

https://dspace.org/

The basements of Babylon: English literacy and the division of labour on the South African gold mines.

Brown, David

1987-02-14T10:49:15Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7723

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

1987

BROWN



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

HISTORY WORKSHOP

AFRICANA LIBRARY

The Basements of Babylon: English literacy and the division of labour on the South African gold mines.

David Brown
University of Natal

The Basements of Babylon: English Literacy and the division of labour on the South African gold mines.

David Brown
University of Natal
(Durban)

This paper is a discussion of changing literacy and language policies on the gold mines. Initially a brief explanation of the approach taken to literacy in an industrial context is presented. Secondly it discusses the use of the pidgin Fanakalo and its development in the 1950's as well as the origins of the most significant literacy organisation contracting to the mines. It continues by discussing the changes in policy and implementation of language and literacy training which, it is argued, provides empirical evidence for the extension of ideological controls over selected groupings of workers on the goldmines.

Comparisons between the social and historical development in 19th century North America and contemporary South Africa may seem remote. However this paper argues that recent Canadian research can be instructive when considering the social and cultural processes involved in South African industrialisation, particularly by following Harvey Graff's work "Literacy, Jobs and Industrialisation". (Graff 1981 250) Graff's work has become the touchstone of what one writer has termed the "ideological approach" to literacy. (Street, 1984 p.1) This approach assumes that the meaning of literacy depends on the social institutions in which it is embedded; further, that the practices of reading and writing taught in any context depend upon such aspects of social structure as stratification. (Street, 1984 p.6)

Graff's work on 19th century Canada shows that perceptions of illiteracy were bound up with poverty and danger to the social order. As a result the spread of literacy brought about certain contradictions: the middle classes were afraid of its radical effect which resulted in the process of literacy being carefully controlled. (Graff, 1981 p.247)

Graff describes this process of control as follows:

> The workers had to be convinced that it was in their interests to learn the kind of literacy on offer, in the kinds of institutions in which it was taught, but had to be restrained from taking control of it for themselves, or developing their own alternative concepts of it.

Literacy was seen by educational reformers as a crucial factor in discerning the productivity of workers

> Quite simply it was the well-informed well-educated workers who were thought to produce the most and the best, to possess superior moral habits and to save money. Uneducated illiterate workers presumably did not.... Literacy recorded that training had begun.(Graff 1981 p.237)

Graff's detailed empirical research contradicts the views propagated by educational reformers at the time in that it shows literacy did not lead to enhanced social positions for the literate worker. Moreover, workers had to be convinced of the advantages of literacy. Graff's views are in marked contrast to other writers on the role of literacy in society, such as Jack Goody, whose anthropological work views literacy as an independent and determining factor in society. (Street 1984 p.10)(Goody 1981 p.27) By examining the relationship between literacy, occupation and remuneration Graff cites evidence from records of a Canadian lumber company which reveal 36% of the skilled workers to be illiterate (Graff H. 1981 p.252) Consequently, Graff argues that correlations between literacy, production and remuneration were not as simple as the predominant ideas of its 19th century Canadian promoters. Graff points out that 'skills' such as literacy relate to occupations to a degree; however, economic rewards may have little to do with an evaluation of the role of literacy where the remuneration of the illiterate can often exceed that of the literate. This Graff saw as providing evidence for popular working class claims that education did not necessarily affect work directly,but rather other aspects of life.(Graff 1981p. 252/3)

Literacy in Canada during the last century was conducted mostly through the promotion of schooling which,according to Graff, was universal at primary levels and preceded the process of industrialisation (Graff 1981 p.258). Graff contrasts this with the English experience of industrialisation, which occurred well before literacy reached universal proportions. The impact of schooling came after the mass upheavals of the early transition to the factory and industrial capitalism in Britain. For Graff Britain presented a picture of a post hoc attempt at social stabilisation which Graff believes the middle-class reformers in Canada learnt from as they, subsequently, did not have to face the ' first ' industrial revolution (Graff 1984 p.258) He puts it succinctly as follows:

> Print literacy had important socializing functions, both direct and indirect...; for example, literacy training served to regularize and discipline behaviour.....the

> 'training in being trained' mattered most in the creation and preparation of a modern industrial and urban workforce.(Graff 1981 p.260)

The type of evidence which Graff presents the role of literacy will be explored in relation to the multilingual and coercive context of the South African gold mining industry.

