

Changing livelihoods, language use and language shift amongst Basarwa of Botswana

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This study explores the historical relationship between the languages of Basarwa of Botswana and Setswana, in order to understand the dynamics underpinning their appropriation of the Setswana language, as they adjust to their changing livelihoods. The study contributes towards the promotion of a better understanding and awareness of the issues of language shift and language use amongst Basarwa. Basarwa occupy the lowest rungs of the social ladder in Botswana. Due to the close association between the status of the people and the status of their language, the Basarwa languages accordingly rank low in use and status nationally (Andersson & Janson, 2004, p. 118; Batibo, 2005, p. 71). Like the other minority languages, the Basarwa languages also have a low status and a low prestige in education and in written discourse. Moreover, the study observes that in their quest to mediate their socio-economic marginalisation, Basarwa have had to appropriate Setswana, the dominant national language for survival. However, their appropriation of the Setswana Language has had deleterious effects on their languages and overall socio-cultural identity. In this context, the nationally dominant Setswana language not only dominates public discourse, but also official spoken discourse as well, while English dominates official written discourse (Andersson & Janson, 1993, pp. 83-84). The sources used to guide this analysis include secondary material, official and unofficial documents, as well as the author's own observations, as a Motswana and an educationist.

Keywords: Khoesan languages; Basarwa/Khoesan/Bushman/San; language use; language shift; changing livelihoods; Basarwa livelihoods.

Introduction: language shift and language endangerment

Language shift is defined as a process that involves giving up part of one's identity, where language forms an integral part of that identity. In this process, one's ethnicity is exchanged for another (Herbert, 2002, p. 321). Language shift usually occurs as a result of factors which are both external and internal to the speech community. These include the group's identity, its relationship with other groups, the degree of political autonomy of the group and its access to avenues of material prosperity (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998, p. 22). Language shift mirrors the socio-historical discourse between the hegemonic language groups and the minority language speakers (Robbins & Uhlenbech, 1991, p. 4).

In the process of language shift, members of a speech community whose mother tongue is in a weak position adopt other languages in addition to, or in preference to their own. Where the speech community does not effectively pass the language to the younger generation, language endangerment can result (Brenzinger, Heine, & Sommer, 1991, p. 33; see also Batibo, 2005). The school in particular plays a crucial role in the loosening of language in younger generations (Brenzinger et al., 1991, p. 33). In the long term, language death may result from the lack of language maintenance interventions (Batibo & Smieja, 2000; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998; Lukusa, 2000, p. 55).

Other important determinants of language shift include official language policy and the socio-linguistic relations between the minority and dominant language groups. Official policy tends to advantage some languages in relation to others by specifying the domain of language use, as in language rationalisation for purposes of administrative expediency (see Laitin, 1992, p. 9). This usually requires the channelling of resources in order to bolster the use of the advantaged language, through the production of written material, thus giving it greater visibility and status. In this scenario, the speakers of the neglected languages may, due to force of circumstances abandon their languages in adaptation to an environment, where the use of those languages is no longer beneficial to them (Andersson & Janson, 2004; Batibo, 2005; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998, p. 22).

Language shift can occur at an individual level, or as a result of group decisions, which may enable the adopted language to spread into the speech community (Brenzinger et al., 1991). In due course, the situation can deteriorate to a tipping point, where the community languages get reserved for fewer social functions, as the adopted language becomes more entrenched. This may eventually lead to language death (see Laitin, 1992, p. 80, quoting Dorian, 1989). Moreover, language shift is largely mediated, although, not necessarily dictated by socio-economic conditions including urbanisation and livelihood changes (see Brenzinger et al., 1991).

If left unchecked, language shift can progressively lead to language loss. This risk may be mitigated through the conscious promotion and use of the threatened languages over a substantial range of functions. However, the extent to which speakers of a language would be able to accomplish this depends on sustained and efficient measures to ensure language maintenance. Language maintenance and revitalisation require proactive engagement of the members of a speech community to lobby and to carry out activities, such as production of orthographies and other materials in order to promote language use in that community (see Andersson & Janson, 2004; Batibo, 2005; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998). Language maintenance and revitalisation also require finance and dedication. Where only a few speakers are left, the situation is even direr, as the strictly linguistic issue gets embedded in the larger challenge of ensuring the community's survival (see Grenoble & Whaley, 1998, p. 143).

Basarwa in socio-historical perspective

The Khoesan language speakers are found in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, and are the earliest group of people to inhabit parts of Southern Africa (Colclough & McCarthy, 1980, p. 7). According to 1996 estimates, their numbers are lowest in Zambia at 1600 and highest in Botswana, at

about 50,000 (Hitchcock, 1996, quoted in Suzman, 2001, p. 65). The Khoesan language speakers are usually normally associated with a marginalised lifestyle (Andersson & Janson, 2004, p. 117).

