

Found and Lost Languages: A Survey of the Past and Current Situation of Botswana Ethnic and Linguistic Communities

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Abstract

Botswana is blessed with 26 languages and ethnic communities and RETENG (the Multicultural Coalition for Botswana) (2015) considers this situation as reason to celebrate the country's rich cultural and language diversity. Isaac Schapera in his seminal study *The Ethnic Composition of the Tswana* (1952) indicates that within the Tswana tribal reserves existed other ethnic groups which were either subsumed under the Tswana or were in territories that were otherwise designated Crown Lands, such as the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Accordingly therefore, the groups with territorial and linguistic recognition were the Tswana or Setswana-speaking. At independence, the same situation was perpetuated. Education Policy practices also ensured that ethnic languages such as Lozi and Kalanga were abandoned in early education. Other ethnic groups and languages such as Shiyeyi, Subiya, and various Khoisan languages, Afrikaans, Nama, OtjiHerero, ThiMbkukushu, Ndebele, Setswapong and Sebirwa were completely overlooked territorially and linguistically. The objective of this paper is to provide an update on the situation of Botswana ethnic and linguistic communities since Independence in 1966 and discuss their vitality within the current Botswana languages use practices. It will also examine whether, in the 50 years of their absence in official social policy to promote them, they managed to survive. The language situation analysis frameworks expounded by Batibo (2005 and 2015) will be used to discuss the likely consequences of Botswana language use policy for the posterity of the country's languages. Only English will be shown to benefit in this sociolinguistic situation.

Introduction

Botswana is demographically small but relatively one of the larger countries in Southern Africa occupying an area of over half a million square kilometres. The country is sparsely inhabited with just over 2 million people (according to the 2011 Census). Botswana is both multi-ethnic and multi-lingual with at least 26 ethnic languages spoken within its borders (Andersson and Janson 1997; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). The languages can be divided into three groupings according to their socio-historical origins. Those of the Bantu family, spoken by over 96% of the population and comprising Setswana, Ikalanga, Shekgalagari, Chikuhane, Thimbukushu, Shiyeyi, Sebirwa, Setswapong, Nambya, Otjiherero and Zezuru. Those of the Khoisan (Basarwa) family, spoken by only about 3% of the population but comprising many linguistic entities which include Naro, !Xoo, #Hua, Jul'hoan, #Kx'au ll'ein, Nama, Kua, Shua, Tshwa, Kwedam, Glui, and Gllana (Seloma and Chebanne 2007). The third group is that of Indo-European family, namely Afrikaans and English. The former colonial language, English, is considered the official language of Botswana, while Afrikaans is spoken by a tiny minority of White farmers and by the so-called Coloureds of South-Western borders of Botswana with South Africa and Namibia.

The languages situation of Botswana is extensively documented which was done even during the colonial period through the research of the Anthropologist, Isaac Schapera (1952). Through his research on the ethnic composition of Tswana groups with tribal and nomenclature still valid to date, especially the designation of those tribes that controlled administrative territories and those that were subsumed under other tribes (Bennett 2002). Schapera (1935) also provided an understanding of the social structure of the Tswana ward in which the tiered composition of wards depended on the ethnic groupings of a village or

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tribal territory. It is this understanding and the assumed tribal superiority (see Schapera 1933) which defined the ethnic characterisation of the Independent Botswana Constitution (see Sections 77, 78, 98 of the 1965 version). When Botswana administrative documents talk therefore of *merafe* (tribes/ethnic groups) they mean occupants of territories controlled by 'kingdoms or proto-states' (Bennett 2002:5).

During the colonial period, the ethnic linguistic matters came to the fore mainly when they were debated around the resistance that some of these groups put up against domination (Ramsay 1987). The post-Independence pre-occupation with the ethnic and linguistic structure of Botswana has come mainly from civil societies representing ethnic language associations (Mazonde 2002) and some linguists interested in language use and social policy (Chebanne and Creissels 2001) and language and ethnic rights analysts and activists (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). This form of resistance, and the informal nature of handling ethnic grievances put the question of ethnic identity in a negative light in Botswana. When some of the so-called minority language communities attempt to pursue their socio-cultural identity their effort is construed to be synonymous with going against the national ideals of homogeneity of recognized ethnic communities (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). Clearly therefore, the question of Botswana languages has not been on the agenda for national developmental policy in the critical domains of education, administration and cultural manifestation.

With these concerns in mind this paper, therefore, seeks to evaluate the ethnic languages situation in Botswana since 1966. The question of ethnic and language identity will be shown to be a problem in a sociolinguistic situation that has evolved since 1966. The discussion also seeks to manifest salient issues of cultural and language rights through an exploration of the dynamics of the current language use practice and how it presents some difficulties for the so-called minority language speakers in effectively engaging in democratisation process, preservation of ethnic cultures and languages, and ensuring that all citizens are fully involved in nation building. The language use and language vitality within the current Botswana languages use practices will be critical to understand if ethnic language maintenance is till effectual 50 years on. The role of English will also be alluded to because its status as the official language has seen it rapidly encroaching on other languages' domain of use. Its status has made it the vehicle of ushering foreign cultures to which the people of Botswana are attracted to as demonstrated by the mushrooming of English medium schools. In other words the status of English has contributed to it being a language of imperialism!