The perspective offered below also reinforces arguments presented by Chisholm with regard to the relationship between 'skills' and ideological control in South Africa but focuses specifically on language and literacy in the workplace. Chisholm expresses the relationship between skill and ideology as follows:

> An essential component of the 'skill' which capital is demanding is social and ideological. The purpose appears to be as much to intensify ideological controls over workers and wed them more firmly to capitalist values as to provide for South Africa's manpower needs.(Chisholm 1984 p.406)

The gold mines present a sociolinguistic profile which can and often does reflect the overall complexity of the macro-linguistic profile of Southern Africa. The mining industry draws on all the linguistic groups in Southern Africa, since the vast majority of African workers are migrant labourers, travelling from all over Southern Africa. This is a type of social displacement conducive to pidginisation. (Bickerton, 1980, p.3)

Since the 1950s, the dominant linguistic grouping amongst the white miners involved in the underground production process has been the Afrikaans-speaking miners. They form a closed-shop union, the Afrikaner Mynwerkers Unie. Crucial to this closed-shop has been the acquisition of blasting certificates and the control over supervisory positions underground - through such mechanisms, the union's members have maintained their position as a "labour aristocracy". Apart from being racially exclusive, blasting certificates and supervisory positions depend on examinations being taken in one of the official languages (although, it seems, such a stipulation can be waived where it is in the interests of the white miners: for example Portuguese-speaking supervisors have been able to take their examinations in Fanakalo. (Interview with K. Watters, Johannesburg, July 1984).

The languages that converge in the workplace are, therefore, English, Afrikaans, all the Bantu languages, and the lingua franca of the mines, Fanakalo. It is a pidgin of uncertain genesis, which is thought to have arisen in Natal from approximately 1860. Its initiators may have been the Indian indentured labourers transported to Natal to work on the sugar plantations. According to this theory of its origins, the Indian workers rapidly adopted English as a language. In addition (depending on which theory of pidginisation is followed), a pidgin thought to be English substrate relexified by a Zulu superstrate emerged among Indian people in their communication with the indigenous African population. The pidgin was called "isikhulu" by the Zulu-speakers of Natal (literally meaning "the language of the coolies"). It is still used in the markets and factories of Natal. It is not a neutral medium of communication and can be considered insulting by Zulu-speakers. (Cole, 1953, p.i)

Its reception in the mining industry probably goes back to the arrival of the first migrant workers on the mines. However, its role within the industry was clearly established by 1920, with the publication of the first Zulu-English-"Mine Kaffir" dictionary by the Chamber of Mines Health and Safety Committee. This was followed by a more ambitious edition in 1938, which included Afrikaans, Sotho, "Mine Kaffir" (Fanakalo) and English. The preface to the 1938 edition explained,

> "Mine Kaffir" used in this book is a dialect understood by the majority of natives on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines. Each word in the

> vocabulary and each phrase in "Mine Kaffir" has been carefully considered by a Sub-Committee, which included a number of Boss Boys...(ibid.p.1)

The purpose of the promotion of Fanakalo by the mining industry is immediately apparent from the phrase list. For example,

> You must follow your boss only.
> Hamba nalo bas kawena; landela lo bas kawena
>
> When a boy is under the influence of liquor, he is not fit to go underground, he will get into trouble.
> Loskati lo muntu yena dakiwe hayifuna yena hamba pantsi; yena faka mina lotrabul
> (pp.60-61)

The dictionaries continue to be published to the present day but interestingly, no longer include any of the Bantu languages, only Fanakalo, English and Afrikaans. Their vocabularies are constantly updated; the 1985 edition, for example, was the first to include the Fanakalo word for "strike" - "sitrayika". (1985, p.61) It also stated that the promotion of a lingua franca on the mines would lead to better social relations and provide an important safety factor in dangerous mining conditions. (App.1, p.14)

Fanakalo is not immediately intelligible to all speakers of African languages. It is often intelligible to Nguni speakers, but not to Sotho speakers. White miners have to learn it. As a result, the mine managements decided to teach Fanakalo to all new recruits in the 1950's. Analogies were drawn between Fanakalo and Ogden's Basic English a synthetic language the full title of which was British American Scientific International Commercial (the concept behind it was widely misinterpreted to mean simple English) among others by the mining industry who saw Fanakalo as a naturally-formed "Basic Nguni". (Cole, 1953, p.1)

The example from the Rand Mines mining group illustrates how the pidgin was integrated into the industry. In a report, written by the chief training officer of Rand Mines in 1951, Fanakalo was described as

> a new language based on the Nguni group, with the inclusion of words and modified words from Afrikaans, English, German, Portuguese and other European languages. Its grammatical forms are simplifications of the Nguni group of languages, the spelling is phonetic and the clicks of the Nguni language are not used.

