

CHEGWAPONG: THE RISK BEYOND BILINGUALISM

by

B. Mogara

gabanab@mopipi.ub.bw; P/Bag UB 00703, Gaborone, Botswana

and

Stephen T. M. Lukusa

tchidiessa16@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Intelligibility between Chegwapong and other languages (e.g. Sebirwa) or dialects of Setswana (such as Sengwato and Setawana) remains an undeniable fact due to genetic relations between these speech forms. What raised our eyebrows is the ETHNOLOGUE's description of Chegwapong as a vigorous (i.e. vibrant) language. We went out for a much more recent fieldwork to collect data that led to the publication of An Anthology of Chegwapong Folktales. Our three-member research team included two fluent Setswana speakers.

Contrary to the afore-mentioned inadvertent description, Chegwapong is not only undergoing the process of change, its life too is threatened by the dwindling number of its speakers. The public image of this language is generally negative; people tend to see it derogatively as a mispronounced variety of Setswana whereas it is in reality an offshoot of Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa (i.e. Northern Sotho, one of the Bantu languages spoken in the Republic of South Africa).

Our account in this paper is backed by our unanimous field observation that most people in the eight Tswapong villages that we were recommended to investigate based on the claim that they were the stronghold of Chegwapong turned out to be people who rather spoke Setswana with a Chegwapong accent assuming that they were speaking Chegwapong.

Should we therefore conclude that Chegwapong is nothing but a mispronounced form of Setswana? This paper attempts to answer this question with supporting evidence collected during our fieldwork.

Keywords: Chegwapong, legwapo, moribund language, vibrant language, language endangerment scale

1. Introduction

Chegwapong (also known as 'Setswapong' in Setswana or by the hybrid name 'Chetswapong') is a moribund language deriving from Sepedi, a Sotho-Tswana language spoken in the neighbouring Republic of South Africa. It is

highly mutually intelligible with Tjibirwa, with which it shares roughly 90.5% of its basic vocabulary (Batibo, 1998). It is also mutually intelligible with Shekgalagari, (Sengwato variant of) Setswana and Sepedi. It is spoken by the Bagwapong people who inhabit the Tswapong Hills in the eastern part of Botswana. Dimpe (1986), like Anderson and Jonson (1997), states that Bagwapong are not a homogeneous group but comprise smaller groupings such as Ramokgonami, Maifela, Chadibe and Sefhare, where each of these clusters is an off-shoot of larger groups such as Babirwa, Bakaa, Ndebele, Rozvi and other Bapedi groups with which the Bagwapong interacted during their migrations (Mpulubusi, 1992).

Although they all inhabit the Tswapong Hills currently, historically, their movement patterns vary from group to group and they arrived in the area at different times, and some of these groups possibly moved into the area during the Mfecane wars (Tlou & Campbell, 1984; Batibo & Seloma, 2006). Chegwapong is spoken in the north-eastern part of Botswana in the Tswapong area, which is divided into Tswapong North and Tswapong South. The language is found in Mahalapye, Tswapong North and South, and Serowe-Palapye Sub-Districts in the villages of Moshopha, Maape, Tumasera, Sefhare, Mokobeng, Mochaneng, Chadibe, Lerala, Ratholo, Majwaneng, Lecheng, GooTau, GooSekgwane, Mathokolo, Makungwane, Mhalapitsa, Seleka, Lesenepole, Maunatlala, Pilikwe, Malaka, Moremi, Shakwe, Matolwane, Mophaneng, Kgagudi, Mogapinyana, Mmadiokane/Manaledi and Mokokwana (Batibo et al. 2003).

The present paper adopts the name Chegwapong because that is the endonym used by the indigenous speakers of the language which is still maintained by older generations.

Lukusa (2013) uses a five-level endangerment scale suggested by Wurm (1998: 192) including:

- 1) **Potentially endangered languages:** are socially and economically disadvantaged, under heavy pressure from a larger language and beginning to lose child speakers;
- 2) **Endangered languages:** have few or no children learning the language, and the youngest good speakers are young adults;
- 3) **Seriously endangered languages:** have the youngest good speakers age 50 or older;
- 4) **Moribund languages:** have only a handful of good speakers left, mostly very old;
- 5) **Extinct languages:** have no speakers left.