Theoretical framework

A study by Batibo (2015) raises interesting theories in language dynamics in Africa and these theories account for trends in linguistic and ethnic identity loss in trans-cultural contact situations in Botswana. While Batibo looks specifically into the Khoisan, and the way their languages and identities are lost in contact with speakers of the Bantu languages (Batswana and other Bantu), the theories raised clearly demonstrate that in a contact situation there is language shift and subsequently language loss. According to this model, where language shift is taking place in favour of a dominant group, there is usually a progressive loss of identity features of the shifting minority group, starting with linguistic loss, then cultural loss then autonymic loss (place and personal names). Then, finally, the ethnonymic loss, that is the loss of the name that is given to the relevant ethnic group. In Botswana, this pattern seems to take place generally, in that a number of ethnic languages and dialects are fast losing ground, especially among the younger generations such as Wayeyi, Babirwa, Batswapong (among the Bantu speakers) and †Huã (†Hoan), Sasi, G!wi, Gllana, Cua, Tsua, Tshwa, and others (among the Khoisan languages). Also some dialects are disappearing, such as SheBolaongwe, SheShaga (dialects of Shekgalagari), Setlharo (Western dialect of Setswana which is closer to SheNgolosa and Setlhaping) have almost been abandoned. With non-Bantu ethno-linguistic communities, this attrition and loss are being followed by cultural erosion in terms of songs, dances, performances, rituals, customs, practices and beliefs. Then some ethnic groups, especially Khoisan (some sources suggest

that the 'Basarwa' prefer to be called Bushmen) are losing their autonymic identity (place and personal names) in favour of Setswana names, especially as a way of integration into the mainstream group. The last feature of identity to be lost is usually ethnonymic identity (ethnic name). Most groups, which have lost the majority of their identity features, have kept their ethnonymic identity. This includes the Khoisan groups which are proud to identify themselves as 'Basarwa', but can no longer speak the language.

In this theoretical framework, another way of looking at the Botswana ethnic languages loss issue would be to evoke the discussion around René Dumont (1962) who makes a claim of 'False Start in Africa'. In his discussion, Dumont puts forth an argument that many of our countries adopted inappropriate national language policies after independence, which have not facilitated democracy, equity and harmonious or sustainable development. Thus, even with the utopian Vision 2016 ideals, Botswana has failed to effectively implement this vision due to the prevailing language policy in which the minority ethnic languages are not recognized. Hence, to make Vision 2016 (now Vision 2036) possible, there was need for change of the current National Language Policy, highlighted in the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994. This would have permitted, for example, the implementation of the national Vision 2016 which boldly states that 'No Motswana shall be linguistically disadvantaged' (Republic of Botswana 1996:7). Batibo (2015), who argues for an ideal language policy for an inclusive sustainable development in Africa, also stresses that only an *inclusive* national language policy would ensure that all the languages are on board. Issues of cultural and linguistic assimilation in Botswana are reported to be happening at a much larger scale than was earlier imagined (Sköld *et al* 2015). English, and less so Setswana will, because of globalization be the language that gains in this sociolinguistics dynamics.

An Overview of Ethnic Diversity in Botswana

The data on ethnic communities and their linguistic diversity is derived from an extensive data compiled by researchers since twenty years ago (Janson 2000 and Hasselbring 2000). Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo (2003) look into the national census data of 2001 which had a question on language knowledge, and this clearly showed that all over the country speakers identified a language they spoke. Seloma and Chebanne (2007) also provide an overview of Botswana languages sourced from primary sources such as various sociolinguistic research conducted by Batibo (2005 and 2007) and Chebanne (2008). The latter researchers provide a comprehensive account of the sociolinguistic situation of the Khoisan languages of Botswana. The term 'ethnic' rather than 'tribe' is preferred to remove any confusion on language and cultural identities.

Bennett (2002:5) states that 'the basic pattern of settlement in Botswana is broadly agreed: Khoisan being the earliest inhabitants, Bantu-speakers arriving later'. Over centuries, the language ecology of what later became Botswana evolved, with late arrivals, the Sotho-Tswana, creating sprawling kingdoms in which they subdued people they found. In Southern Africa this language ecology started to significantly change even before the advent of colonialism, that is, more than ten centuries ago (Barnard 1992). Botswana still essentially retains, albeit in a fleeting manner, the identifiable historical ethnicities of Southern Africa. Table 1 below provides the only statistical evidence ever derived from the national population and housing census 2001. There was nothing of linguistic nature which was asked for the 2011 census. Though the linguistic identities and the statistics of speakers are not conclusive, the 2001 census figures present the ethnic composition of Botswana.