(Rand Mines, T/D 1/51, MWC)

The sense of Fanakalo as "new" and worthy of promotion is typified in a popular song of the 1950s in South Africa: "Fanakalo - the magic word from Zulu-Land". This enthusiastic promotion of a pidgin contrasted dramatically with the difficulties faced elsewhere in the world during the 1950s in sustaining the idea that pidgins and creoles had a significant role to play in society. (Hall, 1966, p.142) However, the success of Fanakalo cannot be compared with the apparently benign intentions to promote pidgins and creoles in other parts of the world.

Fanakalo instruction was introduced with the express aim of educating miners for occupational purposes and not simply to promote an existing pidgin, as many miners do not speak Fanakalo on entering the industry. Management was aware that they would have to teach Fanakalo to

> those who do not speak a language of the Nguni group and therefore do not speak Fanakalo. They have to be taught a completely new language. (Rand Mines, T/D 1/51, MWC)

The teaching of Fanakalo was (and still is) integrated into initial job training on the mines. On arrival at the training school, the men are introduced to a series of posters and the first lessons of Fanakalo consist of naming objects that they have encountered on the mines. An example of the initiation (taken from Randmines in the 1950's) consists of approximately one hundred words during the first 24 hours on the mine. Simple actions, such as stand, sit, walk, put on, and take off, are taught in Fanakalo. The entire process of becoming a miner is bound up with that of learning Fanakalo. (Rand Mines, T/D 1/51,MWC)

A second series of lessons includes the Fanakalo a miner uses from the time he awakens, goes to the shaft, into the cage and underground. This increases the vocabulary by about 40 words and covers activities such as putting on protective clothing and travelling underground. A third series concerns surface procedures. These start from the end of the shift to the time the miner goes to bed, and includes health issues. A fourth series deals with drinking water facilities underground, telephones, air pressure metres, water control valves, overhead wires, etc. A final series deals with specific job training, such as pipe fitting and all semi-skilled categories of work which are filled by migrants. (Rand Mines, T/D, 1/51 MWC) The counterpart to this training is that of the white miner, who learns the Fanakalo necessary for instruction and for understanding the role of the African miners in his charge. (Fanakalo for Europeans, 1960, MWC)

This process of language training was seen to be a major solution to improving social relations and safety underground. However, closer scrutiny presents a picture of Orwellian Newspeak, which rigidly defines social relations between supervisory, semi-skilled and unskilled levels with the language for nearly all tasks on the mines carefully defined.

Fanakalo was being contemplated, and in fact for a time was used, as a vehicle for literacy in the 1950s. This idea was forestalled when significant challenges were developed by linguists who approved its use as an oral means of communication but objected to its use for literacy. (Lanham, 1978, p.26) The intervention here by linguists in the early 1950s is an illustration of the degree to which political and social goals motivate the practice of linguistic science. (Linell, 1982, p.1)

Examination of the structure of Fanakalo led Cole, a leading linguist of the 1950s and expert on comparative Bantu linguistics, to detail the following arguments against its consideration as a Bantu language. (Cole, 1953, p.1; the discussion here is confined to a few salient arguments presented by Cole.)

In phonological terms, stress and tone differ markedly from Bantu languages. Zulu and all other Bantu languages are tone languages, whereas none of the features of tone has been retained in Fanakalo. Secondly the stress system in Bantu languages is on the penultimate syllable; in contrast, the stress system in Fanakalo approximates to that of English. There are structural and grammatical factors too. In Zulu, for example, there are eight noun classes, consisting of 15 prefixes. None of these is retained in Fanakalo. Another feature of difference is that Fanakalo has an article absent in Bantu languages.

As a result of these and other differences, treated the idea of untrained mine managements - that Fanakalo represented a "Basic Nguni" - as an affront to speakers of Bantu languages. (Cole, 1953, p.7) Such arguments militated against Fanakalo acquiring the status of a language and, therefore, against its use for literacy and educational purposes. However, its use as a lingua franca in oral communication on the mines was commended by Cole.

His critique coincided with overall language planning by apartheid ideologues: the majority of migrant workers came from "homeland" areas, whose sense of "national identity" they wished to promote. The orthography and the development of literacy for each ethnolinguistic group could, it was hoped, promote this desired sense of nationalism. Further, such a critique helped to prevent any conflict which might have arisen had Fanakalo been given equal status with the official languages for the purpose of training skilled labour. For example, as pointed out above, examinations for blasting certificates must be taken in English or Afrikaans to this day.