Basing himself on this scale, Lukusa (2013) observes that Chegwapong is not simply endangered, it is **seriously endangered** and is doomed to die if proper measures cannot be taken to rescue it because:

The oral tradition reports that Bagwapong got separated from Bapedi around the 18th century. Because of the unstable conditions in the Northern Province of South Africa, they are thought to have moved into the hilly area of Botswana where they are now enclaved among the majority Setswana speakers. They managed somehow to maintain their political autonomy until they were subjugated by the Bangwato in the early '1800s' (Mortzafi-Haller 1992, Mpulubusi 1992). Today, the Bagwapong form a heterogeneous multi-ethnic group with cultural groups like Matabele, Barotsi, Bakaa, Babirwa and others. Their language is highly mutually intelligible with Tjibirwa, with which it shares roughly 90.5% of its basic vocabulary (Batibo, 1998).

Lukusa (2013) reports that the circumstances do not augur any hopeful future for the language and growth in community support is zero. For example, in the family context, we often have these scenarios: A Mogwapong man + a Setswana speaking woman get Setswana speaking children. Even inter-marriage between a Mogwapong man and a Mogwapong woman generates Setswana speaking children.

Nowadays, in many villages, the younger Bagwapong generation has lost the language and can only speak Setswana, the national and the majority language which is taught at school. Moreover, even in the so-called Bagwapong stronghold only a few elderly people can manipulate the language with a satisfactory degree of ease. Most elderly Bagwapong easily code-shift unintentionally between Setswana and Chegwapong.

Chegwapong is not only undergoing the process of change. Its life too is threatened by the dwindling number of its speakers. According to Andersson and Janson (1997), the estimated population of surviving Bagwapong speakers is 2,000 though only 6 years later (Cf. 2003 UNSD) the Ethnologue in the afore-mentioned controversial description calls it a vibrant language and advances a population of 5,380.

There are two divergent views with regard to how these people became known as Bagwapong. According to the first view, the name Bagwapong was given to the diverse groups of people who settled around Letswapo Hill (Ketlogetswe 2005). The Batswapong/Bagwapong people are of the view that *letswapo* (in Sengwato, a Setswana dialect) or *legwapo* (in Chegwapong) is indigenously understood to mean 'foot of the hill' while *-ng* is a locative suffix and in this case possibly means 'at/from.' The name Batswapong was

therefore conveniently used to refer to diverse groups of people who were settled at or came from (the foot of) Letswapo Hill (Mulindwa 1983).

From a different view, legend has it that Batswapong derived their name from *poo* ‘bull’, after a renowned traditional doctor referred to as *poo* ‘the bull’ or *ngaka ya poo* ‘the bull doctor’ (where bull signified formidable power). Frequent visits were made to *poo* ‘bull’ because of his remarkable powers, and ‘patients’ reported that they had consultations with *poo* (*ba tswa poong* ‘they are coming from the bull’). The whole community ultimately became known as *Ba-* (= those who) *tswa* (= have come) *poong* (= from the bull) (Mpulubusi, 1992).

Lukusa (2013) argues that in Botswana, Chegwapong’s survival is threatened. The language is endangered in the sense that most of its speakers are immersed in a Setswana speaking environment and their language is under a lot of pressure from this advantaged powerful language. Many Chegwapong speakers became bilingual due to similarities and close genetic relations between Setswana and their own language. As a consequence many villages which are nowadays claimed to be Bagwapong villages¹ are now populated by people who speak Setswana with Chegwapong accent. Hence, one should wonder whether Chegwapong is just a mispronounced form of Setswana. In many of the Bagwapong villages, the younger generation as well as the elderly can no longer speak fluent Chegwapong. They often codemix it with Setswana and many are not even aware of doing so (Mogara, 2017).

In terms of contemporary linguistics, nothing has been done so far in this language (Mogara, 2017). This paper therefore aims at filling the gap in the descriptive literature of Chegwapong. To achieve this, the paper therefore looks at the following questions, though not in the sequence suggested by the numbering below: 1) Is Chegwapong distinct from Setswana? 2) In what ways is Chegwapong different from Setswana? 3) What is the current status of the Chegwapong language? 4) On what kind of speakers does the Ethnologue base itself to describe Chegwapong as a vibrant language?

2. The Linguistic characteristics of Chegwapong

Chegwapong is indeed a distinct linguistic entity in that it has a distinctive grammar, vocabulary and a sound system which, though related to what may be found in Setswana, are not completely identical. In order to show that

¹ E.g. Ramokgonami, Moshopha, Tumasera/ Seleka, Sefhope, Machaneng, Mhalapitsa, Sefhare, etc. (Anderson & Janson, 1997: 42)

Chegwapong is different from Setswana, a look at its phonological system, its morphology, grammatical concord and basic vocabulary is in place.

i) The Phonological System

Phonologically, just like all other Sotho-Tswana languages Chegwapong is characterized by seven vowels which generally tend to be lengthened in penultimate position.