Table 1: Languages spoken in the home in Botswana, 2001 Census

Language	Number	Per cent of 1,601 885
Setswana	1 253 080	78.2
Ikalanga	126 952	7.9
Shekgalagari	44 706	2.8
<i>Shiyeyi</i>	4 801	0.3
Herero	10 998	0.7
Setswana	5 382	0.3
Sebirwa	11 633	0.7
<i>Mbukushu</i>	27 653	1.7
<i>Subiya</i>	6 477	0.4
Sekgothu	690	0.04
<i>Sesarwa</i> (Khoesan)	30 037	1.9
Afrikaans	6 750	0.4
Ndebele	8 174	0.5
Shona	11 308	0.7
English	34 433	2.2
Others foreign)	18811	1.2
Total	1 601 885	100%

Source: Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo (2003:396)

According to RETENG (2015) the above table should be studied with utmost care as the figures represent language knowledge, not ethnic numbers. Importantly, the figures were derived from a question that created confusion in the minds of people as respondents may have thought that indicating their knowledge of Setswana was more important for the question (Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo 2003). And to many it would be important since that is the only language (together with English) used in socio-political, community, and educational domains. Therefore, it should be expected that these statistics could be misleading on very important issues of ethnic numbers and the objective languages knowledge and use in Botswana. And while Table 1 provides an indisputable evidence of the existence of many languages in Botswana, it also shows the demographic paucity of the minorities, at least as indicated by the least reliable census question. It should be noted, however, that the list is far from being exhaustive for the reasons that the label Sesarwa is a generic term that is used in Botswana with undue regard of the necessary distinction of 1) the specific language names; 2) the specific ethnic names; and 3) the anthropological characterisation by making an indication of those who are gatherers, pastoralist and agriculturalists. According to Table 1, the listed languages as shown by their numbers, Bantu languages have higher numbers than Khoisan languages. Some aspects of this linguistic diversity of Botswana were discussed by Seloma and Chebanne (2007).

Ethnic and Linguistic Social Policy Since 1966

Within the context of African societies' movement to liberate themselves from colonialism, Botswana, like all other African countries, was faced with a number of challenges both in the 1950s and after Independence in the 1960s. These challenges have been identified by Fishman (1971) as quest for unity (to unite the many and diverse ethnic groups), for sovereignty (to build national identity and nationhood) and for development (to mobilise all the masses so as to build a modern state). Languages were central in these efforts. African countries in their quest for an optimal national language policy within their circumstances, selected different paths, according to their circumstances (Batibo 2007). The question of Botswana's ethnic identity has been amply discussed by Nyati-Ramahobo (2002). She argues that the government of

Botswana has worked tirelessly to achieve the ideal goal of a homogenous nation state. When the case of ethnic languages in Botswana is considered, therefore, the situation is the most tenuous in terms of the official recognition of what constitutes the societal profile of the country. Except for purely administrative reasons (Constitution of Botswana), the policy does not seem to recognise ethnicity together with territoriality or construe ethnicity as being defined in purely linguistic terms (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). More often, language policy has been confined to the level of speeches, wishes or small scale experimentations for well-known reasons. Among these being that the language pluralism is presented as an obstacle and a problem with the risk of ethnic conflicts and quandary. Only English and Setswana are regarded as national ethnic and linguistic unifiers. Today, reflections and innovation concerning the 'national languages' are still the acts of linguists, journalists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious preachers, and indeed all kinds of people without significant link with the authorities in power (Chebanne 2002 and Mazonde 2002).

Although Independence brought to Botswana remarkable infrastructural development and social amenities to a level higher than most countries in the Sub-Sahara region, the domain of ethnic languages and cultures has generally regressed, if not altogether becoming the negation of development. Therefore, Vision 2016 has been wishful thinking as none of the items mentioned on language and cultural rights have been fulfilled. The official view of a united homogenous nation has not even favoured all the pillars of the Vision. Nyati-Ramahobo (2002:21) succinctly describes this position by stating that "The assimilationists' efforts are continuing. When marginalized groups assume their natural groupings (*that is around cultural and linguistic identities*), they are being tribalistic. On the contrary, when (*se*)Tswana speaking groups do the same, they are not considered tribalistic but are seen to be promoting nationhood'.

For some ethnic groups the official attitude means that the cultural and linguistic homogenisation of the nation translate into their demise. For instance, before Independence the San were almost monolingual and fervently attached to their aboriginality; today they are desperately clinging to a dream of the past that does not seem realisable in the future. For the Khoisan languages, the socio-political policy of Botswana shows that these weaker languages will carry on being marginalised in the country. The sociolinguistic landscape, and social policy are not conducive to the promotion and maintenance of their indigenous languages and cultures (Chebanne 2010; Batibo 2005; Batibo 2015 and Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). As a consequence the Khoisan groups will experience language dearth and eventually death (Sköld *et al* 2015). This situation has largely been encouraged by state educational and social development policies which recognised languages of wider communication coverage in school and larger ethnic communities in areas targeted for development (Chebanne 2010 and Webb 1995). The current situation, therefore, paints a bleak picture on the survival of ethnic and linguistic communities whose languages are not catered for in education policies, and in general socio-cultural activities. Several languages are on high risk and will not live into the next generation (Chebanne 2010 and 2015). While ethnic identity will persist for a while, 'minority' languages are irredeemable in the current language situation (Batibo 2015).

