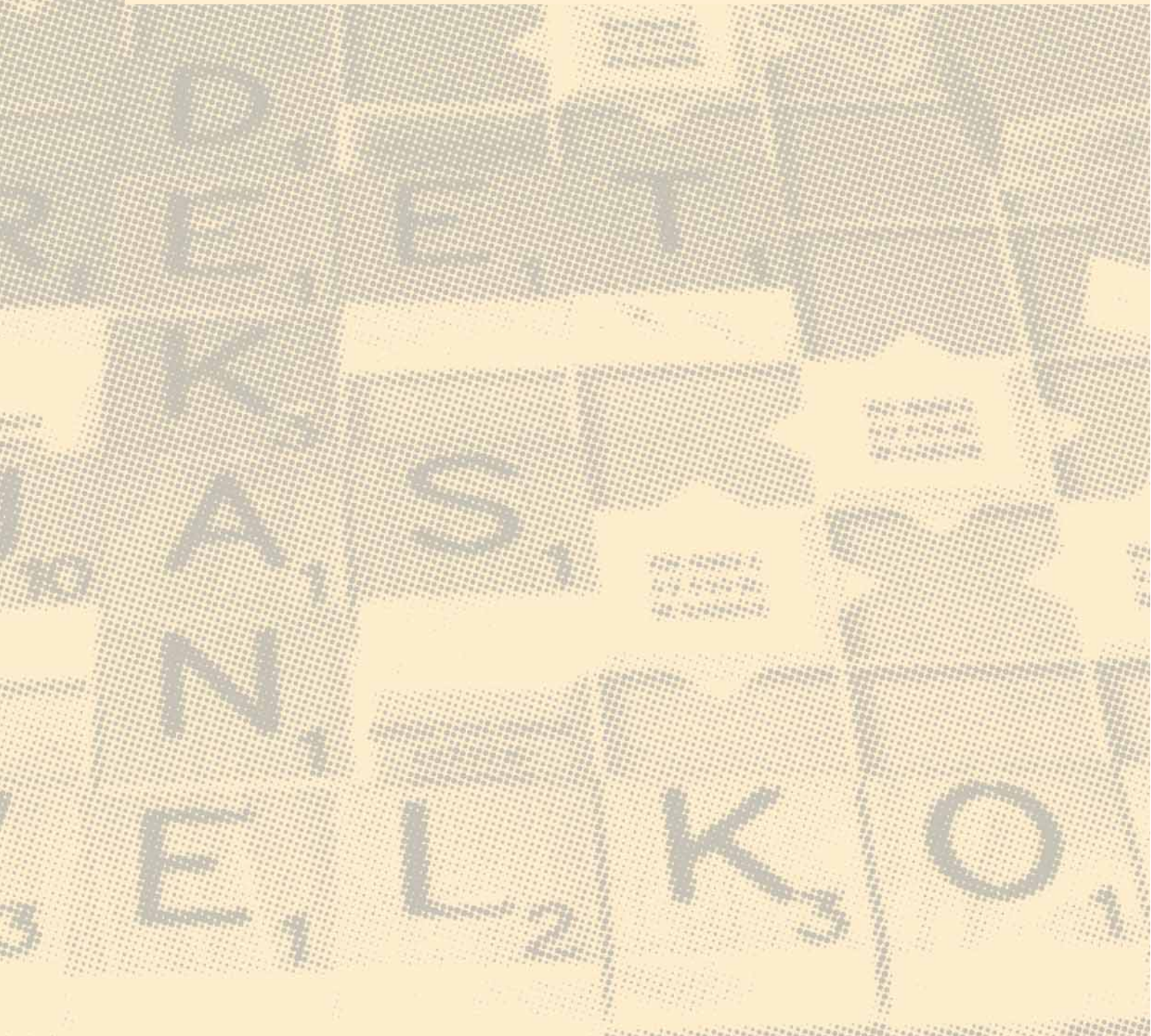


Museums and the Intangible Heritage : the Case Study of the Afrikaans Language Museum

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Introduction

Two issues are addressed in this paper, namely the problem of representing heritage that is totally intangible in a museum 'exhibition', and the issue of the Afrikaans language and its place within the many officially recognized languages of the new South Africa. The two issues are linked in this analysis of the current exhibition in the Afrikaans Language Museum in Paarl, South Africa.