Table1: Chegwapong Vowels

Height	Localization		
		Front	Back
Close	Tense	i	u
	Lax	ɪ	ʊ
Mid		ɛ	ɔ
Open		a	

The examples in (1) below show the vowels.

(1) Sound example	pronunciation	gloss
i : pije	[pidʒi]	‘horse’
u : chemumu	[tʃimumu]	‘mute/speechless/speech-impaired person’
ɪ : chemumu	[tʃɪmumu]	‘mute/speechless/speech-impaired person’
ʊ : mosaldimoholo	[mɔsɑ jɪmɔhɔlɔ]	‘old woman’
ɛ : wa hahwe	[wahahwɛ]	‘your/your’
ɔ : khosi	[kʰɔsi]	‘chief’
a : moyanaana	[mojana:na]	‘girl/daughter’

NB: All vowels can be lengthened in penultimate position

Chegwapong has a relatively complex consonant system which differs from that of the mainstream Sotho-Tswana languages. The inventory is given in table 2 below.

Table 2: *Chegwapong Consonants*²

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Latero-alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosives: Voiceless-aspirated	p ^h		t ^h tt ^h				k ^h		
Plosives: Voiceless non-aspirated	p		t tt				k		
Plosives: voiced	b		d d ^h (dh)				g(gh)		
Plosive aspirated voiced									
Affricates: voiceless-aspirated			ts ^h		tʃ ^h				
Affricates: voiceless non-aspirated			ts		tʃ (ch)				
Affricates: voiced					dʒ (j)				
Fricatives	ɸ (fh) β (bh)	f	s		ʃ (sh)				h
Nasals	m		n			n (ny)	ŋ(ng)		
Sonorants: semi-vowels, laterals, trill			r	l		j (y)	w		

² While all consonantal sounds appear in IPA symbols, their spelling is indicated in round brackets where confusion is supposed to arise.

Retroflex consonants: [ɮ] (**ld**) ho **ldisa ldik^homɔ** [ho]isa [ik^homɔ]
 ‘to feed cows’

Most plosive consonants can be preceded by a nasal and therefore form prenasalized onsets. The phonological system of Chegwapong unlike the standard Setswana one does not have lateral affricates [tʃ] and [tʃ^h]. Instead, it has the geminate consonant *tt^h* as in *jotthe* ‘all’, *matthare* ‘leaves’, *tthobolo* ‘gun’, etc. and a retroflex lateral [ɮ] spelt with *ld* as in *ldipholoholo* ‘animals’, *ldinda* ‘lice’, *lda* ‘eat’, etc. or an aspirated plosive alveolar [d^h] spelt with *dh* as in *phadhalala* ‘spread’, *dhaya* ‘make’, etc. Moreover, where Setswana has [s] and [ʃ] respectively, Chegwapong has [tʃ] as in *chelo* ‘thing’, *chenya* ‘destroy’, *chetthako* ‘shoe’, etc. Furthermore, where Setswana has the aspirated uvular plosive [q^h] as in *kgosi* ‘chief’, Chegwapong has the aspirated velar [k^h] as in *khosi* ‘chief’, *kheji* ‘sack’, etc. Equally where Setswana has [tsw] as in *tswa* ‘come from’, Chegwapong has *gw* as in *gwa* ‘come from’, *gwelela* ‘continue’. Of interest also is the fact that Chegwapong has the bilabial voiceless fricative sound [ɸ] spelt with *fh* and the bilabial voiced fricative [β] spelt with *bh* as in *chefhokhu* ‘blind person’, *fha* ‘here’, *tsofhala* ‘get old’, *Chefhare* ‘Sefhare village’, *ho bhidilwe* ‘to get angry’, *ho bhutthuha* ‘to come out quickly’, etc. In addition, where Setswana has the uvular sound [χ] as in *gagwe* [χaχwe] ‘his/hers’, Chegwapong has the fricative velar [h] as in *hahwe* ‘his/hers’, *bohwhawadi* ‘in-laws’, *bohobe* ‘porridge’, *lehong* ‘stick’. A voiced velar plosive consonant [g] as in *ghima* ‘big’, *moghibhi* ‘thief’, *gwa* ‘come from’, etc. exists in Chegwapong but not in Setswana. Where Setswana uses [nt] as in *ntuela* ‘pay me’ resulting from the first person singular Object Marker N- and a verb root initial [t], Chegwapong uses *nd* as in *nduela* ‘pay me’, *ndemoga* ‘recognize me’, etc.

