

Botswana National Cultural Council Language Sub-Committee

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Introduction

For the 2005, the Language Sub-Committee decide to have terms of reference 1 and 3 as their projects for the year. These terms of reference read as follows:

1. To develop an inventory of all indigenous languages of Botswana and analyse their level of development, use and limitations;
3. To develop an inventory of policies that directly and indirectly impact on the development and use of Botswana's languages and describe processes in place to implement such policies.

At its meeting of July 12, 2005, the Sub-Committee I volunteered to undertake these tasks as I already had done some work and was aware of the work of other scholars in this area. Below is my submission, which I have tried to keep brief for readability.

A. Term of Reference 1: Inventory of indigenous languages of Botswana

Indigenous in this case refers to all African languages including European languages which have native citizens. After much debate on what consists a language vis-à-vis a dialect most linguists who have worked on Botswana languages have come to a consensus that there are 26 minority languages in Botswana. The total of languages will then be 28 in addition to Setswana and English. The table below indicates all minority languages. For purposes of our task therefore, we could subtract European and other world languages from the table and add Setswana. This will give us 26 indigenous languages.

Table 1: Minority Languages in Botswana Figure 1ⁱ

1.	Afrikaans	14.	Naro *
2.	Chikuhane	15.	Otjiherero
3.	Gana *	16.	Rugciriku
4.	Gwi *	17.	Sebirwa
5.	≠Hua *	18.	Setswapong
6.	Ikalanga	19.	Shekgalagari
7.	Isindebele	20.	Shiyeyi
8.	Ju 'hoan *	21.	Shua/Tshwa *
9.	Khwedam *	22.	Silozi
10.	Kua *	23.	Thimbukushu
11.	≠Kx'au ein *	24.	Tsowa *
12.	Nama	25.	!Xóǀ *
13.	Nambya	26.	Zezuru

Source: Richard Cook, 2003 * Khoesan languages

With regard to their level of development, if we are to concentrate on indigenous languages, then we can substitute Afrikaans with Setswana and we have the same results.

Table 2: Level of Development of the Minority Languages of Botswana.

Highly Developed	Developing	Under or undeveloped
Afrikaans Isindebele Nama Otjiherero Silozi Zezuru Nambya All genres of literary materials available. Teaching began many years ago in other countries	Ju 'hoan Thimbukushu Naro Ikalanga Shiyeyi Enough literary materials available to begin teaching - e.g. orthographies, reading texts, grammar, dictionary, poems stories, songs. Some teaching in other countries may have begun but limited. While all are currently developing, they are at different levels.	Chikuhane* Gana Gwi #Hua Khwedam Kua #Kx'au ein Rugciriku Sebirwa* Setswapong* Shekgalagari* Shua* Silozi Tsowa !Xóǀ * Work by RETENG is going on to develop orthographies, some texts but too limited to begin teaching. There is no work on the rest.

Source: Cook, 2003 (modified).

B. Term of Reference 3: Existing Language Policy Statements in Botswana

1. From the Revised National Policy on Education, Adopted by Parliament on March 1994.

Note: These recommendations relate mainly to Setswana and English

Recommendation 3 - [para. 2.3.30]

With respect to language policy, the Commission recommends that the National Setswana Language Council be renamed the Botswana Languages Council and be given revised terms of Reference, including the responsibility for developing a comprehensive language policy (p13).

Recommendation 18 [para.4.4.31]

With respect to the teaching of languages in primary school,

- a) English should be used as the medium of instruction from standard 2 as soon as practicable (p59)
- d) Setswana should be taught as a compulsory subject for citizens of Botswana throughout the primary school system. In-service training programs should commence immediately to improve the teaching of Setswana as a subject (p18)

Recommendation 31 [para 5.5.7]

The Commission recommends the following statement of goals for the three-year junior secondary program: The goals of the Junior Certificate Curriculum are to develop in all children

- proficiency in the use of Setswana and English language as tools for effective communication, study and work
- an understanding of society, appreciation of culture and sense of citizenship; etc. (p21)

Recommendation 32 [para. 5.5.13]

