

LANGUAGE IN INDIA
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow
Volume 8 : 11 November 2008
ISSN 1930-2940

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**The Use of Setswana as a Medium of Instruction,
A Core Subject and a National Language:
Is It Not a Negation of Affirmative Action?**

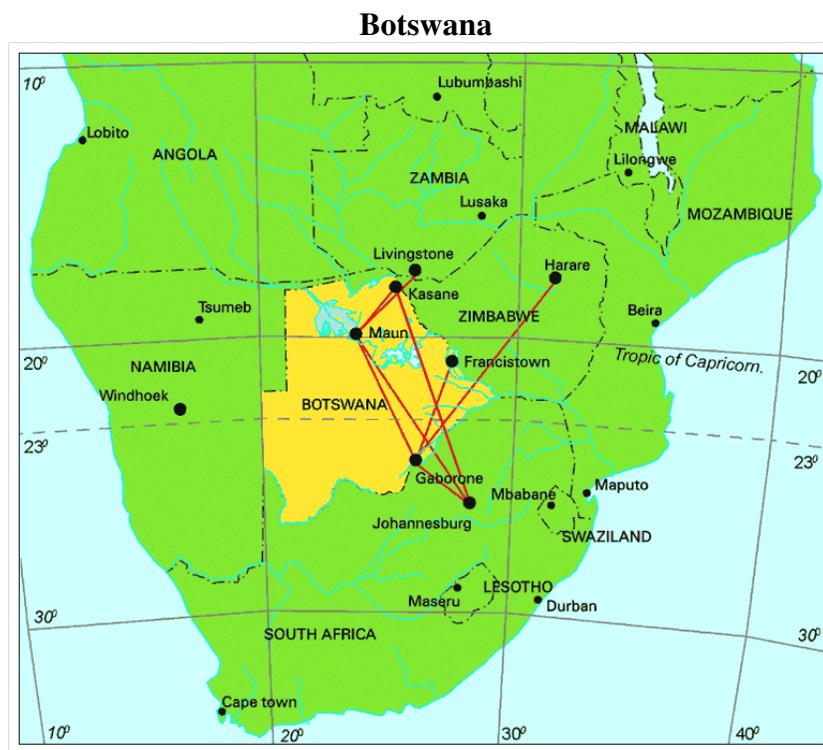
A Study of Botswana Linguistic Situation

Koketso Jeremiah

The Use of Setswana as a Medium of Instruction, A Core Subject and A National Language: Is It Not A Negation of Affirmative Action?

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the use of Setswana as a medium of instruction and as a core subject in primary schools, as a core subject and a medium of instruction in junior and senior secondary schools in Botswana, and as a national language. It argues that when Setswana is used as a medium of instruction and as a core subject in primary schools, students whose mother tongue is not Setswana are academically and culturally disadvantaged, and when it is used as a medium of instruction and as a core subject in junior and senior

secondary schools, non-native Setswana students are also academically and culturally disadvantaged. It further argues that when Setswana is used as a national language, non-native Setswana speakers are disadvantaged in other spheres of life, for example, in employment. It gives examples of language policies that Botswana can adopt to solve the problems posed by its current language policy.

Key concepts: Affirmative Action, national language, official language, core subject, medium of instruction, Swahili/Kiswahili, *Dutchification*, sustainable development.

Introduction

This paper is divided into several sections and these are: Affirmative Action Defined, then Ethnic Composition of Botswana's Population, Setswana in the School Curriculum, Botswana's Language Policy, Manifestation of negation of Affirmative Action in the Curriculum, Threat of language death and cultures of minority groups in Botswana, Lessons from elsewhere on the solutions and problems facing Botswana in bringing about Affirmative Action to Language related problems, Theories of Ethnic/Inequality and Language diversity, Affirmative Action worldwide, and Conclusion.