ii) *The Morphological System*

Morphologically although due to common genetic origin, Chegwapong has some similarities with Setswana, there are remarkable differences between the two. The language has an 18 noun class system as in Setswana. As is the case in many Bantu languages, most nouns in Chegwapong consist of a noun prefix and a stem. Noun classes, their prefixes, typical contents, their plural forms, and glossed examples appear as indicated in Table (3) below. Chegwapong has eighteen noun classes each of which has its own prefix. Amongst the class prefixes, some are singular others are plural while some others are invariable as in names of liquids. Table 3 below presents the noun class prefixes.

Table 3: Noun class prefixes

Class	Typical Contents	Class Prefix	Example	Gloss
1	Human beings (singular)	mo- [mʊ]	moana	child
1a	Names of family relatives & personified animals	-	rakhaldi	aunt
2	Human beings (plural)	ba-	baana	children
2a	Family relative (plural)	bo- [bɔ]	borakhaldi	aunts
3	Trees & other objects (sg)	mo- [mʊ]	mocheche	dress
4	Trees & other objects (pl.)	me- [mɪ]	mecheche	dresses
5	Trees & other objects (sg)	le- [lɪ]	letthare	leave
6	Names of liquids	ma-	maatse	water
7	Names of languages & objects (sg)	che- [tʃɪ]	Chetthako, chelo Chegwapong	Shoe, thing Setswapong
8	Names of objects (pl)	bi-	bitthako	shoes
9	Names of animals & others (sg)	N-	poldi	goat
10	Names of animals & others (pl)	din-	ldipoldi	goats
11	Elongated & abstract objects (sg)	lo- [lʊ]	lobopo	universe
14	Abstract concepts	bo- [bʊ]	bohole	disability
15	Deverbal nouns	ho- [hʊ]	ho ghiba	to steal
16	locatives	ha-	ha moraho	at the back
17	locatives	ho- [hʊ]	holdimo	an top of
18	locatives	mo- [mʊ]	motthang	in the event of

Chegwapong grammatical concord works as illustrated in the following table. The examples have also been translated in Setswana to highlight similarity.

Table 4: Chegwapong Grammatical Concord Marking

Cl.	Noun Prefix	e.g.	Concord
1	mo-	moyanaana	<u>Moyanaana</u> yo wa hahwe a le monte ‘his/her child is beautiful’ Ngwana yo wa gagwe a le monte (Setswana)
1.a	Ø-	khosi	Yaanong (Ø) khosi a che rada hore moyana wa hahwe o ka jewa ‘now the chief wanted her child to get married’ Jaanong kgosi a rata gore ngwana wa gagwe o ka tsewa (Setswana)
		Ldimo	<u>Ldimo</u> o nna a ta fha a bata ho lida ‘the ogre always comes here with the intention of eating you’. Dimo o nna a tla fa a batla go go ja (Setswana)
2	ba-	battho	<u>Battho</u> botthe ba nne ba tshela ka ho lema (all those people survived by ploughing) Batho botlhe ba ne ba tshela ka go lema (Setswana) <u>Batsaldi</u> ba jamaya,... ‘parents went....’ Batsadi ba tsamaya.... (Setswana)
2.a	bo-	bomma	e be ho raya hore <u>bomma</u> ba bone ba che ta, ba a ntshiwa yaanong kana o lwelela hore palo e wele e nne lesome ‘It then meant that when their mother came, some were taken more than once so as to reach ten’. e be go raya gore bommaabone fa ba tla, ba a ntshiwa jaanong kana o lwelela gore palo e wele e nne lesome (Setswana) <u>Batsaldi</u> ba jamaya, <u>bokhosi</u> bo o itshupa kwa ha Mosaldimoošana “the parents went and the chiefs arranged to meet with Mosaldimoošana’. Batsadi ba tsamaya, bokgosi ba ya go itshupa kwa ga Mosadimoošana (Setswana)
3	mo-	mocheche	<u>mocheche</u> o monte ‘a beautiful dress’ mosese o monte (Setswana)