With respect to Junior Certificate curriculum,

- b) each student should take eight core subjects, namely, English, Setswana Social Studies etc. -----
- d) in addition each student should select a minimum of two and a maximum of three optional subjects. At least one of the subject selected should be from each of the following groups of subjects: ii) **Third language** (p63)

Recommendation 46 [para.5.10.33]

In order to improve the teaching of Setswana, the Commission recommends that:

- a) teachers should be exposed to as many language teaching methods as possible so as to provide a variety for the teacher and the learner, with emphasis on communicative approaches, and therefore make Setswana more interesting as a subject (p26).
- b) information on job opportunities other than teaching, e.g. in the media, professions and as translators, Court interpreters, and Parliamentary translators, should be more extensively disseminated. With some guidance students at school level would then take their study of the language more seriously, recognizing opportunities for development in the language (p66).
- c) the University of Botswana's Department of African Languages and Literature should play a leading role in guiding academic presentations in Setswana and cooperate with the Faculty of Education in promoting the teaching of Setswana.(p26).

Recommendation number 70 [para.7.6.9]

With respect to the development of a core curriculum for students in tertiary education institutions, the Commission recommends the following components:

- d) a module on Botswana's culture and values, within the context of heterogeneous African cultures, noting the uniqueness and universals of Botswana's ways of life (p34)

Recommendation 100 [para. 10.5.9]

- c) the primary teacher training curriculum should prepare teachers to handle adequately some of the innovative methods such as Breakthrough to Setswana, Project Method, continuous Assessment, Guidance and Counseling, Special Education, Remedial Teaching, especially to support assessed progression (p. 45).

Recommendation 101 [Para.10.5.13]

- e) admission requirements should be reviewed to allow experienced primary school teachers holding COSC/GCE to be recruited for training as Setswana Teachers (p. 46)

Recommendation 103 [para.10.5.19]

- a) Setswana teacher training should be included in the category of critical human resource shortage alongside the Science and Technical fields of study in the proposed Grant/Loan Scheme. (p. 46)
- b) Setswana teachers should enjoy enhanced entry salary and parallel progression similarly to Science and Mathematics teachers. (p. 46)

2. From the Constitution and other official documents

a. Enabling/empowering policies

- ◆ Sections 3 and 15 of the Constitution, which guarantee every citizen fundamental rights and freedom regardless of race, gender, language, ethnicity and so on (Republic of Botswana, undated: 00:5; 00:17);
- ◆ As stated earlier, a motion by the Honourable Member of Parliament Oliphant Mfa to review sections 77-79 was passed on of February 17, 1995;
- ◆ Another motion Passed by Parliament on August 8, 1997, moved by the Honourable Member of Parliament Itani Chilume, , to allow the use of other languages in education, the media, and other social domains as necessary;
- ◆ Recommendation 32 of the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) suggests the introduction of a third language at Community Junior Secondary School level. It is always assumed that this third language meant any of the minority languages;

- ◆ Recommendation 3 of the RNPE- to form the Botswana Languages Council, which will be responsible for developing a comprehensive language policy.
- ◆ Vision 2016 (summary version, p. 21) states that “there is a challenge to recognise and develop equally all languages in Botswana”;
- ◆ Vision 2016 (p. 5) further states that “Botswana’s wealth of languages and cultural traditions will be recognised, supported and strengthened in the education system. No Motswana will be disadvantaged in the education system as a result of a mother tongue that differs from the country’s two official languages”.
- ◆ Report of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (61st Session, August 5-23, 2002) calling for the recognition and equal treatment of all ethnic groups of Botswana.
- ◆ The National Cultural Policy which states that ‘other Botswana languages, which form part of the multilingual and multicultural diversity and a rich source of cultural heritage should be harnessed and assisted to develop through research and documentation and other media such as the development of dictionaries, orthographies, textbooks etc so that cultural knowledge is available through these languages (National Cultural Policy Approved by Parliament in August 2001). No commitment as to who should do this.
- ◆ Report of the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination of March 2006- calling for use all languages and cultures in education.

All these are positive signals towards pluralism as a necessary ingredient for nation building. These are an acknowledgement of the fact that suppression of our languages and cultures is not one of the ingredients for democracy or development, and it could defeat our purpose for building a united and proud nation. These policies seem to give hope to the development and use of minority languages. However, none of these have been put in practice.