Botswana became self-governing in 1965 and attained independence on 30th September 1966. Before independence Botswana was a British Protectorate for 80 years. Botswana is a non-racial country. All citizens have freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association. All citizens have equal rights. All these rights and freedoms are enshrined in the Constitution of Botswana (National Development Plan 9 2003/4-2008/9).

Botswana is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It covers an area of 582 000 square kilometres by size. It is almost the same size as Kenya and France. Botswana is surrounded by several countries: Zimbabwe to the north-east, South Africa to the south and east, Namibia to the west, and Zambia to the north (National Development Plan 9 2003/4 – 2008/9).

Botswana has a population of 1 680 863. The average population density was 2 persons per square kilometre in 1991. It has since increased to 3 persons per square kilometre in 2001. The largest population densities are concentrated in the cities of Gaborone and Francistown. These two cities have densities in excess of 1000 persons per square kilometre (National Development Plan 9 2003/4 – 2008/9).

When Botswana became independent, agriculture was the main sector that contributed to the livelihood of Botswana, and to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The economy depended mainly on beef export earnings. Communication and infrastructure were poorly developed. The only exception was the railway line. Government depended mainly on foreign aid to undertake some development projects (National Development Plan 9 2003/4 – 2008/9).

With the discovery of minerals, especially diamonds, Botswana underwent remarkable transformation, especially the social and economic aspects. Mining dominated the economy since the mid 1970s. In 1983/4 the mining sector contributed 52.6% to the GDP. By 2003 the contribution of the mining sector dropped to 36.5%. This is an indication that the country is diversifying its economy. Revenue from the mining sector and other sectors is being used to fund educational projects (National Development Plan 9 2003/4 – 2008/9).

Affirmative Action Defined

“Affirmative Action means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/affirmative-action/>, accessed 29 January 2008, 1). The purpose of Affirmative Action policies is to correct the effects of past and current discrimination and to encourage institutions, for example, universities, hospitals the police service, and so forth, to have employees or students population that represents the diversity of a nation’s population’s ethnic composition in numeric or proportionate terms.

Ethnic Composition of Botswana’s Population

The population of Botswana consists of a variety of ethnic groups which belong to two categories: Batswana and non-Batswana.

Batswana groups include: Batlokwa, Bangwaketse, Batawana, Bangwato, Bakwena, Balete, Barolong and Bakgatla (Tlou and Campbell 1997). These groups are usually referred to as the principal or majority groups.

Non-Batswana groups include: Batwapong, Babirwa, Bakalanga, Ovambanderu, Amandebele, and Balozi (Tlou and Campbell 1997), Bangologa, Baherero, Bakgalagadi, Basarwa, Bahurutshe, Basubiya, Bayeyi, and Bambukushu (The Botswana Society 1994). Non-Batswana groups are usually referred to as minority groups.

Setswana in the School Curriculum

In the primary school curriculum, at lower primary (Standard 1-4), Setswana is a core subject together with Mathematics and English. (A *core subject* is a subject of study that is compulsory to all students or pupils: all pupils or students are required to take it). Non-core subjects are Environmental Science, Cultural Studies, and Creative and Performing Arts, and Cultural Studies. At upper primary (Standard 5-7), Setswana is a core subject together with Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies. Non-core subjects are Agriculture, Creative and Performing Arts, and Religious and Moral Education

(<http://www.moe.gov.bw/cde.index/html> accessed 2 March 2008; Report of the National Commission on Education 1993).

In all these cases, Setswana is, in addition to being a core subject, used as a medium of instruction in teaching it as a core subject. All Batswana students are required to take it, including those Batswana students whose mother tongue is not Setswana. They are also assessed in the same way.

In this paper, Batswana means citizens of Botswana regardless of whether you are a native Setswana speaker or not; whether Setswana is your mother tongue or not.