In parts of Southern Africa, their numbers have been reduced by military conquest, subjugation and discrimination (Brenzinger et al., 1991; Dorian, 1989, quoted in Traill, 2002, p. 27; Mesthrie, 2002; Traill, 2002, p. 44). These challenges have also affected the survival of their languages, and over time, there has been a rapid language shift to Afrikaans and Dutch in the case of South Africa, and to Setswana in the case of Botswana (see Brenzinger et al., 1991; Dorian, 1989). In Botswana, their individual group names consist of three main dialect continua denoting people who speak languages which have some degree of similarity. According to Batibo (2005), the highly endangered Khoesan languages in Botswana include Kua, Shua, Tshwa, |Gwi, ||Gana and †Kx'au||'ein, †Hua and some varieties of Khwedam, namely ||Ani, |Anda and Buga, most of which have fewer than 2000 speakers (Batibo, 2005, pp. 70–71). In South Africa, there are many instances of Khoesan languages which are extinct, such as Korana (!Ora,!Kora, N|u, |Xam and ||Xegwi (Batibo, 2005)). Traill (2002) also documents instances of language endangerment and language death amongst Khoesan of Botswana, which resulted largely from lack of official interest, the language education policy and unfavourable economic and social conditions (Traill, 2002, p. 44). Nama, a Khoesan language spoken in parts of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana has the largest number of speakers and has a stronger status, orthography and dictionary, although, it is still comparatively endangered (Andersson & Janson, 2004, p. 207).

Basarwa languages belong to the Khoesan group of languages. There is no universally accepted collective referent label for the Khoesan language speakers (Bolaane, 2004, p. 400; Saugestad, 1998; Suzman, 2001). In the 1980s, Guenther (1986) observed that all the referent labels for Basarwa have been coined by other ethnic groups and are inherently pejorative. In scholarship they have been variously referred to as Bushmen, San and Khoesan. They are also referred to by their diverse individual group names, such as !Xun, Dobe, Ju|'hoansi, Khwe and Naro. Latterly, the Penduka Declaration on the Standardisation of Ju and Khoe Languages challenged the use of the referent label 'Khoesan', noting that each language family has different and unrelated grammar, word order and vocabulary (Penduka Declaration, 2001, p. 2). The participants further pointed out that the word 'Khoesan' actually suppresses the right to self-determination by the San people, particularly noting the implications of the small 's' in the word 'Khoesan' (Appendix 3: Penduka Declaration, 2001). The term 'Bushman' is generally regarded as derogatory in official Botswana circles, and instead, the label 'Basarwa' is used to refer to the people of San/Bushman/Khoesan origin (see Bolaane, 2004, p. 400). Accordingly, the term Basarwa is used in this paper in line with this official position, and some recent work on Basarwa of Botswana (Bolaane, 2004; Motzafi-Haller, 1994; Thapelo, 2003).

Following their first contact with the Bantu-speaking people in the first millennium, the Basarwa underwent far-reaching ethno-cultural and linguistic transformation (Andersson & Janson, 2004). While Basarwa relationships with these groups were initially cordial, they became increasingly exploitative over time. In the last century, the subjugation of Basarwa by the principle Batswana groups became more entrenched (Chirenje, 1977; Colclough & McCarthy, 1980; Solway, 1994; Thapelo, 2003). The extent of Basarwa subjugation was predicated upon their

association with the bush, which further entrenched their stigmatisation, marginalisation and exploitation (Motzafi-Haller, 1994; Thapelo, 2003).

Basarwa are the most marginalised socio-linguistic group in Botswana, and are despised even by those who were themselves subordinated by others. For example, although Bakgalagarhi were also historically marginalised, they have, however, been regarded to be socio-linguistically better than Basarwa, whom they in turn subjugated. Moreover, while Bakalanga, Babirwa and Batswapong maintained a measure of local political and cultural autonomy, Basarwa have to a large extent been locked in perpetual and hereditary vassal relationships with both their Setswana speaking overlords and the other ethnic minorities. This historically engendered socio-cultural hierarchy has generally informed language positioning and language use, both in official and in unofficial public discourse. Thus, the socio-linguistic marginalisation of Basarwa mirrors their socio-cultural and political domination. For this reason, although the other minority languages in Botswana such as Sebirwa, Setswapong, Shiyei and Shekgalagarhi are endangered (Batibo, 2005, p. 71), Basarwa languages are the most endangered. Basarwa languages and Setswana are therefore locked in a super-ordinate relationship, in that the speakers of the weaker Basarwa languages learn and speak the speech of the stronger and more prestigious Setswana language for wider communication and for socio-economic benefit (Batibo, 2005, p. 102).

The Setswana language occupies a dominant position in the country (Mooko, 2005; Solway, 1994) not only in relation to Basarwa languages, but also the other ethnic minority languages as well. The national dominance of Setswana also derives from its numerical superiority, as it is spoken by 78.6% of the population as a first language, and by over 90% as both first and second language (Batibo, 2005, p. 70). By comparison, Ikalanga which is denoted as the numerically dominant minority language is spoken by 150,000 people out of a population of 1.7 million (Batibo, 2005, p. 70). The Ikalanga language is spoken mainly in the northeast district, while in the urban areas it is spoken predominantly in the City of Francistown. However, Ikalanga is fairly widespread and is spoken in many parts of the country, including the capital city Gaborone.