Having been involved in museums for the past two to three decades in different ways, from an academic as well as a popular viewpoint, in theory and in practice, I have always been very much aware of the importance of acknowledging and exhibiting intangible culture. I remain astonished that the literature on museums to a great extent still focuses very largely on material culture and in many cases totally ignores the existence of the perhaps intimately intangible culture. For example the Museums Association of the UK, still defines a museum as an institution which "collect, safeguard and make accessible *artefacts and specimens [my emphasis]*, which they hold in trust for society", while the International Council of Museums (ICOM) only added references to the intangible heritage and cultural centres to its definition of a museum in October 2004. However, on the positive side,

the 2006 meeting of States Parties to the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention of 2003 nominated ICOM as one of five recognized expert non-governmental advisory organisations to assist in the implementation of the Convention.

Languages are recognised in the Convention as one of the most important aspects of the intangible heritage of peoples, not just because of their intrinsic interest, but also because it is through language that so many important manifestations of the intangible heritage are transmitted from generation to generation.

Exhibiting the intangible heritage

Perhaps the most important problem that will be addressed in this article is the need to exhibit or otherwise present intangible culture or heritage in a way that will interest and involve the general visitor, while still achieving a well-researched and educationally valuable display. It is therefore necessary to reflect shortly on the concept of the intangible heritage in the context of museums and museum exhibitions. The research methodology followed in this quest was to compare the findings of a literature investigation of this topic to a case study, namely that of the Afrikaans Language Museum,

at Paarl, South Africa, which is in its entirety a museum of intangible heritage.

Intangible culture or heritage can be presented in museums in two different ways. Firstly it is in my opinion almost impossible to exhibit and explain artefacts meaningfully without providing the context of the customs and other aspects of the intangible culture that form the environment within which these artefacts belong. This need has received much more attention in recent years than a few decades ago. For example, George Abungu, former Director General of the National Museums of Kenya, put a lot of emphasis on this in his 2005 interview with Medeia Sogor of *Atmusephere*, saying: "intangible provides the meaning for the tangible." (Abungu 2005). He also makes clear in the same interview that in his opinion museum officials should go beyond the academic evidence to obtain direct from the community the meaning that had always been part of a specific object up to the point that the object had been moved to the museum. However, in the second instance the intangible heritage can and should also be exhibited or preserved in its own right: as a song, a custom, folk belief, folk dance or language.

I believe that there are several reasons for the fact that this principle was seriously neglected in the past. Certainly among the most important reasons was a tradition which can be traced back to the very beginning of museums. Once again I find that Abungu agrees with this view, saying: "Museums have cases of problems with the intangible because the way they have been founded and created was to show the most beautiful, the most spectacular, the greatest of all, and the unique that appeal to your eyes" (Abungu, 2005). Another reason is that it is much more difficult to display intangible heritage: this demands considerable imagination and

maybe more technical aids than the display of works of art or other physical museum objects.

Several leading works on museums of the past decade or so that have been consulted do not refer at all to intangible culture in museums or suggest even vaguely that it exists as a museological issue. Their common point of departure is that museums are there to collect, research and display material culture (e.g. Moore 1994 & 1997, and Macdonald 1998, Falk & Dierking 2000). This impression is confirmed by the Vice-Director of the Chinese Cultural Relics Bureau, Beijing, Mr Shu, when he stated, "Museums have traditionally been a space in which material evidence of the past is collected, conserved and displayed. However practices, ideas, knowledge and skills associated with these objects have received little attention for a long time. I believe that the issue of intangible heritage is one of the most important areas for the museum profession to explore in the years ahead." (Shu, 2004).