Also, prior to Independence, the Kalanga and the Lozi had the advantage of bilingualism, even multilingualism in education (Bennett 2002 and Nyati-Ramahobo 2002) but that is now confined to informal domains. Similarly, the Bakgalagari, had a dream of becoming a tribal entity with the change of colonial crown lands to districts, but they were only qualified to be a non-ethnic and non-linguistic entity in state lands glorified as districts (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002:19). In spite of their ardent desire to accede to tribal recognition, the Wayeyi in Ngamiland and Veekuhane (Basubiya) in the Chobe were further minoritised by being subsumed under the Batawana (Bennett 2002). Elsewhere in the Central District, Sebirwa, Setswamong and Kalanga are quickly assimilated into the dominant Ngwato cultural and linguistic realm.

The Khoisan wherever they are in Botswana are also assailed by the socio-cultural and educational attractions which have drawn them to be mainline Setswana society. This socio-political reality will see the non-Tswana ethnic groups denied the right and means to define themselves culturally and linguistically (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002:18).

Setswana as the National Language

The Setswana (Tswana language) has a majority of its speakers in the Free State (Borolong boSeleka in Thaba-Nchu), Northern Cape, North West and Gauteng Provinces of South Africa. Some Barolong and Bangolola in Namibia also speak it. In Botswana and South Africa, Setswana has the status of a national language alongside 10 other languages. This status means that Setswana is used in public administration, education and as an interethnic communication facilitator. For instance, a Moyeyi in Botswana will speak Setswana with a MoHambukushu and a Moherero (Arua and Magocha 2002). In Botswana Setswana is regarded as a language of national unity, and English as a language in which government policies are articulated (Bagwasi 2003). In Namibia, Setswana is recognised as a regional language, and thus qualifying for use as a language in education. Therefore, Setswana is a truly cross-border language which has led to the African Union promoting it to the status of a regional language.

Setswana is a member of the Sotho subgroup (also known to as Sotho languages) of closely related Bantu languages found in Southern Africa (Chebanne 2008a). This group of languages includes Sesotho (spoken in Lesotho and parts of South Africa), and Sepedi (also known as Northern Sotho) which is spoken predominantly in the northern parts of Gauteng Province and in the Limpopo Province –South Africa. Setswana is, therefore, mutually intelligible and/or semi-intelligible with Northern Sotho and Southern Sotho. It is also semi-intelligible with Lozi, spoken in Zambia's Western Province. The native speakers of Setswana are known as Batswana (singular: Motswana). All the ethnic groups that speak Setswana as their mother tongue are known as Batswana. Though they may belong to a variety of ethnic clusters under the leadership of different *dikgosi* (kings), they are collectively called Batswana.

Despite the national and regional status of Setswana, researchers have often lamented that language use practices in education and administration have given more prominence to English than Setswana is being usurped in the critical national roles in domains of culture and education (Republic of Botswana 1994). While Setswana is a school subject through primary and secondary education, it is considered to be of less significance in value to the educational and economic development of the country. The RNPE has argued that 'The Setswana language is not viewed as an important factor in the contemporary economic and cultural life of the country and it is not seen as a vehicle for secondary or even tertiary education' (Republic of Botswana 1994:183).

According to Smieja (2000), the speakers' attitudes depend heavily on the status and prestige of their language which must have an educational and economic value associated with it. A language's prestige results partly from its users' perception of its symbolic or utilitarian value. The social esteem in which a language is held is often a function of favourable government policies, historical legacy, and the use of language in education, extensive domains of use, as well as a well-codified form of the language, substantial documentation or cultural prestige (Smieja 2000 and Batibo 2015). While on paper the national policy seems to support Setswana, there is no clear focus or plan on what needs to be done to make Setswana a functional national language. Notwithstanding this situation, Setswana seems to be better placed to hold on for the next 50 years or so.

Regional Languages

The order or presentation of regional languages is guided by their demographic importance. This scenario can be observed from the 2001 population and housing census data (Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo 2003) and the surveys undertaken by Andersson and Janson (1997), and the analysis of Botswana languages situation by Seloma and Chebanne (2007).

Kalanga

The Bakalanga (or Vakalanga) as the people are called, are related to the Shona in Zimbabwe. They came under linguistic and cultural influences of non-Shona groups over the centuries (Chebanne 1995; Wentzel 1983b-I, II; Ramsay *et al* 1996; van Waarden 1991). Therefore, they have a history of peripherality with regards to the main Shona group which goes back to 500 years when the territory that later became Bulilima gwa Memwe evolved far from the social dynamics of the Mambos of great Zimbabwe (Wentzel, 1983b-I, II). 'Lilima' (for Shona 'Ririma'), indicates that the speech community was phonetically distant from the main Shona speech community by that time (Doke 1931). Politically, the Balilima, were ruled by a Chingamile (Changamire) a sort of a governor sent by the Rozwi (Rozvi) Mambos (kings) from Danang'ombe, the capital of the Butua Kingdom (Wentzel, 1983b-I, II). The last Chingamile was Memwe, a Rozwi, not a Lilima, and therefore possibly a Karanga (not Kalanga) speaker. Memwe and his Bulilima province have since crumbled. The consequences of the declining kingdom led to the marginalisation of some of its subjects by other ethnic groups since over two hundred years ago (Wentzel 1983b-I, II; Ramsay *et al* 1996; van Waarden 1991). The present day Kalanga still find themselves in this situation both in Botswana and Zimbabwe.