The Report of the National Commission (RNCE)

The position of the Report of the National Commission (RNCE) on with regard to medium of instruction is that Setswana should be a medium of instruction from Standard 1 to 4 and that the switch to English as a medium of instruction should take place from Standard 5 till Standard 7 (RNCE 1993). (*Medium of instruction* is the language that is used in teaching. It may or may not be the official language of the territory') (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medium_of_instruction accessed 29 January 2008, 1).

Current Situation

At junior secondary school level, Setswana is a core subject together with Agriculture, English, Integrated Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies. Non-core subjects (or optional) are Art, Business Studies, Design and Technology, Home Economics, Religious Education, Computer Awareness, Music, Physical Education and Moral Education (<http://www.moe.gov.bw/cde/index.html> accessed 2 March 2008). At this level, Setswana is taught using Setswana as a medium of instruction.

At senior secondary school level, Setswana is taught as a core subject together with English Language, Mathematics, and Science (Science has a variety of combinations, which could be pure sciences, that is, Physics, Biology, and Chemistry; separate science, that is, Double and Single).

Optional subjects are Geography, History, Religious Education, Social Studies, Literature in English, Development Studies, and Guidance and Counseling. These optional subjects are optional within the humanities block.

The other category of optional subjects is outside the humanities block, and these include: Agriculture, Design and Technology, Art, Food and Nutrition, Fashion and Fabrics, Home Management, Accounts, Commerce, Business Studies, Physical Education, Statistics, and Additional Mathematics (<http://www.moe.gov.bw/cde/index.html>). At this level, Setswana is taught using Setswana as a medium of instruction.

Botswana's Language Policy

The language policy of Botswana is not written. One can infer it, understand it, and observe it from the reality of life. Various documents refer to it, for example, the Botswana Constitution, reports of National Commissions on Education, a variety of curricular materials, the media, and the National Development Plans. These documents do not make it central to their discussion, nor do they define it; they only make reference to it (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004).

For example, the National Policy on Culture states: "...since national aspirations, national culture and national language are synonyms, Setswana as the national language and symbol of unity should be used as a medium to communicate, translate and put forward the country's socio-cultural values, future aspirations and development plan..." (Republic of Botswana, 2001, 20). The Constitution of Botswana states: "Every person, who is charged with a criminal offense, shall be permitted to have without payment the assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand the language used at the trial of the charge..."(00:11, in Baldauf and Kaplan 2004, 52).

English in Botswana

At the time of independence, English was constitutionally declared the official language of Botswana, though indirectly. (An *official language* is a language or dialect that has a legal status in a country or nation and it is used in government business like in courts i.e. administration of justice, parliament and administration). The current usage of English is in spheres such as administration, education, the business sector, and, since 1998, in the Botswana Parliament (Mooko 2004; Baldauf and Kaplan 2004). All government records and correspondence are carried out in English. Civil servants conduct all their meetings and record all minutes in English. Forty percent of the population of Botswana reads and speaks English, the majority of whom are the elite group, who live mainly in urban areas (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004).

Setswana

Setswana is the national language of Botswana (Mooko 2004; Baulf and Kaplan 2006). (A *national language* is a language or dialect that is commonly spoken or used in a nation and may serve as a national identity for the citizens). It is used to unite the country. Non-Setswana speaking Batswana are encouraged to speak and read it for the sake of national unity. Of course, they are aware of the detrimental effects of such a move: that this will eventually kill their respective languages and cultures.

As a result, some language associations whose main aim is to advance the interests of marginalized languages in Botswana have emerged, for example, the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language (S.P.I.L.) and the Kamanakao Association (Kamwendo and Mooko 2006). SPIL. is the association that promotes the advancement of Ikalanga language while the Kamanakao Association promotes the advancement of Seyeyi

language. So far SPILL and Kamakao Association have only succeeded in creating some awareness among their respective minority groups and government circles. More needs to be done to ensure recognition and development of these languages to the status of national languages. Approval should be achieved at policy and legislative level.