However, there is a reference in the work of Margaret May, in her chapter "Exhibition ideas: integrating the voices of communities and audiences" (May, 2002) refers to the use of stories that speak to the audiences. It seems that she refers here to information and contributions from communities that could highlight certain exhibitions (the first capacity), rather than stories in the sense of folk tales or individual experiences (the second capacity). The latter is what the museum in the case study attempts to display. In the few other references found to intangible heritage or oral history, it was noted that it was always the first capacity mentioned, namely the context of the material object that received the attention: nowhere does there seem to be references to the complete displays of intangible culture. For example, in ICOM's *Museum Basics* the

authors state: “researchers use oral history techniques [...] when researching books or exhibitions, or simply when researching the background of objects in the museum’s collections” (Ambrose and Paine, 1994, pp. 147-148). It has therefore been very difficult to measure or test the case study against the existing literature for purposes of display or transmission methods. General museum and exhibition principles could however be tested.

In South Africa the term *oral history* is such a “buzz” phrase nowadays, that each and everybody connected to the discipline of history, museums, archives, certain government departments and several other institutions wants to conduct oral history surveys and recording projects. Although this may sound promising it is a pity that the concept is not always fully understood and its depth not fully exploited. A part of the problem is the employment of field workers or interviewers who are not properly trained. I am aware that many institutions worldwide use volunteers for oral history projects. For example, Ambrose and Paine (1994, p. 147) also refer to “groups of enthusiasts doing oral history work”, but others, including me, cannot accept this approach as scientific. In my experience interviewers have to have a complete understanding of the academic background of the discipline in which they work (may it be history, cultural history, folklore, ethnology or sociology), and the theories and methodology of that discipline, to be able to do proper fieldwork and interviewing.

At the Department of Cultural History at South Africa’s University of Stellenbosch (which was amalgamated with the Department of History in 1999) oral history projects have been conducted for almost four decades. This is not a new concept, as the website of the UK-based Oral History Society seems to imply in claiming that “No longer are we dependent only on the written word” (<http://www.oralhistory.org.uk>) as if oral history is a totally new invention. In fact, for centuries we have not been dependent only on the written word. For many ages, local history, community events, folklore and genealogy have been transmitted orally through generations, and the recording of these date back many centuries. Also, as a result of this work done by the Stellenbosch Department of Cultural History among others, some museums in South Africa have been made aware of the intangible heritage and its significance, and have been encouraged to incorporate information on this in their normal exhibitions. The attention due to intangible

heritage was further enhanced in South Africa’s National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 which enforces the conservation of living or intangible heritage (Act no 25 of 1999).

Languages in the Republic of South Africa today

The current exhibition in the Afrikaans Language Museum at Paarl, Western Cape Province, South Africa, needs to be seen against the background and in the context of an unusual language milieu with a long and politically influenced history. At present there are eleven official languages in South Africa, as detailed below (with the percentage of the population that speak the language as their first home language taken from (Van der Merwe & Van der Merwe 2006, p.15):

- isiZulu (23.8%)
- isiXhosa (17.6%)
- Afrikaans (13.3%)
- Sepedi (9.4%)
- Setswana (8.2%)
- English (8.2%)
- Sesotho (7.9%)
- Xitsonga (4.4%)
- Siswati (2.7%)
- Tshivenda (2.3%)
- isiNdebele (1.6%)

Afrikaans is therefore the third largest “first home” language in South Africa as a whole and is the home language of a majority of the population (55.3%) in the Western Cape Province, where the Afrikaans Language Museum is situated. The other two significant language groups of the Province are isiXhosa (23.7%) and English (19.3%) (Van der Merwe & Van der Merwe, 2006 p. 67).