The classification of Kalanga is often complicated by debates of whether it is a cluster, a language or a dialect. However, what is historically certain is that Kalanga belongs with the Shona languages in Zone S10 (South Eastern Bantu, North) (Guthrie 1967 and 1971) classification and Doke puts it in Zone 6(a). Cole's classification puts Shona in Zone 61 (South Central), and Kalanga would then be Zone 61/1/1 (Western Shona) (Herbert 1993). Doke further gives the following dialects of Kalanga: 61/1/1a Kalanga; 61/1/1b Nyayi; 61/1/1c Nambya; 61/1/1d Rozwi; 61/1/1e Talaunda; 61/1/1f Lilima (Humbe); and 61/1/1g Peri. The so-called Peri is a Northern Sotho group from the Pedi which became assimilated by the Lilima (Humbe). The Kalanga label (61/1/1a) is a common denominator groups such as Nyai, Talaunda and Lili-ma that form the so-called Western Shona group (Chimhundu *et al* 2010).

At present, the Botswana government language policy (or language use practice) has no plan of ensuring that other languages, except Setswana, are protected and preserved for the future generations. One of the greatest threat to the survival of the Kalanga language. Over the past 50 years Kalanga has been marginalised by not acceding to community language use domains such as education and radio programmes. In view of this in 1993, the non-governmental pressure group Society for the Promotion of Ika-langa Language (SPIL) took a non-political decision to engage in activities that would promote and revive the language and the culture of the Bakalanga, that is, the speakers of Kalanga language. To promote the language and culture of the Bakalanga people, the Society undertakes cultural activities such as the annual Domboshaba Festival of Culture and History where festivities, publications such as a newsletter and books are distributed. This festival encourages research in the language by native speakers as well as by researchers. However, without official government support these activities may not ensure the resilience of the language.

Shekgalagari

Shekgalagari falls under Sotho-Tswana languages in the Southern Bantu Zone S (Chebanne 2005). Linguists believe that these communities spoke a common Proto-Sotho-Tswana language (Cole 1955; Doke 1931; Andersson and Janson 1997), and that Bakgalagari (a term used for convenience to designate the ancestors of Bashaga, Babolaongwe and Bangologa who now inhabit the confines of the Kalahari Desert and other places in Botswana and Namibia) were the earliest off-shoots. Other Sotho-Tswana ethnic communities like the Bafokeng, Barolong and Baphofu later established themselves as separate communities (Tlou and Campbell 1997). Linguists also believe that before the split –probably caused by inter-ethnic rivalry and demographic congestion –the Proto-language had evolved significantly, and at this time there were clear dialectal differences between these three communities and Shekgalagari (Chebanne and Monaka 2009).

Shekgalagari is essentially made up of three main dialectal varieties of Shengolologa, Sheshaga, and Sheboloongwe. To a large extent Shekgalagari has undergone similar predicament as other minority languages. Assailing political and economic pressure by Bangwaketse, Bakwena, and Bangwato have seen over the last century the speakers of Shekgalagari dispersed, assimilated, and the present generation shifting massively to speaking Setswana dialects of tutelage. The Baboloongwe in the villages of Moiyabana, Mosolotshane, Kodibeleng and Otse in the Central District now speak Sengwato dialect. Bashaga in Letlhakeng, Ditshegwane, Takatokwane, and Dutlwe in the Kweneng District speak Sekwena dialect. Baphaleng under Bangwaketse domination in the Southern District have since lost their language. While Shengolologa alone has resisted preponderant influence of Setswana, others have not been so fortunate due to proximity with Setswana speaking communities. It is on the basis of the resilience of Shengolologa that it was chosen for the development of the orthography and Bible translation project in 2004 based in Kang (Lukusa and Monaka 2008).

Localised Languages

In this section we discuss those Bantu languages of Botswana that represent less than 2% of the country's total population. Elsewhere, they are considered together with Kalanga as 'minority' languages (Mazonde 2002). The term minor and its derivative minority are used advisedly to denote socially constructed status and not necessarily numerical minorities (RETENG 2015). The 2001 population and housing census figures reveal only those people who optionally indicated they knew the language, not necessarily the ethnic speaker, or even not all speakers construed the intention of the question seeking the owner of the language. Therefore, these census figures did not report on ethnic affiliation and the figures in Table 1 above are hypothetical. It should be recalled that while the designation Botswana, Setswana, and Motswana are used respectively for the country, the culture and language, and the citizen, the census questions may be construed to seek those who have positive identity for citizenship through Setswana knowledge, and thus their ethnic language would not be used to achieve Botswana ethnic citizenry.

Ethnic and demographic relationship of the so-called demographically minor languages in Botswana have been undertaken by Nyati-Ramahobo and Chebanne (2003), Janson (2000), Andersson and Janson (1997), and also much earlier by Schapera (1952) who provided an analysis of the so-called major and minor languages in the country. Bennett (2002) also clarifies the political and territorial dimensions of the inter-ethnic relationships in Botswana. During the Protectorate years, one of the concerns of the British was to define territories and not ethnic groups. However, those who ruled the defined territories also subsequently imposed their language and culture (Bennett 2002). This was the case with the Bangwato's imposition on the Babirwa, Batswapong, Bakalanga, Wayeyi in Tsienyane, and Basarwa all over the Bangwato Reserve which following Independence in 1966 became the Central District (Bennett 2002). This policy

dispensation has marginalised these groups and further entrenched the perception of their minority status. The languages under consideration fall into different language classification zones according to Guthrie (1948:1967 and 1971), and these are Zones K, R, and S.