The current socio-linguistic context in Botswana

The roots of the current socio-linguistic context can be traced back to the colonial language policy, which in the British dependencies was guided by the indirect rule policy of administration. In the various contexts, colonial and post-colonial officialdom identified what they viewed as dominant languages, which they used for administrative expediency and convenience. Moreover, indirect rule allowed for considerable linguistic and cultural relativism (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998, p. 8). It required and promoted indigenous African languages, which were more widely understood and spoken by the indigenous populace, and hence could be employed expeditiously and conveniently for administrative purposes. It proved more economical and less complicated, for example, to deal with, and to produce official material in only one language, even though this created as well as worsened multiethnic rivalry in some contexts. In the British dependencies in particular, the indigenous languages were also promoted as a way of maintaining social distance between the educated Africans and the colonial government officials.

The British colonial government generally encouraged teaching in the vernacular so as to preempt political agitation, which could arise from acquisition and use of English for political purposes (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998).

In Botswana and elsewhere, English attained the status of a coveted language because it was accessible to only a few people during the colonial period. Setswana was used in the education system and in the proceedings of the customary courts and the Native Advisory Council. This laid the foundation for its privileged status in relation to the other indigenous languages. English serves as the medium of instruction in the higher levels of the school system, while Setswana serves as the medium of instruction in the lower levels. Currently, Setswana is a compulsory subject in the public school curriculum (Le Roux, 1999; the Working Group on Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), 2001).¹ Accordingly, it is required of all Batswana children up to the Standard seven terminal level, including those who attend private English-medium schools. This accords Setswana the status of a prestigious language, while the other languages are relegated to a lower status and are not used at all, even in contexts where Setswana is not the predominant language of first communication (Andersson & Janson, 1993, p. 78). They are completely disregarded and are left out of official use (Andersson & Janson, 1993, 2004; Batibo, 2005). Accordingly, there are no official materials produced in these languages either. Conversely, there is a considerable amount of literary material written in Setswana, which emanates from the work that was begun by the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries at Kuruman (Andersson & Janson, 1993, p. 74).

Thus, both colonial and post-colonial language policies inadvertently advantaged English and Setswana as preferred languages. However, English is more privileged than Setswana, in that it has a long established orthography, and also enjoys the status of an official language. Generally, Setswana can be regarded as the official spoken language, while English is the official written language (Andersson & Janson, 1993, p. 83). In the current socio-political context, English tends to dominate the written language while Setswana dominates the spoken word, even in political and official contexts (Andersson & Janson, 1993, p. 84). Thus, although Setswana can be said to be less privileged than English, it is more privileged relative to the other minority languages. Setswana is also the second language of discourse in Parliament, which has elevated its status even more.

In the case of Ikalanga, the language has gradually lost status, because it used to serve as a medium of instruction in some missionary schools in the North East District during the colonial period (Andersson & Janson, 1993, p. 81). Moreover, in the post-independence period, the Ikalanga language used to feature widely in written discourse, as evidenced by regularly featured articles in *The Mmegi* newspaper, and a number of books, which have also been written in Ikalanga.

Currently, Setswana and English wield hegemonic authority over the minority languages in Botswana. This is also because, as official and national languages, respectively, and increasingly as languages of commerce, they are used to access various forms of benefits in Botswana's socio-economic and political landscape. Setswana specifically plays an important enabling and bridging role between the minority languages and English, which is also the global language of commerce. This further compels and creates the context for speakers of minority languages to move away from their own language and to move towards those that are linked to accessing

resources. To this end, Batibo (2005) argued that the speakers of minority languages are often disadvantaged socio-economically, because in the world of commerce and commodity exchange, the dominant languages are normally used as trade languages, which accrue benefit for those who speak them fluently, whether as first or second languages (Batibo, 2005, p. 57). In the same vein, Batibo and Mosaka (2000) also highlighted the disadvantages experienced by minority speakers as they are unable to access crucial information on health and wellness issues, because they are only broadcast in Setswana and English on national radio (Batibo & Mosaka, 2000: quoted in Batibo, 2005, p. 57).

Official language policy and socio-political discourse tend to dictate the general trend of language use among minority groups, including Basarwa and compels them to appropriate Setswana in their socio-cultural deliberations and in tandem with their changing livelihoods. In the process, Basarwa languages have shifted and receded in use. Consequently, the Basarwa speech communities have decreased as the communities of those speakers increasingly shifted allegiance linguistically and socio-culturally towards the languages spoken by the dominant groups (Batibo & Smieja, 2000). This process reflects the view that people tend to give respect to prestigious language varieties and to value their own varieties less in comparison (Bourdieu, 1991, quoted in Corson, 2001, p. 101).

In Botswana, ethnic group marginalisation is compounded by the nature of the socio-political discourse, which discourages open debate about ethno-linguistic issues, because it is considered to be against the spirit of nation building. In social circles and in political discourse there is a general perception that consciousness about ethnic self-identity somehow leads to, or necessitates abdication of national consciousness and national identity. For example, there is a ground swell of opinion in some quarters against ethnic community radio stations because of the fear that they might ferment ethnic tension. Whether this is in fact so, is debatable. It is clear that policy and practice in Botswana have resulted in a situation, whereby English and Setswana are the languages of the public sphere in general, and of education in particular, whilst marginalised languages are confined to the private sphere of the home (see Solway, 2002, p. 70). Batibo (2005) observed that an exclusionary language policy is actually counterproductive as it tends to alienate excluded groups who tend not to cooperate in national development matters, and that language rationalisation as is the case with Setswana tends to create social tension.