° The South African Institute of Race Relations, a research body funded largely by mining capital (Bird, 1984, p.203) was in the forefront of adult educational initiatives in the post World War II period. The originator of the SAIRR scheme was also the central figure in the development of Fanakalo programmes on the gold mines, Maida Whyte. The programme for Fanakalo described above was devised by her. (Rand Leases Memo, 1951, p.23, MWC)

The SAIRR formed a committee in the 1940s to develop methods and materials for a national adult literacy programme. Whyte initially adopted a number of methods then available, among them Edward Roux's "Easy English for Africans". (Secretary of Education to M. Whyte, 27/6/46; MWC) The SAIRR gave as its rationale for involvement in the scheme the following:

> While an appeal must be based on justice and Christian principle....can South Africa.... afford economically to carry this burden of illiteracy? South Africa has been urged to develop secondary industry in order to offset a possible decline in gold production but the post-war world is going to see intense economic competition for markets and South Africa is already heavily handicapped. (Cited in Bird, 1984, p.201)

This "moral" initiative, based on sound economic motives, initially attracted the SAIRR to the literacy methods of Frank Laubach, which went by the slogan, "Each one, teach one for Christ". However, it soon became apparent that this method was confined to vernacular literacy, and this could not be the goal in a context where literacy in an official language was imperative. Other methods and materials were tried out in the night schools which had grown up in the major cities, some of them independent, others set up by the SAIRR, which latter were expressly apolitical.

The SAIRR initiative was outflanked by the state's own educational designs. Nevertheless, it was developing literacy methods for all ethnolinguistic groups, and Whyte continued to promote the idea of a national literacy programme, looking to the "benign colonialism" in the pre-independence literacy programmes in Zambia and Malawi as potential models for South Africa to emulate. (Correspondence, 1956, MWC) A central concern of this literacy programme was to prevent the circulation of "undesirable literature" (Annual reports, 1949-57, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, MWC). However, she and the SAIRR were unable to persuade the state to take responsibility for such a scheme, and kept the SAIRR initiative alive by expanding its literacy committee to include representatives not only from its more traditional liberal supporters, but also from state ideologues, such as those in the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs. The latter used this position to achieve equal recognition for Afrikaans and English literacy materials for adult workers.

In the end, Whyte's most productive links were forged with the mining industry. She was instrumental in setting up the independent Bureau of Literacy and Literature (BLL), which evolved out of the SAIRR literacy committee into an Association not for Gain in 1964. From then on, inital literacy in Bantu languages on the mines was conducted almost wholly by this one organisation. The programmes were entirely voluntary, and seen by management to have a "welfare" function: at that time, the mining industry did not need to promote literacy for training purposes. These "welfare" programmes continued largely

unchanged until recently, with initial literacy being followed by a choice between English or Afrikaans. English is usually chosen by the workers, and for some has provided a degree of social mobility to clerical jobs and surface work. Literacy teachers were drawn from among the migrant workers in the compounds and trained to use materials and methods that have changed only slightly over the years. These vernacular materials possess the following features:

1. Material consists of a pre-primer and three or four primers.
2. There is a narrative which runs from the beginning of the first primer right through the series.
3. Pictures are used to assist word association.
4. Whole words and sentences are used from the beginning, on the grounds that words and sentences mean something, whereas letters and symbols mean little in their own right.
5. New words come in very gradually, only one or two in each lesson. Every lesson must be known perfectly before the student goes on to the next lesson.
6. Each student learns as an individual, and proceeds at his own pace. (Adapted from BLL/0177/I/M.2, n.d.)

The trainer introduces a picture to the learner, and the learner attempts to read the word which is then told to him. This is followed by boxes, containing a breakdown of the syllables contained in the word, which the trainer reads to the learner, who then reads them on his own. This method is duplicated for all vernaculars, although the narratives vary from one ethnolinguistic group to the next. This complies with an overall pattern of social control within the mining industry, which recognises and fosters a tribal ("national") identity. The inflexibility of the material and methods allow for a determination of the content of the literature by which the migrant worker becomes literate. The drawings in the booklets present a "rural iconography", and reflect little of the experiences of the migrant as a worker in the mines.

The fundamental assumption in the materials and methods is that the oral and literate learning process resides in intrinsic factors to be found in a specific language and culture. The "oral consensus" methods, which developed out of the work of the American anthropologically-based school of structural linguistics, (Howatt, 1984, p.250), accord with other identifiable ideological frameworks of social control in the mining industry, where migrant workers are housed in compounds which are divided on an ethnolinguistic basis, a factor which militates against worker solidarity.