TjeBirwa and TjeTswapong (Zone S Languages)

The languages under Zone S are otherwise called Southern Bantu Sotho-Tswana sub-group. Linguists believe that these communities spoke a common Proto-Sotho-Tswana language (Cole 1955; Doke 1993a and 1993b; and Andersson and Janson 1997). Sekgwama (1987) notes that TjeBirwa has in the past hundred years experienced massive 'tswananization' (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002:21) which began in the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century (Bobeng 1976 and Sekgwama 1987). This situation has been aggravated by the educational language policy as practiced in the school system. Most TjeBirwa and TjeTswapong speakers now use forms of languages that are closer to the Sengwato dialect of Setswana than to the kind of TjeBirwa and TjeTswapong languages spoken some hundred years ago.

Sekgwama (1987) and Westphal (1962) clearly point out to the political intervention of the Bangwato into the political affairs of TjeBirwa and TjeTswapong speakers to be consequential in the ethnic and linguistic existence of these two languages. The point made earlier on 'tswananization' currently presents difficulties in the context of the present practice of the TjeBirwa and TjeTswapong languages. The forms closer to what is spoken now are almost the Sengwato dialect of Setswana because they contain very few lexical items and phonological characteristics that are particular to the TjeBirwa and TjeTswapong spoken by older generations. These languages are, therefore, under threat of totally disappearing under the current situation of state language use practice (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002).

Shiyeyi and OtjiHerero (Zone R Languages)

Shiyeyi and OtjiHerero belong together with Zone R Bantu languages and are found in the Zambezi Province of Namibia. They are related and belong together with languages of the R21 Zone which comprise the OshiKwanyama, OshiNdonga, OshiWambo, and OtjiHerero; and the ShiYeyi is at R41 level of relationship. Most of these languages are found in northern Namibia, southern Angola and north-western Botswana where they are regional languages. The R21 languages are very closely related, however, ethnically they have and continue to exist as separate entities. From Guthrie's (1967) comparative vocabulary, OtjiHerero has discernable phonological and lexical differences, but still presents sufficient historical linguistic affinities with the rest of the R21 languages (Vossen 1988).

One interesting language is the R41 ShiYeyi, whose historical habitat is the Okavango Delta in Botswana (Tlou 1985). However, ShiYeyi speakers are also found within the present day Zambezi Province of Namibia along the Linyanti River system. Guthrie's (1968) zoning it at R41 indicates that it is sufficiently distant from the R21 languages. In terms of this areal zoning, ShiYeyi may be considered a historical linguistic isolate. Later linguistic research by Maniacky (1997) and Vossen (1988) demonstrate evidence of the ancient arrival and habitation of the ShiYeyi speakers in the area. Therefore, the Wayeyi would be the Zone R speaking group that reached and maintained their habitation longer than the rest of the R group. In the past century ShiYeyi has successively come into direct contact with the !Xuun, and later with Setswana through the Batawana and Lozi through the BaLozi. Both Setswana and Lozi languages have further contributed to ShiYeyi lexical and phonological evolution (Vossen 1988 and Westphal 1962). Both ShiYeyi and OtjiHerero have developed orthography and Bible translations have been undertaken on them (late nineteenth century for OtjiHerero and late twentieth century for Shieyi) (see Haacke and Elderkin, 1997)

Chiikuhane, ThiMbukushu and Gciriku (Zone K Languages)

Botswana's Chobe-Caprivi (Zambezi valley) languages that fall under Zone K according to the listing of

Guthrie (1968:71) are the Chiikuhane (Subiya), ThiMbikushu, and Gciriku. Linguistics and historical dynamics in this region account for the differences that are now manifest in these languages. While the three of them have had historical mutual influence with Kavango languages, their current location accounts for their linguistic relationship with ShiYeyi (Maniacky 1997). ThiMbukushu and Gciriku are further to the west within the Zone R and have, therefore, undergone important vocabulary and phonological borrowing with the ShiYeyi and other Zone R languages.

Chiikuhane has maintained with Totela language of upper Okavango and Zambezi a closer link with their origins, the Tonga language in Zambia, albeit it also has been brought into closer mutual influence with ShiYeyi (Maniacky 1997). The few clicks that Chiikuhane has are most possibly a borrowing from ShiYeyi or an adaptation of ShiYeyi influence. In the past hundreds of years, ShiYeyi, a Mafwe-Mashi related language has come into direct contact with Chiikuhane, a Tonga language related to Totela (Maniacky 1997; Haacke and Elderkin 1997).