The extent to which Setswana has eroded Basarwa socio-linguistic discourse can be further observed in the names that Basarwa give their children, and in the fact that both their first and second names are in Setswana (UNICEF, 2000; see also Batibo & Smieja, 2000, p. 50). It is also estimated that only 10% of Basarwa still speak their own languages (Cassidy, 1999, p. 9). Moreover, even many Basarwa who still speak their own language do so only in the privacy of their own homes, for fear of incurring revulsion and taunts from speakers of the other languages, particularly the speakers of the dominant Setswana. Thus, the process of integration into mainstream Tswana society has invariably and inevitably submerged minority cultures into the mainstream Tswana cultural-linguistic discourse.

Linguistic hegemonic domination is not unique to Botswana, as it has been reported in other African contexts as well. For example, the hegemonic position of Chichewa and marginalisation of Chitumbuka in Malawi (Kamwendo, 2005), and the dominance of Hausa in Nigeria (Igboanusu & Peter, 2004) are cases in point. Like in

Africa, mono-lingualism has also emerged in parts of Europe as a necessary ingredient for progressive nationalism, national building, national identity and modernisation (Anderson, 1990; Barbour, 2000; Hobsbawm, 1996).

Basarwa changing livelihoods and language use

Livelihood comprises a combination of activities and choices that people make in order to achieve their livelihood goals. Basarwa livelihoods have changed markedly over the past two millennia, in tandem with their loss of control and freedoms over much of their ancestral territories. This includes loss of access to the natural resources, such as wildlife and veld products,² which used to form the core of their livelihoods. Over time, Basarwa have succumbed to various government policies and activities that have served to wean them away from their itinerant lifestyle to a sedentary one. The sedentary way of life, with its attendant shift in means of livelihood, has co-opted Basarwa into livelihoods that require various strategies of negotiation. In the process, language has become an important and crucial variable. In some contexts, the changing Basarwa livelihoods have increasingly come to revolve around land use. As Madzwamuse (2005, p. 128) contends, land remains a major determinant of the natural, physical and financial capital available to Basarwa.

Basarwa lifestyles and livelihoods have been changing in relation to transformations that have been taking place in the Botswana socio-economic environment (Andersson & Janson, 2004, p. 117). While Basarwa used to live exclusively through hunting and gathering, over the decades, they have gradually been compelled into a sedentary or semi-sedentary lifestyle, by climatic conditions and governmental policies on land use and management (see Madzwamuse, 2005). Many Basarwa have become integrated into the mainstream Tswana society, where they have gradually aligned with the various ethnic group identities. In the process, they have appropriated the respective languages in order to accommodate the new circumstances, and to do so in a manner that guaranteed a measure of socio-cultural mobility. Hence, in mainstream Tswana society, to reveal one's identity as a Mosarwa used to be and still is to some extent anathema. Avoiding this label ensured avoidance of socio-cultural stigmatisation and automatic elevation of status. Coming to terms with their acquired socio-cultural status also meant giving up their identity, language, traditions and customs and all that they are associated with.

Basarwa have tried to avail themselves of existing opportunities to improve their life conditions, and have participated in some of the government and non-governmental programmes. Although, there are no specific government programmes targeting Basarwa as a distinct ethnic group, the Remote Area Development Programme (RDP) policy serves a large number of them. Basarwa comprise the highest number of remote area dwellers (see the report of the Netherlands Development Programme (SNV, 2000) covering the period 1994–1997 for elaboration on this policy). Moreover, there are a number of non-governmental San Capacity-Building Programmes, which are targeted at Basarwa in order to improve their socio-economic circumstances. The University of Botswana (UB)/University of Tromsø Basarwa Research Collaborative Programme (See www.ub.bw), WIMSA, the First People of the Kalahari (FPK) and Letloa Trust are all dedicated towards improvement of Basarwa lives. These programmes are also a means by which Basarwa advance their education and skills, to enable them to join the socio-economic mainstream.

These initiatives, which are part of the San Capacity Building Programme have produced a group of Basarwa, some of whom have served as administrative functionaries of the central government. While these Basarwa youth can be said to have undergone a process akin to language shift, many of them are also proud of their Khoesan heritage and are active advocates for their people's rights. Cases in point are Tanango Moronga, who has done a lot of work with NGO's amongst Basarwa in the northwest region of Botswana, Ngakaeaja Mathambo, a geology degree graduate, who once represented WIMSA in Botswana. He has also and worked for the FPK, a Basarwa advocacy group. Mogodu Mogodu, a Sociology degree graduate, who also worked for the FPK and is currently pursuing a Law degree at the University of Cape Town, and Masego Nkelekang, who has a MA degree in the Social Sciences are part of this group. In their public advocacy work, which is conducted in the Setswana and English-speaking public domain, these Basarwa use Setswana and English, which they are fluent in, as primary languages of engagement in various fora, where Basarwa rights are discussed. Their use of Setswana is partly dictated by the circumstances pertaining to the types of fora and the audiences to which they present. It is also important to note that like other Batswana, educated Basarwa tend to have facility in their respective languages, as well as in Setswana and English. This has led some of them to argue against exclusive mother-tongue education, as they fear that this would disadvantage Basarwa from being able to access higher education and economic opportunities, which require fluency in Setswana and English.³