Though Afrikaans is now established as a distinct and significant language in its own right, albeit one of the world’s youngest, the perception that prevails abroad and even within South Africa is that Afrikaans is just a simplification of Dutch, but this is far from correct. In the 17th century, after the colonisation of the Cape by the Dutch East India Company, the languages that contributed to the formation of a new local language were Dutch and to a lesser extent some of the Khoi languages and a little French brought by French Huguenot refugees who settled in the Western Cape from

the 17th century. In the 18th century German was added to these, as many, in fact most of the employees of the Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC - the Dutch East India Company) at this stage were Germans. However, the German influence was not very significant because these immigrants were mostly single men who married Dutch women (Trümpelmann in Pienaar 1968, p. 51) and therefore their children learnt to speak the already adapted form of Dutch. The German influence is most noticeable in Afrikaans first names and surnames (Combrink in Olivier & Coetzee 1994, p. 22-28).

Much more important in language terms, in the 18th century the numbers of slaves increased dramatically as they were imported from the Far East and the East Coast of Africa. It was the Malay language that added most to the emerging new local language, especially in the form of vocabulary. Achmat Davids is convinced that the origin of Afrikaans was in the creolisation of Dutch by free blacks, slaves, the lower ranks of Cape society, and the farmers, slaves and Khoi-Khoi in the interior (Davids in Olivier & Coetzee 1994, p.113). This is however only a superficial summary of the origin of Afrikaans: this is discussed in far greater depth in the work of J du P Scholtz, e.g. in his *Wording en ontwikkeling van Afrikaans* (Scholtz, 1980).

There have been later influences helping to create the Afrikaans that is spoken today. In the 1806 the British finally occupied the Cape and since then the English language has not only influenced Afrikaans, but helped to cause dissension between the respective main uses of the two European languages and between the peoples of South Africa in many ways: this was to last for two centuries through to the present day. During the 350 years since colonisation there have also been many Portuguese at the Cape, though the main influence of Portuguese was through Malay-Portuguese (Davids in Olivier & Coetzee 1994, p.117).

Since the settlers of European descent came into contact with the Nguni- and Sotho-speaking people of Africa at the beginning of the 19th century, these languages have also had some influence. There is not the space here to consider what all these influences were and how they contributed to form Afrikaans. Suffice to say that the result is a very poetic language with exceptional possibilities towards alliteration, rhyme and nuances of meaning, totally different from Dutch and other European languages, as perfectly illustrated in an article by Réna Pretorius, titled 'Die sêkrag van Afrikaans soos

weerspieël in die Afrikaanse poësie' [The power of expression of Afrikaans as reflected in Afrikaans poetry], (Pretorius, in Van Rensburg 2004, pp. 1-12).

Though Afrikaans, often referred to as "Cape Dutch", was spoken in the latter part of the 19th century by both white and "coloured" people alike (the coloured population being of mixed descent, mainly from Khoi-Khoi, with slaves and white settlers), it was still not an official language and did not exist in written form. It was with the object of formalising and gaining official recognition for it that an association with this aim was founded at Paarl in 1875: the *Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners* [Association of True Afrikaners] (discussed below). A long and hard road followed for the leaders of this and later movements seeking to gain recognition and acceptance of Afrikaans from the British then dominant in South Africa.

However, with the rise of the Afrikaner during the first decades of the 20th century, especially within politics and the economy, Afrikaans gradually evolved into a fully developed language able to serve the economy, politics, science, education, art and technology. The language was further boosted with the establishment of several newspapers, magazines and cultural organisations during the 2nd and 3rd decades of the 20th century. Under Act no 8 of 1925 Afrikaans was finally acknowledged alongside English as an official language of the then Union of South Africa under the British Crown (SESA 1970, vol.1, pp. 79-80). Unfortunately, by the early 20th century there had been major demographic changes within the Cape since the greater part of the Khoi-Khoi population had been wiped out by a number of smallpox epidemics during the 18th century, and the remainder of the population began mixing with the new populations arriving in the region, particularly slaves and white people, resulting in the almost total disappearance of Khoi-Khoi languages and culture as well.