The Khoisan Languages

The term Khoisan is used by linguists and anthropologists to bring together various Southern Africa people that speak click languages such as the Nama/Damara, Glui/Gllana, Naro, Shua/Cua, !Xoon, !Xun and †Hoan (Chebanne 2012 and 2015). Historically, the speakers of the Khoisan languages or some of them are considered the later Stone Age hunter-gatherers and are thought to have been direct ancestors of the Khoisan-speaking peoples who still inhabit some of the more remote desert regions of Namibia and Botswana (Shillington 1995:34). According to the Köhler (1981) hypothesis the common structure of word roots, the combination of rare consonants (ejectives) of click and glottal types largely demonstrated that the Khoisan languages, even as they are currently linguistically diverse, might have had an ancient genetic relationship, and that pursuing such a hypothesis would be scientifically credible and productive. However, the debate on the Khoisan language families has not been resolved yet (Traill 1986).

Diagram 1 below presents the commonly accepted classification and the tentative Khoisan languages families. Bleek (1942) enumerates many Khoisan languages in colonial Southern Africa including Botswana, and it is in present day Botswana that their greater number and linguistic diversity was observed. This was also earlier on observed by Schapera (1930) and also much later by Silberbauer (1981). Recent research on the Khoisan (or Basarwa or San) has been undertaken by Cassidy and others (2001), Saugestad (2001) and Chebanne (2012) who provide, historical, social, political and economic conditions of these people. Whether the Khoisan communities have always been hunter-gathers, devoid of earthenware skills and agriculture is a matter of historical conjuncture. With the linguistic and ethnic attrition that characterise the Khoisan speech communities (Barnard 1992; Hassebring 2000, Andersson and Janson 1997 and Batibo 1997) it can be supposed that throughout history some of these languages have not managed to resist adverse sociolinguistic and geographical factors that caused 'language death' (Chebanne 2012:89).

Diagram 1: The Khoisan Languages Family

The Khoe and San

- 1 Hadza** (*language family, Tanzania*)
- 2 Khoe-San**
 - 2.1 Sandawe** (*language family, Tanzania*)
 - 2.2 Khoe-San (Southern Africa)**
 - 2.2.1 Khoe-Kwadi** (*language family, Botswana and Namibia*)
 - 2.2.1.1 Khoekhoe: Nama-Damara (Khoekhoegowab); !Ora; Hai||om**
 - 2.2.1.2 Kalahari Central: ||Gana; !Gui; Naro**
 - 2.2.1.3 Kalahari North: Khwedam (Kxoe, ||Ani, Buga, !Ganda)**
 - 2.2.1.4 Kalahari East: Kua, Cua, Tsua, Shua, Tciretcire, Ganadi**
 - 2.3 San (Non-Khoe)** (*language family, Botswana, Namibia & South Africa*)
 - 2.3.1 Southern San: Taa and Tuu: !Xóó (!Aa): †Ama◊am; !Gwan◊am; !Kui (|Xam, ||Xegui, and N|u)**

2.3.2 Northern San: !Xuun, Ju!hoan (Ju!hoasi), †Kx'au ll'ein;

2.3.3 Hōā ; Sasi (Isolates, but distantly related to !Xuun)

This classification is adapted from Güldemann *et al* (2000); Vossen *et al* (1986); Vossen (1988 and 1998); Chebanne (2010 and 2012); and Du Plessis (2009). It should be noted that Hadza, although a click language (which makes it often to be put together with Khoisan) from what Heine (2000) suggests, resembles by its grammatical structure, the Kuliak language of Uganda which belongs to 1K languages.

Diagram 1 also confirms the reported linguistic and genetic diversity of these languages that Köhler (1981) preferred to refer to as 'ancient languages'. With the linguistic and ethnic attrition that characterize the Khoisan speech communities (Barnard 1992; Hassebring 2000; Andersson and Janson 1997 and Batibo 1997) it can be supposed that throughout history some of these languages have not managed to resist adverse sociolinguistic and geographical factors that caused 'language death' (Chebanne 2012:89). On the other hand, some of these communities have been more resilient than others because of the geographical conditions that provided barriers and protection against incorporation by other communities which is the main cause of the loss of ethnicity and language.

English as the Official Language of Botswana

Since the establishment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885 to the present English encroachment into and its use among the Batswana has not known any recession. When the territory became a British protectorate in 1885, English became the language of protestation. The three Batswana kings who went to Britain in 1895 to protest against Cecil Rhodes' designs of taking the Protectorate, were former Missionary school learners (see Nkomazana 1993). The provision of education and other social amenities in the first half of the twentieth century brought about the unprecedented usage of English by civil servants such as teachers, office workers, police, and others. By the years leading to Independences in 1966, English was a school language of instruction (Bagwasi 2002). The strength of English was manifest in education where Setswana and other languages were taught as subjects starting from the first day of schooling (Republic of Botswana 1977).

In the 130 years up to Independence with the English language experience, the Batswana had been completely subjugated into Anglicism and the dominate culture has become English or European. Without taking lightly these complex socio-cultural and economic issues, this encroachment of English cannot be underestimated as to its effects in the Botswana society. For Batswana, English has become not just an official language but a determinant of the emerging religious culture; a language of education and erudition; a language of politics and power, even economic power (Mgadla 2003 and Nkomazana 1993). It has become clear from the national Commissions of Education of 1977 and 1993 that English in Botswana is firmly rooted. English will, therefore, continue to usurp and replace local languages even Setswana which is a national language in formal settings.