Generally, Basarwa work as farm labourers for the other ethnic groups across the country, and for white farmers particularly in the Ghanzi and neighbouring areas. In the latter case, some of them learn to speak and have switched to Afrikaans, otherwise a South African language spoken by the farmers who originate in that country. Farming and tourism activities around their previous places of abode also dispossess Basarwa of the lands on which they previously hunted (Madzwamuse, 2005). Basarwa lifestyle has also increasingly transformed as a result of government policies regulating land use, laws regulating natural resource use, construction of veterinary cordon fences and the growth of the wildlife-tourism sector (Fabricius & Koch, 2004, p. 166; see also Saugestad, 1998). These policies have curtailed Basarwa seasonal movement, and decreased Basarwa access to land and resources. This adds to their deprivation, and further drives them into new modes of livelihoods and the new languages of engagement.

In their sedentary lifestyle, Basarwa have adopted new institutions, such as chieftaincy, Village Trust Committees and Village Development Committees for political-administrative convenience and expediency. These institutions have become an integral part of the formalised institutional framework of their communities (Madzwamuse, 2005, p. 130). The discourse in the operational context of these institutions is generally conducted in Setswana. This situation is also dictated by the fact that the revision in 1993 of the Land Act of 1968 has democratised land use, and allows any Motswana to own land anywhere in the country regardless of ethnic affiliation. Moreover, government officials also form an important part of local government administration, and they are deployed to any part of the country, where invariably they may be members of these structures. Basarwa have also been conscripted into public discourse through the use of Setswana, and have strategically appropriated it for gainful communication, interaction and employment (Solway, 2002; Taylor, 2001).

Basarwa leaders who have facility in Setswana are able to participate in national political discourse. A case in point is that of Roy Sesana, who was actively involved in the legal case between Basarwa and the Botswana government, regarding the forced removal of Basarwa from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) to villages located outside the Reserve. The repeal of Sections 77 and 78 of the Citizenship Act has also enabled Basarwa and other minorities to have representation in the House of Chiefs. Until the Botswana Chieftainship Act was amended in 2001, minorities were not recognised as distinct ethnic groups, but were regarded as members of the principal ethnic groups. This automatically denied ethnic minorities leadership by their own people. Consequent to the repeal of this Act, Basarwa and other minority group leaders have access to the House of Chiefs through regional representation. The discussions in that House are conducted in Setswana, and the Basarwa members of the House of Chiefs representing Basarwa, such as Chief Rebecca Banyika and Chief Lobatse Beslag have facility in this language. This enables them to participate in the deliberations of the House.

Access to education and employment facilitate Basarwa physical mobility in search of employment and other opportunities for improvement of their livelihood. In some contexts such as Khwaai, some of them have acquired plots of land in Maun, which is of particular significance because it is well placed both as a burgeoning peri-urban centre and tourism hub. Language is a crucial vehicle for interaction and negotiation in the process of land and property acquisition (Mafela & Bolaane, 2005). As previously observed, Setswana is the language of the public sphere, which in Tswana traditional administrative matters is aptly represented by the *kgotla*, the traditional, symbolic meeting place where all discussions about matters of public interest, including requests for land, land-related issues and disputes are held.

In Kasane, Maun and the neighbouring settlements that run Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) projects, Basarwa are also employed as waiters or waitresses, guides and bartenders in the tourism facilities (Bolaane, 2004, p. 293; Madzwamuse, 2005; Mafela & Bolaane, 2005). CBNRM is based on the principle that local communities must have direct control over the utilisation and benefits of natural resources, such as wildlife and products in order to use them in a sustainable manner. It is a conservation and rural development strategy, involving community mobilisation and organisation, institutional development, comprehensive training, enterprise development and monitoring of the natural resource base (www.cbnrm.bw, accessed October 24, 2006).

In Khwaai and Xaxaba, Basarwa also operate *mokoro* (special boat) safaris and sell fish and products such as reeds, baskets, crafts and traditional building material in the tourism facilities to supplement their livelihood. Hence, in their sedentary lifestyle, Basarwa rely more on diversity of livelihoods rather than mobility (Madzwamuse, 2005, p. 121). In the above example, Basarwa facility in both English and Setswana also enables them to communicate with both locals and foreign tourists. Although it is crucial for their livelihood, this process further exacerbates the demise of the languages of these guides, because of the greater need to speak in English and Setswana, which are also the languages of tourism, employment and commercial discourse. In this context, Setswana becomes both a blessing and a nemesis to the tenuous existence of Basarwa. It is a useful means to a livelihood end, while it also serves as the means by which their own language is further pushed to the linguistic periphery, due to the fact that it has no immediate use or relevance.