Manifestation of Negation of Affirmative Action in the Curriculum

It is a fact that Setswana is a core subject at lower primary in Botswana schools. It is a core subject at upper primary level of education also. It is a fact that Setswana is a core subject at junior and senior secondary school level in Botswana. It is also a fact that the composition of the Botswana citizenry population is non-homogenous: Setswana is not a mother tongue to all citizens of Botswana. Therefore, treating them equally in terms of using Setswana as a core subject and, moreover, using it as a medium of instruction for itself is far from achieving equality between the various groups that constitute the Botswana citizenry.

Affirmative action aims at achieving equality or correcting the injustices of past systems on the minorities, who include women, children and people with disabilities. It is used here in the context of advancing the interests of the minorities who have been linguistically marginalized for a long time till now in the post independence era, and in the context of democratic societies in which Botswana is included.

When this situation prevails, that is teaching Setswana as a core subject, and as a medium of instruction for itself, non-Setswana speakers are not being treated equally with students whose mother tongue is Setswana: non-Setswana speaking students are being discriminated against by the Botswana curriculum and education system. Furthermore, all students taking Setswana as a subject are assessed in the same way. Is that treating them in the same way? Certainly, this is negation of Affirmative Action.

Jobs that Favour Mastery of Setswana

Even in the advertisement of certain jobs on television and Radio Botswana, affirmative action is negated. There are some advertisements that give preference to candidates who have achieved excellent results in Setswana and English. Such advertisements are discriminatory to minority group candidates. They favour candidates from Setswana speaking groups. Here is one example of an advertisement that falls within this category even though the word “excellent” has not been used directly, but the interpretation reflects “excellence”:

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA: DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING-MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. VACANCY CIRCULAR NO. 10 OF 2003. TO: ALL PERMANENT SECRETARIES REF: IBS 19/3 VII 01 AUGUST 2003. VACANCY: (3Xposts) BROADCASTING OFFICER 1,

RADIO BOTSWANA:...Main purpose of the job: Cover events, compile complex programmes in both English and Setswana in conformity with journalistic standards of balance, accuracy and timeliness...Duties:...2. Cover events thereafter package programmes in both English and Setswana in conformity with journalistic standards of balance, accuracy and timeless. 3. Host talk shows on a variety of topics. 5. Should be able to do live commentaries in both English and Setswana (*Daily News*, Thursday August 7 2003 No. 147, 10).

Two other examples, which are even better than the one preceding them, are listed below:

“A CAB COMPANY looking for a receptionist, qualification certificate, fluent in both Setswana and English. Send CV to Private Bag 0254#396 Gaborone.”(*The Botswana Advertiser*, 23rd May 08, 67).

A leading mental health clinic is seeking the services of a qualified and experienced receptionist/administrator, certificate/diploma in secretarial services or administration , 2 years experience, fluent in Setswana and English. Closing date 28 May 2008. Send application & CV to The Operations Manager PO Box 404358 Broadhurst Gaborone (*The Botswana Advertiser*, 23rd May 08, 67).

Obviously an applicant who has achieved excellent results in Setswana and English, together with related work experience will get the job. The competition is open to all citizens of Botswana, whether from minority or majority (those whose mother tongue is Setswana) groups. Those in the latter category are at an advantage.

This unequal or discriminatory or marginalization of minority linguistic groups have detrimental effects on the languages (and cultures) of these people which at the extreme degree may cause language death as will be discussed in the section that will follow.

Threat of Language Death and Cultures of Minority Groups in Botswana

Speaking a language is a very powerful aspect of language maintenance. Once people reduce speaking a language, its status becomes threatened. The other language that they use most begins to slowly replace the language with a deteriorating status.