4	me-	menatte	Ja bona hore, kwee ldi jamaye mo nehang mo, ldi be ldi che bata menatte yotthe ya mafhatshe e e tshwanang le bomoka le boldinochi ‘they then decided to go into the forest to look for nice things like honey’. Tsa bona gore, ke gore di tsamaye mo nageng mo, di bo di batla menate yotthe ya mafatshe e e tshwanang le bomoka le bodinotshe (Setswana)
5	ldi- Ø-	ldipholoholo	Ha tswa ldipholoholo ja ldula ja inamisa lditthoho, ldi sa ije hore kwe ldi ha ldika jang ‘it is said that the animals sat quietly without knowing what to do’. Gatwe diphologolo tsa nna tsa inamisa ditlhogo, di sa itse gore di ka dira jang (Setswana) Jaja le lengwe... ‘one day’... Tsatsi le lengwe.... (Setswana)
6	ma-	mattho	Ha tswa o ne a na le mattho a maghima ‘It is said that he/she had big eyes’ Gatwe o ne ale matlho a makima (Setswana)
7	che-	chettako	Chetthako cha dang e be che mo lekana ‘The shoe fitted her’. Setlhako sa teng se bo se mo lekana (Setswana)
8	bi-	bitthako bildo	bitthako je binte... ‘beautiful shoes’ dithako tse dintle (Setswana) bildo tswa bi monatte ‘nice things’ dilo tse di monate (Setswana)
9	ø-	noha	Noha e bo e mo ja ‘The snake ate her’ Noga e bo e mo ja (Setswana)
10		ldinoha	Ldinoha ldi bo ldi mo ja ‘The snakes then ate her’ dinoga di bo di mo ja (Setswana)
11	lo-	lotthe	Lotthe le a lowa, nka bolaya battho botthe ba moje wame ‘All of you are witches, it means I will therefore kill all people in my village’. Lotlhe lo a lowa, nka bolaya batho botlhe ba motse wame (Setswana).
12	--	--	--

13	--	--	--
14	bo-	bohobe	Bohobe ke bo shaba ka eng, Jinja? ‘What am I going to use as relish for this porridge?’ Bogobe ke bo shaba ka eng, Jinja? (Setswana)
15	ho-	ho	Ho ghiba ho mo jene ‘He is now used to stealing’ Go utswa go mo tsene (Setswana)
16	ha	ho	Ha moraho ha nto ho bothitho ‘It is warm behind the house’ Fa morago ga ntlo go bothitho (Setswana)
17	ho-	ho	Holdimo ha chetthare ho a tshosa ‘It is scary on top of the tree’ Godimo ga setlhare go a tshosa (Setswana)
18	mo-	ho	Motthang ho pala ha kena ho jamaya ‘In the event it fails, I will not go’. Motthang go pala, ga kena go tsamaya (Setswana)

In Chegwapong as in other Bantu languages, the noun class of the controlling noun determines concord-marking between that noun and dependent words such as the adjectives, the verb, etc. Consider examples in (2) below:

(2) e.g.

- a. Poldi **e** nwa maatse
9.goat 9.SM drink water
‘The goat is drinking water’
- b. Ldipoldi **ldi** nwa maatse
10.goats 10. SM drink water
‘Goats are drinking water’
- c. Chetthako **che** **chintte** **chikhahohile**
7.shoe 7.Cop 7.nice 7.SM be torn
‘The nice shoe is torn’
- d. Bitthako **je** bintte **bikhahohile**
8. shoes 8.nice 8.SM be torn
‘The nice shoes are torn’

In example (2a.), the noun phrase *poldi* ‘goat’ belongs to class 9 and the subject agreement marker for class 9 is *e-*. On the other hand, in (2b), the noun phrase *ldipoldi* ‘goats’ belongs to class 10 and the subject agreement marker is *ldi-*. It is clear in example (2b) that where Setswana uses *di-* for agreement marker for class 10, Chegwapong uses *ldi-*. Furthermore, where the agreement

marker is *se-* for class 7 in Setswana, it is *che-* in Chegwapong as indicated in example 2c. Likewise, where the agreement marker is *di-* for class 8 in Setswana, it is *bi-* for class 8 in Chegwapong as shown by the *bi-* in example 2d.

iii) *The Vocabulary*

According to Batibo (1998: 23), Chegwapong shares 86% of its basic vocabulary with Setswana, an indication that it is a member of the Sotho-Tswana cluster but reasonably distinct from Setswana.

The examples below are cognates to Setswana and give the impression that Chegwapong has adapted Setswana pronunciation.