The importance of language for purposes of accessing employment, particularly in the tourism industry is well illustrated in other communities around the country. In western Kweneng, for example, the Khutse Kalahari Lodge depends on the services of 'Size', the Mosarwa guide who offers a 'bushman experience' to guests, recreating a variety of scenarios to emulate and showcase the Basarwa way of life in the nearby bush. Size's linguistic talents and versatility play an important role in this process, as he is able to communicate in both Shekgalagarhi and Setswana languages, in addition to his own 'mother tongue'. In addition, travellers and researchers come in from as far as Europe to interview and interact with Size for a fee, charged by the lodge. Translations are done for him, by a Setswana-speaking lodge employee who understands English, during his interaction with those who only communicate in English. In this case, Shekgalagarhi and Setswana languages play an important 'bridging' role for communication between Size, the Mosarwa speaker and the guests.

It is important to note that Size's ability to communicate in Setswana is crucial because it is a conduit for communication with English speakers. Although there are not many individuals like Size, his situation illustrates the dynamics of language use and how they mirror the changing livelihoods of Basarwa. It is possible that with the anticipated implementation of the CBNRM to other Basarwa communities, such as those living close to Khutse Game Reserve, more opportunities will be created for the emergence of entrepreneurs like Size. Currently, the Khutse Kalahari Lodge provides an opportunity for other Basarwa from the nearby village to walk to the lodge daily to sell their traditional wares, in the language of economics, Setswana, and through Setswana, English. Kaudwane villagers are also employed in the lodge as cleaners, casual labourers and caretakers due to the fact that they can understand and speak Setswana and Shekgalagarhi. Hence, their communication skill in Setswana particularly facilitates their mobility from the village confines to their place of employment.

Educational participation also enhances the chances of Basarwa to get employment in the burgeoning tourism industry, as this is one of the few opportunities available to them due to their low levels of education. Taylor (2001, p. 5) observed that 'most other guides were young men . . . who have some form of education that has given them a good grounding in English'. The relevance of English in this context is that as in many instances of public discourse between Basarwa and others, Setswana acts as the midwife or intermediary of communication. In their changing livelihoods therefore, education has become an important mediator of Basarwa access to facility in English as well as to employment. Despite its usefulness, in other respects education also serves to marginalise Basarwa culture and language.

Education and socio-linguistic marginalisation

Education has always been regarded as a driver for national development, as it provides the knowledge and skills needed to perform essential services and to produce wealth (Mlay, 1983, p. 168). The government of Botswana has always earmarked education as a critical vehicle for development (Colclough & McCarthy, 1980). In keeping with the democratic governance principles, the government furthermore recognised the need to extend educational services to all Batswana, as well as to ensure provision of Universal Basic Education over the last couple of decades (Botswana Government, 2003, p. 269). Despite the policy statements, due to

their socio-economic marginalisation some communities, mainly Basarwa have been denied the educational benefits that have accrued to other groups. Thus, where schools are provided for Basarwa, their access to these schools and their education generally are circumscribed by a variety of factors, which derive from their overall socio-political and cultural marginalisation (Cassidy, Good, Mazonde, & Rivers, 2001; Le Roux, 1999; Solway, 2002; Thapelo, 2003; Tshireletso, 1995).

Historically, Basarwa accessed western education last, as a result of which they still face problems inherent in straddling western education, an itinerant lifestyle and an uncertain mode of production. The late integration of Basarwa into western education also exacerbated their marginalisation and expanded the range of denigrating symbols associated with their language, lifestyle and identity. Consequently, by the time Basarwa started participating in schooling, the public discourse about their low and marginalised status had crystallised. This only exacerbated the negative connotation of being a Mosarwa, as this ethnic identity also became associated with possessing no education and consequently, being of low status. The association of education with civilisation has further marginalised Basarwa.

The failure of schools to acknowledge the language and culture of Basarwa children has negatively impacted on their confidence, self-esteem, self-concept and overall identity. These conditions do not bode well for their retention, performance and progression in school (Le Roux, 1999; see also UNICEF, 2000). For example, Basarwa children from small settlements located in the various parts of the country have to travel long distances to schools, where they are accommodated in hostels. Some of these hostels are serviced by caretakers who are not speakers of Basarwa languages. Moreover, the culture and language of Basarwa children are not acknowledged or included in the formal curriculum and in the extracurricular activities in general. The children are marginalised and alienated in a school system that is dominated by Setswana and English, which impacts negatively on their welfare, dignity and overall socio-cultural identity (Cassidy, 1999; Le Roux, 1999; Monyatsi, 2005; Mothakaja et al., 1997; Solway, 2002; Thapelo, 2003; Tshireletso, 1995). Moreover, the curriculum policies and teaching and learning materials are premised on, and reflect the dominance of the Tswana culture, language and histories. It would appear that the relations between government officials, teachers and ethnic minorities, as well as between learners from the more dominant groups and minority learners, also reflect this relationship of domination and subordination (Le Roux, 1999; Tshireletso, 1995). Generally, this contributes to the children abandoning school prematurely (Le Roux, 1999; UNICEF, 2000).