There also exist negative policies, in which Government shows no commitment to removing, but has publicly defended. These include:

b. Disempowering Policies

- ◆ Sections 77-79 of the Constitution, which guarantee ex-officio membership to the House of Chiefs to eight Setswana-speaking tribes only; hence only the Tswana language is recognised;
- ◆ The Chieftainship Act (Cap. 41: 01) states that ‘tribe’ means “the Bamangwato Tribe, the Batawana Tribe, the Bakgatla Tribe, the Bakwena Tribe, the Bangwaketse Tribe, the Bamalete Tribe, the Barolong Tribe and the Batlokwa Tribe” (41: 3). All these are Setswana-speaking tribes; their constitutional recognition

has in practice translated into the recognition of their language as the only one for use in the public domains. Their chiefs are the only ones recognised. This meant that the language of the kgotla is Setswana at the exclusion of other languages.

- ◆ The *Tribal Territories Act* also defines tribal territory with respect to these tribes (Cap. 32: 03), meaning that only those eight tribes mentioned above have group rights to land and it is distributed under their jurisdiction; The rest of the tribes only have individual rights to land allocated to them by the Land Board. In practice, the non-Tswana can be moved from place to place without compensation;
- ◆ Derogations contained in sections 3 and 15 of the Constitution, which permit discrimination along ethnic lines, they protect the Chieftainship Act and the Tribal Territories Act from being challenged in court. Thus cementing tribal discrimination and denial of linguistic and cultural rights of non-Tswana speaking groups;
- ◆ The exclusion of all language (except Setswana and English) from the media, the courts and other social domains (RB rejects Shiyeyi announcements);
- ◆ Parliament's rejection of recommendation of the National Commission on Education (1993) to use other languages at pre-school;
- ◆ The Parliament's rejection of the report of the Working group on Recommendation 3- of the RNPE on the formation of the Botswana languages Council, which was to be responsible for developing all languages (It was Chaired by Mr. Swartland in 1997, and presented in Parliament by Minister Chiepe).

In practice, it is the negative policies that are emphasized and in place, it has been observed that the positive ones are usually made on the eve of an election year, and thereafter, they never get any legal backing let alone go into practice.

While many scholars believe that the exclusion of minority languages is legitimatised by the numerical superiority of Setswana-speaking tribes, others feel that these tribes when taken in isolation, are far outnumbered by some of the so-called minority groups. Thus the term 'minority' has no numerical significance in Botswana. The determining factor is whether or not the tribe speaks Setswana, then it becomes a majority tribe. Parsons (1985) maintains that the concept of "Tswanadom that is both philosophical and territorial has led many observers to assume that Botswana is a mono-ethnic state". He (1985: 27) goes on to say that this is so "only in so far as the Tswana minority have successfully imposed its culture on the majority population of the extreme diverse origins" ...but even then "ethnic identities have not disappeared".

C. Recommendations to BNCC

The Language sub-committee would like to make the following recommendation to the BNCC for consideration for submission to government in accordance with its advisory role.

1. Pilot projects on some of the developing languages should be established.
2. Minority languages should be used on radio for announcements and news items
3. A regular program focusing on Botswana cultural groups should be established on BTV.
4. Work on the development of a language policy in line with Language Plan of Action of the AU of 1986 should be initiated.

Extracted from Lydia Nyati Ramahobo's paper titled ' **Linguistic and Cultural Domination: The Case of the Wayeyi of Botswana** (2002 - pages 217-234) contained in the book titled "**Botswana: The Future of Minority Languages**, edited by Herman Batibo and Birgit Smieja. Published by Peter Lang in Germany. (updated 2003) and a journal article titled ' **The Language Situation in Botswana**' in **Current issues in Language Planning**, Vol 1. (2) 2000. pp243-300.

ⁱ Some linguists classify Kwangali as a broad category which includes Rucirikuru and Thimbukushu, and this may be the reason why it is not reflected in the table. Talaonde is also not included because it is a dialect of Ikalanga that has become extinct.