(3) Cognate Vocabulary:

<u><i>Chegwapong</i></u>	<u><i>Setswana</i></u>	<u><i>Gloss</i></u>
Moyana/moana	ngwana	(child)
moyanaana/moyananyana	ngwananyana	(small child/baby)
dau	tau	(lion)
ho gwa	go tswa	(to come)
ho jena	go tsena	(enter)
ho jamaya	go tsamaya	(go/travel)
cheldiba/bildiba	sediba/didiba	(water hole(s))
ka mosho	ka moso	(tomorrow)
mptša	ntsa	(dog)
chetthako/bitthako	setlhako/ditlhako	(shoe(s))
ho boja	go botsa	(ask)
lebijo	leina	(name)
ho bija	go bitsa	(call)
bildo	dijo	food
chelo/bilo	selo/dilo	things
ho lda	go ja	(eat)

The examples in (4) are typically Chegwapong words that cannot be found in Setswana.

(4) Typical Chegwapong words:

<u><i>Chegwapong</i></u>	<u><i>Setswana</i></u>	<u><i>Gloss</i></u>
moghibhi	legodu	(thief)
swada	utswa	(thief)
dabakana	wa	(fall accidentally)
marophela	dinotshe	(bees)
dhaya	gotso	(kindle)

bifhattana	ditlhatshana	(small trees)
dhee	bongwe	(one)
homola	dididmala	(keep quiet)
mohau	lenyora	(thirst)
moldu	mooka	(honey/bee's wax)

What has been described as vibrant Chegwapong by *the Ethnologue* rather turned out to be nothing but a diluted form of speech devoid of characteristic Chegwapong vocabulary words and grammatical features which is so highly intelligible with other Setswana dialects. This is the speech form that is commonly spoken nowadays in many Bagwapong village as opposed to what can still be heard from the fluent speakers that we managed to record in Ramokgonami. Hence our conclusion that if this is a form of language that is expected to survive, authentic Chegwapong will be buried and will be replaced by this sort of regional dialect of Setswana.

4. Conclusion

In summary, it is crucial to stress again that Chegwapong is seriously endangered and needs to be rescued. The number of its competent speakers is dwindling and their language is in the process dying as it is being replaced by a diluted speech form which looks more like a dialect of Setswana than a separate language which it used to be. Many lay people will say, "So what?" But we, as linguists, believe that a language is the vehicle of its speakers' culture. To let it die is to allow such a preventable huge loss to happen because once the language dies even the cultural heritage it used to vehicle will disappear.

There are plenty of examples to give both from within Botswana and outside. The first example is from France where the Normans are a people descended from Norse Vikings who settled in the territory of Normandy in France. The Normans conquered other parts of Europe such as Italy in the 11th and 12th centuries and England (Cf. William of Normandy's conquest of England in 1066). All that is left of them in England is French loan words in English and Norman architecture which is called by mistake Romanesque architecture as it was brought to England from Ancient Rome. The Normans in France used to speak Old Norse (which was a Germanic language). But nowadays, the Norman language, spoken in Normandy is nothing but a Romance language which can be classified as one of the Oil languages along with Picard and Walloon. The name Norman-French is sometimes used to describe not only the Norman language, but also the administrative languages of Anglo-Norman and Law French used in England. In Zambia, Silozi is a Sotho-Tswana

language but it supplanted Siluyana, which was a Luba-Lunda language. Not far from us in Botswana is the case of the Naro people in Tsabong who are just left with the “Naro” label while their language has been replaced by Setswana which they now speak as their mother tongue. At least for them, they have Naro relatives in Namibia whose language has survived and from whom they can re-learn it.

In the case of Bagwapong, the fact that their language is genetically related to Setswana is both an advantage and a disadvantage in that they can easily communicate with the Setswana-speakers in whose environment they are settled but their language risks in the long term to disappear by becoming a dialect of Setswana.

In answer to the question on whether Chegwapong is a mispronounced form of Setswana, we conclude by saying that Chegwapong is not a mispronounced form of Setswana. It is rather a language on its own in that it has its own distinct grammar, vocabulary and sound system. It is a well-known fact that many languages of the world are in danger of extinction and Chegwapong is one of them. This language is mainly threatened by the other Bantu languages which co-exist with it in Botswana, particularly the national language, Setswana. Many of the elderly Bagwapong people can no longer speak fluent Chegwapong and as such cannot transmit it to the younger generation. The development and maintenance of a language depends among other things, on its documentation and description. Documenting and describing a language enables that language to be preserved; even if its speakers can die out, if the language has been described in written form, then at least there is a preserved form of it. Since Chegwapong is now described and written, this might lead to a better appreciation of the language by its speakers and therefore to improved attitudes towards the language.

5. References

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