Restandardisation: Rethinking standardisation for the future

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The 80s and 90s of the previous century saw several international political and social developments that gave rise to a decreased mention of "correct" or "good" language (Van der Horst 2009:11). These include the end of communism, the opening of borders and a subsequent development towards political integration in Europe, the end of apartheid in South Africa, etc. (Clyne 1993:11). This democratisation of the world leads to the increased valuing and validation of variation, in particular language variation (Clyne 1993:22). Furthermore, globalisation gave rise to a worldwide ethnic Renaissance with a focus on the nurturing of diversity (Huss & Lindgren, 2011:11).

Given the international tendency towards democracy in which equal human rights and the value of multilingualism are fostered, the relevance of standard languages, which are undeniably ideological in nature, can increasingly be questioned. Does a language variety which only serves the economic, social and political elite of the speech community still have a right of existence in a democratic society? This paper aims to answer this question by showing that, if standard languages are to remain relevant in a democratised world, it would require a rethinking of standard languages by means of restandardisation.

This paper takes a look at how restandardisation can be utilised as a tool to transform the standard language in order to serve the entire speech community by providing a model for restandardisation. On the one hand this model, which aims to provide a practical framework by means of which future standardisation efforts can be undertaken, is based on existing sociolinguistic and language planning theory. On the other hand it aims to represent a broader perspective on language planning by showing that restandardisation demands a more holistic approach to standardisation than was undertaken in the past, in which all stakeholders and external factors are being considered.

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