

## **Abstract**

Historically, language in South Africa was politicized and used as an oppressive tool to control and limit black development through racially repressive laws under colonization and the apartheid regime which favoured the development of Afrikaans and English. The advancement of indigenous languages has been prioritized in the post-apartheid society as a transformative mechanism. Language diversity in South Africa is supported by the democratic Constitution (1996) and is overseen by policies adopted by government and institutions such as Higher Education Institutions.

This study adopted a qualitative case study to explore how language diversity policy, as a transformative instrument, is interpreted and implemented within HEIs. The study used the University of the Witwatersrand as a case study and analysed its 2014 Language Policy. The research aimed to explore the link between higher education language policies and transformation. It also aimed to explore the university's choice of primary language of instruction, how it promotes academic development through language diversity, and the implementation of its language policy.

The findings of this study revealed a disjuncture between the objectives set by government and the actual implementation of language policies which advocate for the advancement of indigenous languages in HEIs. The study concludes that government is not giving enough financial and epistemological support to HEIs to develop indigenous languages. The 2014 Wits Language Policy was found to be merely a symbolic document which has not brought substantive changes. Furthermore, the 2014 Wits Language Policy is not implemented through practical parameters which meet the aspirations set by the policy. It, therefore, does not attend to issues around language use, university culture, or demonstrate the significance of indigenous languages at Wits nor facilitate language as a transformative tool to rectify the imbalances of the past.