The relatively uncontrolled approach to literacy outlined above was to change in the 1970s and 1980s. Declining profitability, due in part to reduced levels of foreign investment and intensified worker struggles, as well as perceived skills shortages, made it imperative for the mines to change the racist division of labour. (Chisholm, 1984, p.394) The removal of discriminatory barriers to African job advancement in particular is often promoted by mine management as a solution to 'skills shortages'. Some analysts have asserted, however, that the claim of skills shortages is in fact a way of undermining the white trade union by introducing African labour into technical and supervisory positions at lower rates of pay, thus cutting production costs. (Webster, 1983, p.199) Conflicts within the Afrikaner Mynwerkers Unie in the 1970s left the union considerably weakened and less able to oppose the inevitable changes in the job colour bar.

Briefly, the underground production process is conducted by African workers in groups of ten (groups can be considerably larger), with a team leader assigned to each group. For every three groups of African workers, there is a white miner with a blasting certificate, who is paid on the basis of a production quota. He holds a supervisory position and has been crucial to mine management, both in the production process and for control over worker discipline. (Thompson, 1984, p.139) Faced with the formation in 1983 of the National Union of Mineworkers, which articulated more militant wage demands as well as demands for the removal of racist job categories, mine management began to introduce 'skills' training amongst African workers. Chisholm describes such situations as follows:

> Given rising wages...the nature of the worker's application to the job becomes of paramount importance. S/he has to be motivated, efficient and stable. Here the assertion of ideological control by capital over workers becomes critical. It is this tension between the need to maintain profitability and the need for different ideological controls over a changing kind of labour force that seems to be of crucial importance. (Chisholm, 1984, p.394)

Writers on education in South Africa have come to question the notion of "skill"; frequently, the skills that are promoted are social skills such as work discipline, boosting production, etc. The "changing kind of labour force" mentioned by Chisholm has a direct application to the situation on the mines: the team leaders amongst the African workers became targets of a new initiative, as shown above, a much more directed approach to English literacy than the previous welfare programmes had offered.

English literacy programmes have been initiated throughout the gold mining industry. Baucom contracted to many of the mining houses,

although some have established their own schemes. For example, Anglovaal Limited, at its Hartebeestfontein mine, established an Adult Education Unit to develop literacy and numeracy courses, in anticipation of the impending removal of racial restrictions on the acquisition of blasting certificates. Literacy was defined as mother tongue as well as English literacy. The Unit estimated that 3 236 of 5 520 of the leadership group in the 18 000-strong African workforce on the mine did not meet the job-specific literacy and numeracy criteria. It therefore recommended,

> 1. "Remedial" (sic) adult education should be given to those employees who do not yet meet the necessary requirements
> 2. Three different levels of literacy and numeracy classes be conducted
> 3. The language of instruction be English
> (Anglovaal, Lizamore and Merry Report, 1983, p.9)

Although it is based on Baucom's methods, there are distinctions between this literacy programme and the one operating on Rand Mines. It promotes the vernacular literacy programmes run in the hostels by BLL, and makes the completion of such a course the prerequisite for entry onto the English literacy course. Also, this course lays greater emphasis on reading ability. Like the Rand Mines scheme, it stresses English literacy, which, it is believed, will

> i. increase the worker's communicative ability;
> ii. raise his social status among fellow workers;
> iii. enhance relationships with people of other races with whom he has to work;
> iv. tighten the bond between employer and employee. The employer is showing an interest in him... (Anglovaal/Hartebeestfontein, 1983, p.34)

The experience of the Rand Mines group is more representative of the new English literacy initiative, in that it chose to implement Baucom's methods of English literacy teaching. What made it attractive to management was that, according to Baucom, workers could become functionally literate (that is, literate in English) in the same amount of time as it would take them to become literate in their mother tongue despite being unable to read or write.. (Baucom, 1978b)

Investigations of the efficacy of the "welfare" literacy scheme, as well as research into leadership amongst unskilled migrant workers, led to two important conclusions for Rand Mines management. The first was that the "welfare" programme was ineffectual and that literacy was

not sustained in the vernacular. A researcher for the Rand Mines detailed the following limitations of the BLL literacy programme:

