (2007) postulated the significance and vital role-played by theorists in seeking deeper explanations regarding existing phenomena. A theoretical framework is made up of two distinct words, namely “theory” and “framework”. According to Kerlinger (1986), who is considered one of the founding theorists in development of theoretical frameworks, a theory

“a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena.”

On the other hand, Merriam-Webster (2020) defines a framework as

“a basic conceptual structure (as of ideas)”

In addition to the above, a theory can be defined as a coherent and systematic explanation of a set of relationships to describe the phenomena, based on scientific evidence (Cooper & Schindler, 2001). According to these scholars, when studying a particular phenomenon, and in this instance, the explication of activities involved in language policy formulation and execution at City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, theory plays a pivotal role in the investigation. In other words, sets of interrelated descriptions, characteristics, and postulations that are presented in pursuit of providing explications and further predictions are scientifically referred to as theories.

In view of the above, a theoretical framework, which is a structure of theories and concepts underpinning this research, builds what can be known as a schematic representation of the entire study, that creates a picture of all the elements of the research trajectory as postulated by Costa (2020). He further asserted the need for researchers to make decisions regarding foundational dynamics of their research inquiry. The decisions include breaking down of concepts from the research questions, to formulation of hypothesis/assumptions, deciding on the philosophical basis for the inquiry and finally integrating the methodological, theoretical and conceptual approaches.

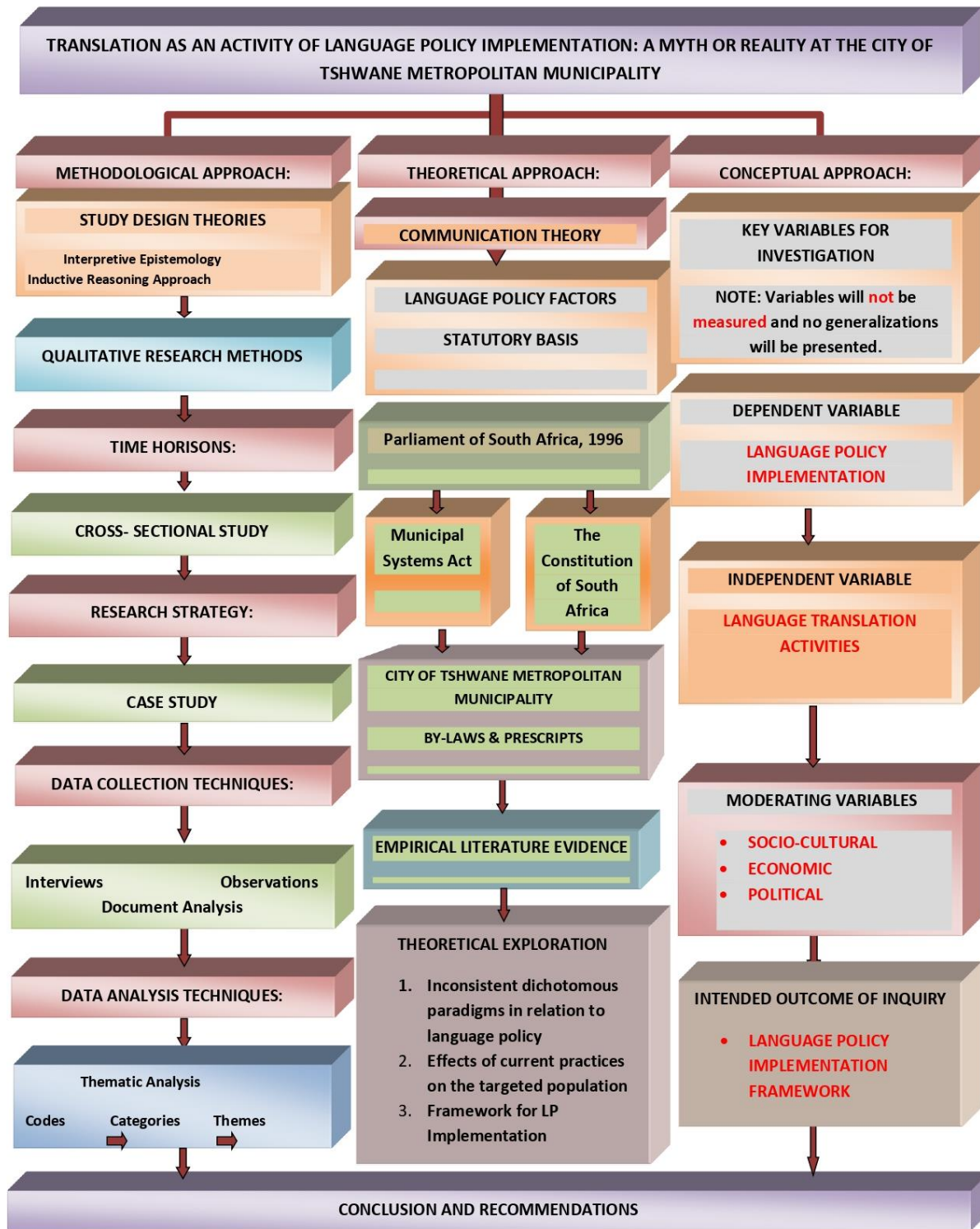


Figure 1: Theoretical Framwork, Adapted to Costa (2020)

Table 2: Language Policy on Translation : Implementation Framework

Key Variable	Significance	Conceptual Elements
Socio-Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Equity: All people shall have equal rights to use their languages (Parliament of South Africa, 1996). • Multilingualism Heritage: Enhancement of preservation and expression of cultural diversity • Debunking Communication Barriers: Facilitation of communication across the barriers of colour, language, and religion is a constitutional and human right in South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal usage of the official languages of the municipality in all its information. • Language policies and their implementation ought to be designed to meet the needs and interests of all segments of the population effectively and equitably (Kelman, 1971).
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multidisciplinarity: Multilingual communication in conceptualised for economic participation and enhancement of municipal communities. • Language-Specific Product Development: Programmes for economic development should be expressed in a language that enhances participation across all conceptual barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever economic planning, town planning, and even family planning are accepted by the majority of people in the world today as being necessary for a healthy and secure existence, there ought to be no objection in principle to language planning and its implementation in South African municipalities (Alexander, 1991).
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Literacy: Language is an important vehicle for language development and functionality (Beukes, 2006). • Needs-Based Intergration: Translation as an activity of language policy implementation can be a facilitator of better communication between the government and its citizens and between people. • Service Delivery: Language and translation are essential in improving service delivery and government communication with its residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language policy implementation strategies should be based on advancing the interests of the majority of all South Africans and should reach all levels of our society (Alexander, 1991).

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