The marginalisation of Basarwa in the school context also creates an alienating climate for Basarwa children because teachers who are mostly members of principal groups or the less marginalised ethnic minorities display a singular intolerance towards Basarwa and their language. At a conference on Culture and Minorities held in 2000, one Mosarwa participant recalled how, during his primary-school days, he was once derided by his teacher because he answered her according to his cultural practice, which was interpreted as disrespect by the non-Mosarwa teacher. Experiences such as these tend to influence a gradual move away from the language of one's speech community to that of the more dominant one in order to get acceptance and to gain a sense of belonging. This tends to influence the way Basarwa are regarded by all who deal with them, which leads to negative self-perception regarding their language and overall identity. Some writers (Maaka, 2004) regard the

situation, where some (minority) languages have effectively been submerged by other (more dominant) ones as a kind of imperialist (linguistic) domination, where one language is replaced by another in both overt and subtle ways. In a comparative context, Maaka (2004) observed that:

...acts of cultural despoliation, coupled with the act of instilling in the colonized mind the fear of returning to supposedly primitive and barbaric lives should the new comers leave, have been the hallmarks of European and American colonialism in the Pacific region... (Maaka, 2004, p. 4)

In the case of Basarwa of Khwaai, their language, the Bughakhwe is gradually dying, as many young people communicate with their parents in Setawana, which is one of the dialects of the Setswana language (Mafela & Bolaane, 2005). Setawana is the language of Batawana, an offshoot of Bangwato who constituted an independent ethnic group from 1795 (Tlou & Campbell, 1994). A process akin to language shift also prevails in Western Kweneng largely due to the effects of schooling. This is coupled with the general neglect of Basarwa languages in the Botswana administrative discourse and educational discourse. In the Serinane-Mantshwabisi context, in particular, the process was worsened by the fact that children leave home at an extremely young age of about 6–7 years, which is regarded as a critical stage of language development. Not surprisingly, the mother tongue of these children has gradually become submerged in the school and hostel discourse. This has effectively denied them the opportunity to learn their own mother tongue. They are effectively compelled to appropriate Setswana as the means of communication in the broadest sense.

Amongst the Bugakhwe of Khwaai, the learners typically spend up to nine months away from their homes and only three months with their parents in the village. Secondly, the school curriculum does not incorporate Basarwa experiences, customs and traditions, and where they are featured they are generally shunned (Le Roux, 1999). Hence, Basarwa stand to lose out on much of the valuable knowledge and skills, which parents would otherwise have been able to pass on to their children, if they could spend a longer time with them, and if the younger generation would be able to learn practical skills for animal tracking and guiding within their own environment (Madzwamuse, 2005). Moreover, language is the vehicle through which the rich cultural idioms and knowledge are transmitted. However, as observed previously, due to the current status of Basarwa languages, much of the rich indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage of Basarwa communities is likely to fade out and disappear.

As already observed, when the younger generations gradually stop speaking the language of the speech community, language death may result (see Batibo & Smieja, 2000). In a related context, Cummins made the following observation:

Where the mother tongue is used extensively in the community outside the school, then language loss among young children will be less. However, where language communities are not concentrated or 'ghettoized' in particular neighborhoods, children can lose their ability to communicate in their mother tongue within 2–3 years of starting school. (Cummins, 1999–2003)

In a similar vein, Batibo and Smieja (2000) noted that the failure of the minority language speakers to transmit their languages to younger generations will result in the next generations either having imperfect knowledge of their mother tongues or

will not know them at all (Batibo & Smieja, 2000, p. XX). Madzwamuse (2005, p. 82) also highlighted the fact that the threat of language loss, also threatens the knowledge base of traditional folklore and knowledge of plants. Accordingly, traditional names of plants are replaced by Tswana names because the original names in Khoesan languages expressed properties and characters of plants. To illustrate this situation, the rich knowledge of the fauna is replaced by labels which are largely meaningless when they are expressed in Setswana (Le Roux, 1999, quoted in Madzwamuse, 2005, p. 82). Hence, as lack of continuity in language speech and traditional knowledge transfer is disrupted by the schooling routine, these crucial symbols of Khoesan tradition will gradually disappear, and so would the language which is their repository.

This would serve to support the view that western education and continued Basarwa lifestyle are not compatible. This mainly derives from the fact that firstly going to school means being away from home for extended periods of time and this does not accord them an opportunity to partake of the indigenous knowledge which their elders possess. This makes clear that there is need for a linguistically affirming home environment in order to facilitate a strong base in the mother tongue. However, this would not be possible in a (school) hostel situation (Cummins, 1999–2003).

It is also important to ensure that Basarwa children do not lose touch with their language, as it mediates their acquisition of crucial cultural knowledge, which they can use to access the new forms of livelihood, as well as possess the knowledge of commercially useful plant and animal resources in the veld. In order to ensure this, it would be useful to advocate bilingual education which begins with acknowledgement of the child's home language, and gradually introduce the medium of instruction, where it is not the mother tongue. Moreover, teaching children their mother tongue has added benefits as it positively impacts on their overall education. International research suggests a strong link between a strong foundation in the mother tongue and easier grasp of the host (majority) language by using codes to understand and effect linguistic skills transfer from one to the other (Cummins, 2001, 1999–2003).