- Teachers are on average extremely poor quality and cannot be expected to teach even a passable standard of English, at their present level of qualifications (very few have attended the BLL one week course)
- Attendance at classes is voluntary
- A high drop-out rate has been observed
- Literacy organisations claim that functional literacy can be taught in 100-150 hours. This does not happen
- Teachers are completely unaware of available resources by way of books, posters, teaching aids, etc.
- Only two mines actually issue certificates stating that the student has passed a literacy test
- There is no management involvement
- In all cases literacy teaching is purely a welfare function
- Literacy is taught in almost any of the various vernacular languages, i.e. the home language of a Swazi, Zulu, S. Sotho, Shangaan, Malawian, etc.
- The vernacular languages taught have very little use on the mines, except for limited application, eg. writing letters to the family (sic) (RMTC, Ross-Adams Report, 1980, pp. 4, 11)

The second finding, more significant for mine management, was the discovery that there was no direct relationship between leadership amongst unskilled workers and levels of literacy. In other words, a literate migrant worker could be found doing menial work such as sweeping, while an illiterate worker could be a team leader, in charge of a number of men. (Baucom, 1978, p.27) (This situation is very similar to that found by Graff in his Canadian study.) The table below presents some of the evidence from two mines in the Rand Mines group, Durban Deep (D.D.) and East Rand Primary Mine (E.R.P.M.).

Job group	No. of illiterate workers		% of workforce by job group	
	D.D.	E.R.P.M.	D.D.	E.R.P.M.
1	1 144	895	75	82
2	531	3 566	72	77
3	3 399	2 897	73	74

4	1 010	1 936	71	63
5	246	772	59	70
6	236	271	69	62
7	793	394	74	70
8	97	126	86	84
TOTAL	7 456	10 857		
AVERAGE			73	73
TOTAL W/FORCE	10 273	14 894		

a. As can be seen from the table, the trend is reasonably consistent showing an overall range from 59% to 86% in the numbers of illiterates, but an average of 73%
b. Surprisingly, it was found that as skill level increased, there was NOT a corresponding increase in education as there should have been
c. A "chi square" analysis showed that there was no relationship between the level of education and Job Groups
d. The indications are that there exists a random distribution as far as education and Job Groups are concerned
e. Estimates of illiteracy of 70% can be made. (RMTC, Ross-Adams Report, 1980, p.5)

On the basis of such evidence, management decided to promote and finance an English literacy and numeracy scheme for leadership levels of the migrant workforce. This, it was argued, would give select workers access to an official language and promote equal opportunities with white workers. In fact, the new system represented a narrowing of opportunities, as the BLL programmes, which had been available to all who chose to make use of them, were discontinued on a number of mines(particularly on Anglo American mines). Generally, a higher priority seemed to be given to specific spoken situations in the course advocated, although its stated aim was English literacy. This was argued for on the grounds that Fanakalo, the ubiquitous pidgin, did not allow sufficient cognitive and communicative skills. (Although as pointed out above it seemed adequate for Portuguese workers to attain entry to skilled work when they were unable to read or write in English or Afrikaans.)

> when the work method moves into the use of highly technical methods and terminology. Measurements, concepts and higher order mental skills necessitate a more complex language-communication system. (RMTC, Ross-Adams Report, 1980, p.12)

For the purposes of implementing the English literacy scheme, the "functional literacy" programme developed by Baucom was marketed widely within the industry. Unlike BLL's material, this course was designed to be intensively taught during working hours. A placement test is administered to all trainees, in order to categorise them according to their English language (written and spoken) and numeracy abilities. The trainees are then given one of two programmes, depending on their categorisation.

The Beginner programme consists of 50 lessons of two hours each, plus 25 revision lessons, also of two hours each. (This makes a total of 150 hours of tuition.) The Intermediate programme consists of 47 lessons of two hours each, plus three revision lessons of two hours each (a total of 100 hours of tuition). As the target group of learners is a selected group of team leaders, they may not be literate in their mother tongue before the course.

The development of this programme is in accordance with some of the principles of functional/notional syllabus design. The following list provides examples of the "semantic and behavioural prediction, which sets up the overall objectives". (Wilkins, 1976, p.64)

Giving instructions
Receiving instructions
Offering to help
Asking for help
Apologising for a mistake
Accepting an apology for a mistake
Appropriate greetings
Introducing people
Explaining absenteeism
Explaining a problem
Discussing a personal problem
Not understanding an instruction
Explaining why something was forgotten
Explaining work preference
Explaining grievances
Expressing gratitude
Expressing sympathy
Expressing fear
Asking for permission
Understanding a payslip
Filling in forms
Identifying self
(RMTC, Watters Report, 1983, p.32)