There is no doubt that despite having had a powerful status, especially within government through much of the 20th century, Afrikaans is currently under threat at the official level. Despite its official recognition under the Constitution of eleven official languages under clause 6 of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and the requirement that the national and provincial governments must use a minimum of two official languages, in practice many government bodies actually enforce the use of English as their only working language within certain government departments. This trend is

particularly marked in the sphere of education that is targeted. The use of Afrikaans is in marked decline within universities and other higher education institutions, while the latest statistics show that in some Provinces the number of Afrikaans medium schools has fallen by up to almost 90% since 1993, (Rademeyer in *Die Burger*, 07/07/06). In very many cases the Afrikaans schools have been replaced or reorganised as either English medium-only schools or as double medium schools using English together with a local official language.

There have been political factors behind such changes. For example, very recently the prominent journalist and former Soweto activist Jovial Rantao, argued that Afrikaans was the “official language of a racist regime” in an article: “Government should do away with Afrikaans-medium schools” (*Cape Argus*, 23rd February 2007). In a reply to this in the same newspaper (5th March 2007), Prof. Christo Viljoen, Professor Emeritus and former Vice-Rector of Stellenbosch University, condemned such views saying: “It is pathetic that 10 years after democracy and attempts to reconciliation and nation building, a hate article such as that written by Jovial Rantao “ should be written, let alone published in a newspaper such as the Cape Argus”, and counters Rantao’s with claims lots of statistics as well as a quote from Bill of Rights of the 1996 Constitution.

Why a language museum?

In 1942 the inhabitants of the town Paarl in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, decided to erect a monument for the Afrikaans language, to establish a museum and to start a special study fund for students of Afrikaans. They started to collect funds for this monumental idea and in 1975 the Afrikaans Language Monument was inaugurated.

The original idea behind the Afrikaans Language Museum in the 1970’s was to honour the members and work of a society (the GRA: Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners-Association of True Afrikaners) originally founded in 1875 in Paarl. Their aims were to establish Afrikaans as a written language, to standardise the language and to start publishing in Afrikaans. The home of one of the leaders of this society, Gideon Malherbe, was bought and restored to serve as a museum, and furnished as near as possible to the original late 19th century appearance.

Since 2002 a lot of work has been done to create a completely new educational exhibition on the top floor of the building, while the period rooms and exhibits on the origins and history of the GRA and its founder members remain on the ground floor. The new upper floor exhibition can be seen as providing the Museum with an important additional function: to indicate that the Afrikaans language is dynamic and develops and adapts continuously as circumstances require (The Afrikaans Language Museum Brochure, 2003).

The Museum nowadays makes a lot of effort to reach out to South Africa’s other very varied language groups in. It presents several educational programmes that relate directly to the school syllabus and which are presented in all three significant official languages of the region, i.e. English and Xhosa as well as Afrikaans. Special programmes address speakers and students of all three languages, and in addition to its work on the Afrikaans language and wider multilingualism issues, they also address cultural diversity, as well as promoting poetry and public speaking competitions to encourage creativity.

The Museum makes very good use of the media to obtain their goals. For example, in co-operation with the University of Stellenbosch, the Language Museum assists in the development of electronic courses for non-Afrikaans speakers (C. Snel 2007: interview). This the longest-established language museum in South Africa, and almost certainly in the world. (The USA’s National Museum of Language has been under development since 1997 but does not yet have permanent accommodation; construction of a Chinese Language Museum began in the ancient city of Anyang in 2006, and in the same year the Portuguese Language Museum-which incorrectly calls itself the first language museum in the world-opened in São Paulo, Brazil.) Within South Africa there is now pressure for the development of language museums for other official languages, and the Afrikaans Language Museum is offering assistance with the formation of these as the national government and other bodies begin to promote and establish these.