Vossen 1988 (cited in Baldauf and Kaplan 2004) conducted a study on the use of language in the North-West District of Botswana (Ngamiland) and came out with interesting results. Vossen's socio-linguistic survey included 13 languages that were spoken in 19 schools. The schools were located in 12 villages. Despite the fact that the Tswana (Setswana speakers) were outnumbered by all other languages, Vossen found that most children from non-Setswana speakers reported that they had a greater

knowledge of Setswana language than the knowledge of any other language different from Setswana.

Vossen observed that the use of mother tongue was generally declining among his respondents. This was true of certain areas in Ngamiland, but not all of them. In general, language maintenance was higher amongst the Mbukushu and the Herero. His conclusion was that of all languages in the area he surveyed, Seyeyi was the most threatened, because Seyeyi children do not speak it anymore. In 1988, Summer and Vossen conducted another socio-linguistic study in the same area and their results confirmed Vossen's earlier study (Vossen 1988) (cited in Baldauf and Kaplan 2004).

So, what can minority non-Setswana speakers learn from these studies? Certainly, their languages are in danger. However, the formation of language associations like S.P.I.L and Kamanakao Association is a commendable move by minority groups to avoid the onslaught of their languages in the name of harmonizing and uniting the nation through the promotion of Setswana at the expense of minority languages.

The Position of the Government

The government of Botswana has from time to time announced that where possible children in non-Setswana speaking communities will be taught in their mother tongues at lower primary level, but no efforts are being undertaken to ensure that such a promise becomes a reality. It may be nothing else but a strategy to mobilize political support. The real intent could still be assimilation of minority groups associated with eradication of their languages.

The following quote may still hold true: "This monograph has demonstrated that, at independence, the Government of Botswana adopted the orientation that language diversity was a problem and aimed to eradicate all minority languages" (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004, 57). Another small quote goes: "Because of this policy, minority languages were banned from use in all social domains" (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004, 57). Cultures are closely associated with expression of cultural values and practices. As you eradicate a people's language, you are also eradicating their culture.

Chebanne (2002) is also aware of the death threat to the minority languages that result from the continued dominance of Setswana and English in Botswana. The quotation that follows indicates this position:

The picture that emerges of the linguistic characteristics, and the condition of the languages situation in the coming years, will present this country with a scenario in which there will be much greater threat to the language and culture of the minorities. Quite evidently this situation may turn out to be worse than the experience under the colonial administration. The lack of supportive language policies (Nyati-Ramahobo 1991; 1997) and legal

guarantees for the preservation of linguistic and cultural identities in this country will only aggravate and precipitate an unprecedented case of mass language death. This will be a reality for indigenous Botswana languages unless there is a definite, deliberate and significant plan to arrest the situation. This intervention needs to be clearly thought and spelt out. It has to be designed in such a way that its execution by the state and the stakeholders is expedient, and the results tangible (Chebanne 2002, 50).

The Reality of Language Death

The problem of language death is a reality. For example, the Khoi and the San in South Africa, have lost their languages to this process. Their languages died due to the process of *Dutchification*, which was "...the official promotion and use of the Dutch language in all the higher domains, such as administration, education, trade, etc. by the Dutch officials of the Dutch East India Company who settled in South Africa after 1652" (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004, 244). Today the descendants these people speak Afrikaans mixed with Sesotho and isiXhosa. Afrikaans is a form of Dutch. Linguists can identify the distinguishing attributes between the two languages. So, speakers of other indigenous languages in Botswana, who the language policy promoters in Botswana want them to learn, and use Setswana to promote national values, social harmony and national unity, must know that by doing this they are, in fact, conniving to annihilate their own languages from the linguistic profile of the nation.