The course gives priority to the spoken language, although written forms are also considered. However, on a field trip to the Rand Mines, the following types of interchange were recorded in the teaching

practices of the English literacy and numeracy class:

> Teacher: This team leader is not strong, but is...
> Workers (Chorus): Weak.
> Teacher: Sorry? (Does not hear)
> Workers (Chorus): Weak.
> Teacher: How do you spell that?
> Workers (Chorus): W-E-A-K
> Teacher: I want to be a strong team leader.
> (Flexes muscles.)
> Workers (Chorus): I want to be a strong team leader....
> (Recorded by D.Brown, E.R.P.M., July, 1984)

This exchange cannot be predicted as a semantic or behavioural need of the learner - the criterion for defining a functional/notional syllabus. (Wilkins, 1976, p.23) The only situation of language use which the learner can be preparing for is to convince himself of his ability!

The overall nature of the course is very eclectic, incorporating grammar teaching and a degree of reading, although this was clearly given a low priority: very little reading material is included in the course.

Perhaps the most candid explanation of this form of literacy programme is given by the designer himself, when he describes the psychological needs of the worker and the role which literacy plays in satisfying these needs. Baucom claims that he seeks a coincidence in the needs of the worker and the company:

> Frankly... the majority of people who go to literacy classes in industry will not get promotion. The factors which give satisfaction tend to be factors of self-actualization, self-concept, self-esteem... The basic value of literacy programmes is not that they will develop all the skills necessary for industry, but rather that if we can provide a work situation which meets both the needs of the company and of the individual then both the well-being of the individual and of the company will prosper. I believe that literacy programmes can play a role in providing that situation ... (Baucom, 1978, pp.32-3)

An examination of the sociolinguistic context of Rand Mines in relation to language choice and language use is necessary before the full implications of the English literacy scheme can be assessed.

There is a particular pattern of communication between underground supervisors (white and usually Afrikaans-speaking) and African workers. The table below, based on a sample of 142 African workers in the Rand Mines group, reflects the language choice of the latter:

Language	To colleagues	To supervisors	To friends
English	9	39	12
Afrikaans	5	50	5
Fanakalo	90	63	40
Bantu Ls	62	9	128

In some cases, the totals add up to more than 142, because workers code-switched in some situations.
(RMTC, Watters Report, 1983, p. 33)

As can be seen, Fanakalo is used most commonly to supervisors, with Afrikaans next in frequency. English is very seldom used. Afrikaner supervisors displayed the following pattern of language choice:

Language	To supervisors		To subordinates	
	Verbal	Written	Verbal	Written
English	34	41	23	29
Afrikaans	29	12	20	10
Fanakalo	0	0	2	0
Bantu Ls	0	0	2	0

(RMTC, Watters Report, 1983, p.33)

For this group, communication, if written, is most likely to be in English (although the frequency is not significantly greater than Afrikaans). Afrikaans occurs most frequently in spoken form.

It may be concluded that Fanakalo, still used in the induction programmes, is the dominant form of oral communication in the workplace. The stratified system of communication, whereby Bantu languages are used by African migrants among friends, Fanakalo and Afrikaans in the workplace as oral forms and English for written purposes, creates intractible problems for the promotion of spoken English within the mining industry, and one can readily see the mismatch between the English literacy programmes promoted by mine management and actual language use in the work situation.

Fanakalo is for the Afrikaner miner a neutral variety of language, which allows social relations between himself and African mine workers to be sustained. Corroboration for this can be found in the lack of co-operation from supervisory workers in the implementation of the English literacy programmes. (RMTC, Watters Report, 1983, p.15) It is the interrelationship between literacy, Fanakalo and the official languages which will help to perpetuate unequal social relations. Here is an explanation of restrictive social practice by the use of language, in both oral and literate forms:

> If language acquisition can be used as an instrument of upward mobility, the converse is also true, that is, the exclusive possession of certain language abilities can be regarded as a technique of perpetuating oligarchic control. If a particular language(s) is the exclusive language of education, and if it is the essential medium of controlling technical information, it may for this very reason also keep people in their place and this guarantees a larger share of control for a privileged few. It is no wonder, therefore, that language policies are regarded by so many people as being the touchstone of class mobility and the guarantee of personal rights. (Nida and Wonderly, 1971, p.73)