The exhibition

As the museum is housed in a family home, the several first floor rooms given over to the new exhibition were mainly originally bedrooms and are therefore quite a lot smaller than purpose-designed museum exhibition

rooms. It has therefore been very challenging to utilise these rooms to the optimum effect. All the signage and text throughout the Museum is presented in all three official languages of the Western Cape, namely Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. This is also the case with texts and commentaries on the Museum's sound systems. Another challenge that the exhibition has overcome, was to avoid making the museum or the exhibition itself a political instrument. Lorena San Roman (1992, p. 29) in her chapter: "Politics and museums" argues that politicising the museum and its exhibitions in such a way should be avoided at all costs.

In the space available in this paper only key features and highlights of the exhibition can be referred to. However, each main sub-theme of the exhibition uses a range of display methods in presenting the different aspects of the intangible culture of the language and of the Museums programme and activities. The reader therefore needs to follow the interesting features and characteristics of the Afrikaans language simultaneously with the display techniques.

Room 1 - Orientation: Meet Afrikaans

Of the four types of orientation that Belcher (1991, pp. 99-100) suggests are necessary in museums, namely geographical, intellectual, conceptual and psychological, the first room in this exhibition focuses only on the last type, the psychological approach. The reason is that the theme of the room is simply: "Meet Afrikaans": the visitor is not geographically orientated or guided in any way, nor taken intellectually from the unknown to the known. This is a room where the visitor can walk around and enjoy several aspects of the language, for example the names

of seaside holiday houses, photographs of which are pinned like washing on a line (see figure 1). The names reveal an important ability of the Afrikaans language, namely to form puns with words and parts of words. This results in names that are very humorous, sometimes sophisticated and difficult to catch, but in other cases straightforward and very funny.

The exhibition also has signposts in the form of traditional road indicator signposts displaying very eye-catching Afrikaans place names (see figure 2). On one wall is a large board with plaster letters and words, which visitors can rearrange into sentences, rhymes, names or messages as they wish, (see figure 3). Another board has a collection of satirical poems by a well known Afrikaans poet, Philip de Vos, which visitors enjoy tremendously. Next to that is a collection of Afrikaans jokes that can be found on the internet. From the ceiling hang a few banners with short verses of folk poetry, mostly quatrains. The whole idea of this room is to supply an introduction and to assist the visitor in getting acquainted with the Afrikaans language.

Room 2 - The roots of Afrikaans

The next room is devoted to the roots of Afrikaans. Informative banners indicate Afrikaans words derived from languages other than Dutch but which contributed to the formation of the language, for example Afrikaans words from the Khoi family of languages, from Malay, Portuguese, Arabic, Nguni, Sotho and English (Olivier & Coetzee 1994; Scholtz 1980; Van Rensburg 1997). One wall in the room displays a large map of the world showing with the aid of arrows the regions of the world where the roots of Afrikaans lie. At the southern point of



Figure 1
The name of holiday homes, pinned like washing on a line



Figure 2
A road signpost with place names



Figure 3
Plaster poetry: words and letters with magnets to build sentences or poetry

Africa is shown as a “port-hole” that enlarges South Africa as the geographical background of the formation of this language (see figure 4). There is also a sound system through which the visitor can listen through earphones to an explanation in all three official languages–Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa - of the roots of Afrikaans. Another large circular panel in this room introduces the visitor to the different cultural groups that contributed originally to the first stages of the language, for example the Khoi people, the Dutch, the slaves and the French Huguenots.

Room 3 - Variants and group language:

Room 3 displays examples of group language and variants of Afrikaans. San Roman (1992, p. 26), argues that, particularly in the case of issues of political controversy, it is important to represent a range of different opinions on a theme, and to achieve that, proper, wide-ranging research by the museum officials is absolutely necessary. Following this principle the curators of the exhibition in the Language Museum have done a lot of research on variants of Afrikaans. It is definitely not a language with only a standard form, and the variants (which cannot be characterised exactly as dialects) give great scope to the different speakers of Afrikaans reflecting different cultures and backgrounds.