General Discussion

The history and sociolinguistics dynamics presented here amply show that in Botswana, the country of Batswana, as presented in most socio-political literature, there is a *de facto* monolithic state in which issues of ethnicity, democracy, and equity evolve around the belief that the country is linguistically and culturally homogenous. According to Janson (2000) the situation of minority languages such as those of the Khoisan speech communities is not in itself a problem, but that not giving them any status in the language use policies of the state is a threat to their survival. They have been disadvantaged historically and socio-economically, and even continue to be neglected in education and generally cultural manifestation. Socio-culturally, the Khoisan speech communities have also suffered as their languages and cultures have been

met with negative attitudes from the major groups who despise them and continue to exercise a linguistic and cultural hegemony over them (Khoisan). Khoisan ethno-linguistic communities and other Botswana minor groups' linguistic and cultural values are discarded and in turn their cultures are assimilated into the lifestyles of the 'major' ethnic groups. This threatens their identity and existence as speech communities and ethnic groups.

As it has been mentioned by other observers, at Independence there was no policy formulation pertaining specifically to language (Nyati-Ramabobo 2002; Janson and Tsonope 1991) and this absence has in a way legitimized ethnic languages marginalisation. The arguments raised in the foregoing presentation clearly demonstrate that Botswana is a multi-ethnic and multilingual nation, and should conduct its social policy in that manner to ensure the enjoyments of linguistic and cultural ideals by all groups. In view of the Botswana policies of language in education and language use planning in public space Botswana has opted for the minimalist programme where English and Setswana are the only languages in communication. The quasi status quo on language use prevailed, and the expediencies and excitement of Independence let this crucial matter hang on vague allusions in the Constitution with regards to requirements for holding certain public offices.

However, one could also be practical and say that the challenges of development were so burdensome for a poor country such as Botswana in 1966. Therefore, the question of language as a right was not simply overlooked, but benefits of socio-cultural minimalism seem to have been preferred. If that has significantly improved the lives of the people as international indicators report, the real value of human rights has been completely swept aside, as the history of about half a century shows (Sköld *et al* 2015 and Nyati-Ramahobo 2002).

While the pre-colonial Botswana's language and ethnic situations were by and large determined by socio-economic and political dynamics (inter-ethnic wars and inter-ethnic allegiances or interactions), the colonial and post-colonial ethnic language situations were based on language policies of expediency. These policies were interested in the creation of political entities and the consolidation of boundaries and the promotion of communication into all the cardinal points of the territorial entity (Bennett 2002 and Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). Missionary efforts, which were instrumental in literacy development, harmonisation and standardisations of diversity, and for the administrative machinery, significantly contributed to what currently prevails in Botswana in terms of the choice of languages that are used nationally (Chebanne and Mathangwane 2009). While it is true that issues of languages' endangerment language identities, and ethnic affiliation are complex, the facts presented in this discussion clearly present a language and ethnic loss model facilitated by policies of the state (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002 and Batibo 2015).

Botswana, just like Tanzania, Kenya and a number of other countries, chose the *exclusive* national language policy. Hence, 50 years later, and in the context of Vision 2016, which was purported to uphold ethnic and language rights, languages have been lost (Chebanne 2012). This has not been without consequences because languages that were found at Independence are dying. Most languages that do not feature in formal language use set ups are in danger of being abandoned by their speakers. The minority language speakers shift to Setswana. Conjecturally, the 50 years of Independence have witnessed a negation of the development of indigenous languages and cultures. Even Setswana has regressed in its cultural and linguistic domains. In terms of the ethnic and linguistic process in Botswana, none of the ideals of Vision 2016 have been fulfilled, and going further into the Vision 2036 under reparation, Botswana will increasingly lose its ethnic languages and their cultural identities. The winner in all this lack of proper language use planning in Botswana will be the English language and the culture associated to it.

Conclusion

The current language use policy presents some difficulties for minor languages of Botswana and this has

far reaching consequences for the country's capacity to convincingly engage in democratisation or even preservation of its ethnic cultures and the languages that convey these cultures. The discussion in this chapter has provided an account of Botswana Bantu ethnic and languages state of affairs and their representation in the policies and laws of the state. An emphasis on minor Bantu languages was deliberately made to demonstrate the tragic risks of losing these precious resources and tools for conveying vibrant indigenous knowledge systems enshrined in these cultures. The argument is that to promote a language use is to preserve culture, to maintain a language and culture identity is to promote ethnic cultural resources for posterity and create prosperity of the supreme right for any human community.

Performances, dances here and singing there will not guarantee language maintenance in Botswana (Chebanne 2015). As a human rights issue, language is important for the democratisation of a society (Chebanne 2010, 2008a and 2008c). The use of one's language is the greatest vehicle to reach one's soul and for the creation of one's vision of things in existence. Botswana must promote its ethno-languages and ensure that its historical language diversity does not die. Languages that have been marginalised need to be put into prominence in the domains that will permit their use and their promotion. Democracy provides a framework for a meaningful human development. Socially, people relate better to development and democracy if they are represented by their social values of language and culture, and can make choices in the modernisation of these values. The English language will not help ensure all these, and will only even supplement or supplant Setswana –the national language.

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