Lessons from elsewhere on the solutions to problems facing Botswana in bringing about Affirmative Action to Language related problems

1. **Tanzania.** In Tanzania, Swahili is both a national and an official language. It is a language of communication among people of different ethnicity in Tanzania. It is also an official language in government, in the mass media and parliament. Swahili is naturally a language of commerce which was developed in the coastal areas of East Africa. It is spoken by many people in Tanzania. There are 120 ethnic languages spoken in Tanzania (Kiango 2005). All students doing primary education in Tanzania learn all subjects in Swahili for all the seven years of basic education. Private schools are an exception as they run differently from public schools. In senior schools and higher education, the situation is different as Swahili is taken as a subject but not used as a medium of instruction. At primary school level English is taught as a subject throughout the seven years of primary education. After these years English becomes a medium of instruction (Menda 2005).
2. **Kenya.** In Kenya, the national language (lingua franca) is Swahili and the official language is English. Swahili is also an official language. There are over 40 ethnic languages spoken in Kenya. Swahili is used for communication between people of different ethnic groups. It is taught as a subject in primary and secondary schools (Kiango 2005).

3. **South Africa.** In South Africa there are nine national languages (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, seSewati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu) and two official languages (English and Afrikaans) (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004).

Origin of Swahili/Kiswahili

Swahili is an African language in terms of its sound system and grammar. It is closely related to Bantu languages spoken in countries such as Kenya, northeast Tanzania, and the Comoro Islands (Nurse and Spear 1985). Swahili is made up of a mixture of Bantu languages vocabulary with Arabic vocabulary (Nurse and Spear 1985).

Swahili language developed due to contact between the Arabs who lived and traded in the coastal areas of East Africa with local people of East Africa. The abstract from a Nairobi based newspaper that follows captures clearly the history of the Swahili language:

History has it very clearly that Swahili is a combination of more languages than one, the major one being Arabic. When the Arabs came to the East Coast of Africa before the exploitation era and consequently colonized it, they had no way of communicating with the indigenous people they met. Gradually and inevitably they tactically (and rightly so) combined what of their languages they could with the languages that were being spoken there. There were many and still are - Girirana, Banjuni (Sic), Dijo, etc., not to mention those spoken further north and south of the East Coast of Africa. The result - Swahili. Some of the most prominent words in the language owe their origin to Arabic: salamu, salama, chai, lakin, etc (*Sunday Nation* 1977 cited on Nurse & Spear 1985, 6).

An Affirmative Language Policy for Botswana

So, what language policy should Botswana adopt? Botswana should adopt English as both a national language and an official language. This will prevent the current situation which is threatening minority ethnic languages today. This would ensure that all indigenous languages in Botswana are equally threatened by language death. In short, the current linguistic equation in use today must be changed.

Currently, the equation is: SE/ML=SH, where SE is the lingua franca, Setswana, ML refers to minority languages, and SH refers to social harmony. Most Setswana mother tongue speakers believe that it is a good state of affairs and all citizens are happy. In reality, this is a time-bomb.

The proposed equation is: EN/ALL=SH, where EN is the lingua franca, English, ALL are all indigenous languages in Botswana, including Setswana. In such a situation, there is a "common denominator", English, and all indigenous languages are equally threatened by linguistic death, and all Botswana are equal linguistically and culturally, and they are all

struggling to establish maintenance and survival strategies, such as S.P.I.L and Kamanakao Association. This scenario allows for real social harmony.

Another alternative would be to create our own lingua franca similar in structure to Swahili, the lingua franca used in East Africa, especially in Kenya and Tanzania. Once this has been achieved, we can then deal with curriculum matters, which through some research studies and other interrogative measures would be easy to deal with.

Another alternative would be to increase the number of national languages in Botswana, and gradually include all languages in the country because none of the linguistic groups would like to be excluded, at least in the final analysis. In terms of the curriculum, primary school pupils should be taught in their mother tongues from Standard One to Standard Four. Simultaneously, their mother tongue should be taught as a core subject. From Standard Five to Standard Seven the pupils should do their mother tongue as a core subject. The same should prevail throughout senior secondary school level.