The display begins with a short summary of the meaning of group language and of the different examples traced in South Africa. On the walls are photographs of speakers of a particular group language or variant, with phrases or vocabulary underneath. What makes this theme very lively, are the short video clips of people speaking different variants of Afrikaans. There are for instance examples of Afrikaans as spoken by sheep shearers, fishermen of Waenhuiskrans, taxi driver Afrikaans, Cape Afrikaans, spoken by the coloured people

of Cape Town and vicinity, Afrikaans of the West Coast, and student language.

Room 4 - Vernacular/folk language:

This room presents vernacular language in different forms, for example folk tales, songs, rhymes, riddles, place names and idioms and sayings. It is partly focused on the interests of children, but there is much for the adult visitor also. Firstly there is an armchair next to a CD player where one can relax and with earphones listen to tall stories, a particularly popular genre in the folk tale tradition of Afrikaans. A large display panel is devoted to riddles, painted in bright colours with a cosmic theme of moons, stars and planets. One sickle moon is transformed into a big question mark. Each riddle is printed on a laminated card which hooks onto a small door with a wooden knob. As the door opens, it reveals the answer to the riddle. The visitor can therefore test him/herself before looking at the answer, and the actual riddles can be easily replaced to ensure that the display does not remain static (see figure 5).

According to Caulton (1998, p.2) when the term *hands-on* is used, there is normally an assumption that the activities will involve interaction and provide added educational value, that *hands-on* will lead to *minds-on*. *Interactive*, he says, implies that visitors will engage in mental interaction, which can happen without physical interaction taking place. The term is therefore often associated with computer games where the only physical activity taking place is via the keyboard and where entertainment and education are not necessarily joint objectives. This is a very important point that many museums still tend to forget: visitors can become very bored when reading, looking and listening in a museum. Ambrose and Paine (1994, p. 75) say that people learn



Figure 4
Map of the world indicating the roots of Afrikaans



Figure 5
Board with riddles and answers behind the little doors



Figure 6
Place names ending with -fontein
Figure 7
Huge scrabble board
Figure 8
Time line presenting the development of Afrikaans in the media

best when they are involved in some way. Such interactivity is offered in this room via the computer keyboard, but both entertainment and education are definitely provided.

An enjoyable programme of Afrikaans idioms and sayings called *Gekke Gesegdes* (literally “mad sayings”) was designed for the computer. The visitor explores this through a self-test, and this produces a certificate showing not just the percentage score, but also humorous comments on their answers. These named certificates can also include the person’s name, and can be signed by a museum staff member. Another part of the exhibition is on children’s songs and games, with a beautifully illustrated panel covering one wall and which provides the words of songs and rhymes and suggests different children’s games. On another computer the visitor can access a number of children’s games by activating a DVD showing children at play and singing together during their play, while the words of the songs are projected at the bottom of the screen.

Of all the thousands of interesting place names in Afrikaans, the so called fountain names were selected to be represented here. A collection of more than 200 place names ending on the Afrikaans word-*fontein* (meaning a natural spring in Dutch) is written in a curving S-form from big to small, suggesting the infinity of these interesting names (see figure 6). One may wonder: why so many names that end in *fontein*? It is suggested that because South Africa is such a dry country, it may be that the yearning for water manifests in place names, especially the names of farms. Almost any component imaginable is connected to-*fontein*: for instance the names of people, like Clara-Annafontein and Andriesfontein; the names of animals (the most abundant by far), like Elandsfontein and Jakkalsfontein; the surroundings, like Duinefontein; numbers, like

Tweefontein and Sewefontein; plants, like Kareefontein (a tree) and Grasfontein (grass), etc. The last feature in this room is a white board supplied with a temporary marker for use by visitors to make comments on the exhibition or to add interesting facts. It is therefore a section of the exhibition that provides for hands-on, minds-on and interactive participation.