The new policies of the mine management, in choosing English as the language of literacy for a select group of African workers, supposedly to promote equal opportunity vis-a-vis Afrikaner miners, are in fact separating the targeted group from rank-and-file workers and forming them into a new labour aristocracy, with access to English literacy the criterion for entry. For reasons of social control, it is important that the mines create such aspirations for a section of the African workforce. Although in practical terms Baucom is probably correct that the majority of those completing the courses will never get promotion, the new labour aristocracy could have a powerful role to play in controlling rank-and-file workers as the white miners' role in this regard continues to weaken. (See Chisholm, 1984, p. 400) From a language point of view, the implication of this situation is that English literacy, used in such a way, becomes a language of class aspiration par excellence. In addition, it must be remembered that where the "welfare" vernacular literacy schemes have been discontinued and Fanakalo is perpetuauted through induction, the difference in communication skills between the leader group and the rest of the African workforce will increase.

It is interesting to note that the implementaton of the English literacy schemes on Rand Mines occurred between 1980 and 1983. During that period, the National Union of Mineworkers was formed and beginning to recruit members. Its initial strategy was to aim at the team leaders, through which it was hoped, rank-and-file workers would be encouraged to join. However, the union was unsuccessful. A difference in wages and an ambiguous relationship with the rank-and-file made team-leaders unreceptive to union organisation. (Thompson, 1984, p.160) According to Thompson the strategy changed to the recruitment of machinists essentially unskilled but a lucrative job category(ibid). The English literacy scheme, justified by management on the basis of promoting "higher order mental skills", and furthering the advancement of workers in the industry, clearly reinforces a trend of social stratification already in progress among African workers.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to explore language and literacy policies on the South African goldmines. Harvey Graff's pioneering study of literacy and its ideological role in industrialisation has been the basis of the approach but it has been extended to a multilingual context. Consequently, changing socio-economic needs of the industry have been shown to be reflected in changing language and literacy policies. Further, the study has shown that the resolution of questions concerning language and literacy within the industry are aimed at the acculturation and aspirations of a section of the workers in order to extend ideological and social control over the workers as a whole. This provides further evidence for those writers who contend that perceived skills shortages preceed an extension of mechanisms of social and ideological control over the workers. Alternative conceptions of literacy and language policies in South Africa require investigation of their history and development taking into account the specific industry and region. It is hoped that this study is a small step in that direction.

BAUCOM, K. 1978 " The needs for literacy in commerce and industry" in Hauptfleisch, T.(Ed.) Literacy in South Africa,pp. 27-33. Pretoria

BAUCOM, K. 1978b Report on Adult Literacy and Language instruction in South Africa. presented to Vice Chancellor , University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

BICKERTON, D. 1980 The Roots of language Karoma

BIRD, A. 1984 " The adult night school movements for blacks on the Witwatersrand, 1920-1980 in Kallaway P.(ed) Apartheid and Education pp. 192-221 Johannesburg, Ravan Press.

CHISHOLM, L. 1984 "Redefining skills: black education in South Africa in the 1980's" in Kallaway, P (Ed) Apartheid and educationpp. 387 410 Johannesburg, Ravan Press

HWS 38

COLE,D.T. 1953 "Fanakalo and the Bantu languages in South Africa" in African Studies 12,1.

GOODY J. AND WATT I. 1981 "The consequences of literacy" in Goody,J. Ed. Literacy and Traditional Societies,pp.27-68 Cambridge, CUP

GRAFF, H 1979 "Literacy, jobs, and industrialisation: the 19th century" in Graff, h. (Ed.)Literacy and social development in the west:a reader pp.232-260 Cambridge ,CUP.

HALL, R. 1966 Pidgin and Creole languages. Cornell, Cornell University Press

HOWATT, A.P.R. 1984 A history of English language teaching Oxford , Oxford University Press

LANHAM, L.W. 1978 An outline history of the languages of Southern Africa in Lanham L.W. and K.P. Prinsloo (Eds) Language and communication studies in South Africa,pp13-28. Cape Town, Oxford University Press.

LINELL P. 1982 The written bias in linguistics. University of Linkoping

NIDA, E. AND WONDERLY W.L. 1971 "Communication roles of language in multilingual societies" in Whitely, W. (Ed.)Language use and social change. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

THOMPSON(C) 1984 "Black trade unions on the mines" in South African Research Service (Ed.) South African Review 2pp.156-164.Johannesburg,Ravan Press

WILKINS D.A. 1976 National Syllabuses Oxford OUP

MAIDA WHYTE Collection of papers (MWC) Archives, University of the Witwatersrand

Bureau of Literacy and literature papers (BLL)

Rand mines training centre reports (RMTC)

"MULTICOPY" Durban