In short, the mother tongues should take the role Setswana is playing in the Botswana curriculum today. Some people, when this issue is raised, they start asking about where to get the funds (resources) to implement such language-in-the-curriculum innovations. Whose funds are they talking about, unless they do not understand the meaning of nation? You cannot discriminate others on the basis of economizing national funds when they are also part of that nation. This would be a similar language situation like in South Africa where there are nine national languages (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, seSewati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu) and two official languages (English and Afrikaans) (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004). South Africa also needs to do more so that in the final analysis all languages in that country would be given the national language status. This is necessary in order to guard against threat to national unity and achieve sound social harmony instead.

The Place of Language in the School Curriculum

In terms of the place of language in the school curriculum, there are two language-based categories of institutions in South Africa, English-medium schools and Afrikaans-medium schools. This applies to all institutions from primary, through secondary (both junior and senior, unless composite) to tertiary level.

In English-medium schools, pupils study English as their first language (L1), and then choose between Afrikaans and an African language as their second language (L2).

In Afrikaans-medium schools, pupils study Afrikaans as their first language (L1) and then choose between English and an African language as a second language (L2). This scenario continues into tertiary education.

It must be emphasized, however, that at primary school level, particularly from grade 1 to grade 3, pupils are taught in the language of their choice, which can be English, Africans or an African language (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004).

The Recommendation of the National Commission on Education, 1977

The 1977 National Commission on Education, or *Education for Kagisano*, recommended that scores of children of non Setswana speakers should be adjusted to compensate for the fact that they are disadvantaged by the language policy in education. “However it recognized the problem of non-Setswana speakers and made a recommendation for the adjustment of scores for them “in the interest of fairness.” This recommendation, it appears, is not being followed” (Republic of Botswana 1993, 111).

Experience of Other Nations

Personal experience in the USA, particularly at a school called Pineview elementary, Hispanic pupils are given follow-up lessons (to instruction in English) in key subjects such as Mathematics, Science and English in Spanish as a form of Affirmative Action. This can be done in Botswana and other African countries in Africa with ethnic diverse populations.

The question of lack of resources and finance to fund teachers for specialized training and development of instructional materials (including orthography) would arise here but since the funds belong to the nation, the linguistic groups who would eventually benefit from such efforts or projects also belong to that very nation.

Numerous Solutions to Choose from – An Ideal Choice

Therefore, there are numerous solutions (and partial solutions) to the language problem that Botswana is facing at the moment, specifically, a national language that can bring about real national unity and social harmony, and a real formula for language as a medium of instruction acceptable (and non-discriminative) to all Batswana as the above discussion have demonstrated.

Of all these possible (and/or partial) solutions, an ideal one would be that which would fit within the context of the theme of the Association for the Development of African Languages in Education, Science and Technology (ADALEST) which reads: “*African Languages in the Context of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*”.

To achieve fit within the context of this theme requires that Botswana adopts a language policy that would achieve national unity and social harmony for the benefit of all Batswana citizens, not the current policy that discriminates and therefore does the opposite. Ketlhoilwe (2008, 2) defines sustainable development as a “...development

model that meets the needs of the present generations without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs". The policy must maintain true social cohesion, national unity and social harmony in the current and future society of Botswana.

Theories of Ethnicity/Inequality and Language Diversity

We now look at selected theories, consideration of which may help us understand the nature of ethnicity and its relationship with language diversity. These theories are: Ethnic theory, Marxism, and Universal Grammar.

Ethnic theory views **race** as one out of the many factors (others are: language, religion, customs, nationality, and political identification) that determines an individual's ethnicity. This theory does not emphasize biological essentialism as the main paradigm that differentiates society in terms of race. It, however, overlooks it, though does not discredit it. The theory emphasizes the assimilation model.

The theory is associated with sociologist Robert E. Park, who said that there are four steps to assimilation, namely: contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation. Park did not explain the marginalized position of non-white people in the USA in terms of race, but emphasized that their failure to assimilate to American culture was due to the fact that they were reluctant to do so.