Room 5 - Word craft

The more formal aspects of the word craft are represented in room 5, for instance the art of the making of dictionaries. Examples of several volumes of the dictionary of the Afrikaans language are displayed on a desk that is specially designed for lexicographers. An enlarged reproduction of a Scrabble board is mounted in the centre of this room with huge letter blocks with which visitors can play (see figure 7). Scrabble is a very enjoyable and internationally known word game, of which the Afrikaans version is particularly challenging and has lots of potential for creativeness. In this room also Afrikaans authors are represented by their names and dates on individual laminated coloured cards, hooked with S-brackets onto a large mesh panel. Each period, covering more or less three decades, is represented by a specific colour, but the colours are evenly spread over the board; that means that writers of a period are not grouped together. This is quite cleverly done, because apart from the fact that it gives an aesthetic pleasant appearance, it is also interesting and challenging for a visitor to check whether a certain writer’s name is there. Even so, if they may find a name or names lacking, there is also a white board like the one in the previous room where they can supply names or make any suggestions. It will be noted that the Afrikaans Language Museum does not reflect widely on the Afrikaans literature and the

works of the named authors because there is also a Literary Museum in South Africa, focusing on Afrikaans literature (in Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State Province).

Room 6 - Afrikaans and the Media

The content of the last room of the upper floor is aimed at the visitor who does not mind reading a lot of text and who actually appreciates information of an historical nature. This display is dedicated to Afrikaans in the media, especially the audio-visual media. Four categories or genres were identified, namely drama and music, radio, film and television and general cultural historical events. The history of these four genres in Afrikaans was thoroughly researched and incorporated in a time line, separated by four soft colours. The time line is presented on both sides of each of three lengthy display boards along the centre of the room (see figure 8). The highlights in the history of each category are indicated on the time line, and on the blank spots on the different lines where nothing of importance was recorded, interesting drawings and photographs are incorporated. The time line initially covers the period from 1652 to 2003 but can be extended in the future as needed. There is also a noteboard which lists all the sources used for the compilation of the time line.

Conclusion

Klein argues: "There is a truism in the museum field that people do not read labels. Casual observation of museum visitors will tend to confirm this. Nevertheless it is not true of every visitor, nor is it true of every exhibition", (as quoted in Edson & Dean 1994, p. 189). In the first five rooms of the Afrikaans language exhibition there is relatively little conventional text or labels to be read. The reading material included is easily readable and mainly presented on large banners or interesting panels. Many hands-on, minds-on and interactive displays are included, making a visit to this museum an enjoyable as well as an educational experience. Belcher (1991, p. 58) classified three types of museums (in relation to their underlying exhibition concept and the response it is intended to elicit from its audience), namely emotive, didactic or entertaining. He adds that these categories are not mutually exclusive and that a single exhibition or museum can comprise elements of each. In my opinion

the Afrikaans Language Museum offers all three elements. Though the emotive element is - correctly - should be restricted to the visitor's own response. Arguing this does not imply a subjective approach on the part of the curators who created the exhibition.

There are of course other museums in South Africa which are successful in representing different aspects of the intangible history of the country and its diverse peoples, but they are few as yet. This museum in its totality presents intangible culture and the new displays of the Afrikaans Language Museum, although small in comparison to most other museums, makes it one of the leading institutions in South Africa that is focused solely on the intangible heritage. Against the background of multilingualism in South Africa the negative attitudes towards Afrikaans in some quarters, and various other problems discussed previously in this paper, it can be seen that the tri-lingual displays and programmes of the Afrikaans Language Museum have an important role. They are visited in increasing numbers by educational and other groups of all the main language and cultural traditions of the region, also seeks to play a leading role in the reconciliation of people in this country, as well as in assisting and supporting other language groups. 🇷🇺

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