Although mother-tongue facility is important, it would not be useful to offer a monolingual education to Basarwa children, in view of the dictates of a fast globalising world with its diversity of cultures in both community and school, and due to its requirements for linguistic versatility in varied multicultural contexts. Thus, whilst there is a demand by indigenous peoples to have the right to speak their own language along with the national and official languages, as languages of opportunity and commerce Setswana and English serve crucial socio-economic purposes as well.

In the final analysis, any measures that are undertaken to redress linguistic marginalisation, particularly in the school context would have to take into account the perspectives of Basarwa themselves. In relation to this issue, during the First Regional Conference on San Education held in 2001, a considerable number of Basarwa participants expressed misgivings about monolingual instruction in their mother tongue, as this would disadvantage them and would deny them the ability to interact, negotiate and succeed in a country dominated by the use of Setswana in the first instance, and in a world dominated by the use of English in the second.

Other countries undertake a variety of measures to affirm the linguistic rights of minorities. Some of these are carried out within the overall objective of promoting bilingual education, while others go as far as to train indigenous bilingual teachers and technical and administrative officials who then drive the process (Rovillos, 1999, p. 4).

The introduction of such programmes invariably requires production, distribution and use of a wide range of official and educational materials (see Tomei & Swepston, 1996, p. 25). The enormous costs associated with such measures hinder effective implementation (see Grenoble & Whaley, 1998). These challenges have been cited in Botswana as well, as impediments to multilingual education. To this end, Jacob Nkate, the Botswana's Minister of Education, reiterated the prohibitive costs associated with multilingualism in the curriculum when he addressed the Mother Tongue Conference in Gaborone in 2005. In Botswana, the situation is also compounded by the nationalistic approach to education policy, which does not make provision for curriculum differentiation that would promote multilingual education. And yet, the Botswana's Vision 2016 document acknowledges the country's diversity and encourages tolerance of ethno-cultural identity (Botswana Government Vision 2016, 1997, p. 68). This provides a good context for acknowledgement of marginalised cultural-linguistic communities, including that of Basarwa. Furthermore, some members of the society believe that these languages should receive the necessary prominence as media of instruction, or that they should at least be featured in some way in the curriculum.⁴ There are also advanced efforts to develop orthographies for Shiyeyi and Shekgalaharhi languages, although progress has been slower with regard to the other languages, such as Setswapong and Sebirwa. Orthographies have been developed for some Basarwa languages that are spoken in the region, such as Nama and Jul'oan in Botswana and Namibia. However the lack of enabling policies prevents their use in Botswana's education system. Conversely, in Namibia the government has resolved to introduce primary education in the mother tongues (Batibo, 2005, p. 120).

Conclusion

The socio-historical status of Basarwa and the historically dominant position of the Setswana language underlie the current socio-linguistic discourse between Basarwa and other ethnic groups in Botswana. Basarwa have been increasingly dispossessed and deprived of their erstwhile resources and livelihoods, as they gradually came under the control of Bantu-speaking groups, providing servile and semi-servile labour. In the changing socio-economic circumstances, the speakers of Khoesan languages have gradually moved away from their own languages, and towards languages which assure them more direct socio-economic benefits, particularly Setswana. The changing socio-economic conditions also present language challenges, which compel language shift towards Setswana. In particular, facility in Setswana to a large extent and English to a lesser extent has proved to be a crucial means of Basarwa ability to access resources that are crucial to their changing livelihoods. The benefits derived from facility in Setswana include access to western education as a means to employment, resources, such as land, markets for goods and social networks associated with these resources, as they are accessed through Setswana and English, the languages of commerce and public discourse. It is important to note that while Basarwa have so appropriated Setswana, this appropriation constitutes accommodation due to force of circumstances.

The context and demands of schooling add impetus for the Basarwa to shift towards Setswana and English, which in some cases resulted in language endangerment. The paper also observed that Mother-tongue education is important, as it has long been cited as a good predictor and facilitator of second or nth language acquisition. It also

plays an important role, as a channel for transmission of rich cultural heritage of any cultural-linguistic group. Hence, its value there cannot be overemphasised. However, in order to be able to carry out its full function in the education system, second language teaching and learning requires some preconditions, as well as provision of key resources, both human and materials, such as enabling language policies, literary materials and trained personnel to facilitate appropriate language planning.

Notes

1. These views were also expressed at other conferences, such as the International Khoesan Conference held in Gaborone, September 2003 and the Mother Tongue Education Conference held in Gaborone, 2–5 June 2005.
2. Veld products constitute things, such as thatching grass, palm (*mokola*) used in basket making, fruit in season, nuts and herbs, medicinal plants, such as the Devil's Claw, truffle and cochineal dye, which is derived from the cochineal insect (Perrett, 1996).
3. These views were expressed by some of the San leaders who attended the First San Regional Education Conference held at Okahandja, Namibia from 7–11 May 2001.
4. The Vision 2016 in particular subscribes to cultural diversity. To this end, the pillars of 2016 are being translated into the various languages, including minority languages of Botswana. This is also the stance adopted by Reteng, the Multicultural Coalition of Botswana.

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