According to Park, non-white, or people of colour could achieve equal status to American culture if they dropped their inferior culture and adopted white culture which was superior (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnicity_theory accessed 21 May 2008).

This theory applies to the language situation in Botswana in that while other languages are being prohibited, speakers of other languages are required to assimilate into Setswana and English. Nyati-Ramahobo states: "...in which speakers of other languages are prohibited from using their languages while having to assimilate to Setswana and English. Practice over the past 33 years further indicates that only Setswana and English are permitted for use in social domains including education"(Baldauf and Kaplan 2004, 29).

Marxist theory views society as comprising people that belong to two main classes, based on the ownership of the means of production, for example, land, factories, financial institutions, and so forth, and those who own nothing else but their labour which they sell to make a living. The former (those who own the means of production) are known as capitalists or *bourgeoisie* while those who own labour that they sell to capitalists are known as the working class or *proletariat*. This is social stratification based on ownership of the means of production. Since these two classes have different interests, they are hostile or antagonistic to each other, hence they often clash within the workplaces (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx accessed 3 February 2008).

This theory relates to the language situation in Botswana in that elites in government clash in interests with the rest of the members of SPILL when it comes to pressurizing government to recognize and promote the use of Ikalanga language in national domains. “There were also divisions amongst the Kalanga people themselves. Some, especially those holding high positions in government positions, were against the formation of SPILL, at least in public. They feared victimisation at their jobs should their loyalty to government be doubted” (Baldauf and Kaplan 2004, 60).

Universal Grammar theory states that languages are a product of three components: (i) the fixed principles of Universal Grammar, (ii) the parameters (or switches) of Universal Grammar, and (iii) the vocabulary (arbitrary nature of word spellings). The latter has nothing to do with Universal Grammar. The three components determine the diversity of language (Schlenker 2006). Some languages have similar origin. As a result, in learning other languages, knowledge of others may help.

This shows that most languages in Botswana can be developed easily (orthography) if their vocabulary commonalities are established. So, any language can be written if the people want it developed that way.

Conclusion

This paper has defined the concept Affirmative Action and given its purpose. One point that came out clearly is that there are two broad groups of the population of Botswana: native Setswana speakers and those who speak Setswana as a second language. Non-native Setswana speakers are struggling to protect and maintain their mother tongue languages against the threat of language death.

The place of Setswana in the school curricula was examined. It was noted that Setswana is used as a core subject and as a medium of instruction in various sections of the primary, junior and senior secondary school curriculum. This is in support of Botswana’s language policy which reflects Setswana as the national language and English as the official language. The policy marginalizes languages spoken by minority groups in Botswana. It does so with the aim of exposing them to their fate: language death. There is evidence in the literature that this is a deliberate aim (See Baldauf and Kaplan 2004, 57). If this situation is allowed to continue, the so-called social harmony will be threatened.

The essence of the paper was examined. In this case, it was argued that by teaching Setswana as a core subject and using it as a medium of instruction in the education system, non-native citizens of Botswana are being discriminated against. They are not being treated equally with citizens of Botswana whose mother tongue is Setswana. It was noted that this discrimination extends into the labour market, especially in jobs that require fluency in Setswana and English. The native Setswana speakers stand a better

chance to qualify for such jobs than non-native Setswana speakers. This is a negation of Affirmative Action.

It was proposed that in order to bring about equality among the diverse linguistic groups of Botswana, English should be used both as the national language and the official language. Alternatively, Botswana should develop its own lingua franca similar to Swahili, which is both a national language and an official language in Tanzania, a country with 120 ethnic languages. In choosing and adopting whatever solution to the language problem deemed amicable, Botswana would be in the direction of fitting within the context of the ADALEST conference theme, which is: “*African Languages in the Context of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*”. Some theories of ethnic inequality were examined, with the aim of making the reader understand the nature of ethnicity and its relationship with language diversity.

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