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Shiyeyi Language Planning in Botswana: International Connections and Local Imperatives

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ABSTRACT
Shiyeyi is one of the 28 languages spoken in Botswana. It is an endangered language because it is no longer being passed on to the children. This article describes micro language planning efforts to revive Shiyeyi over a period of 17 years. The classical and critical approaches to language planning are applied to this case to highlight the interplay between power relations, social exclusion, and social change. The overall planning context is provided and the achievements are outlined as evidence of social change in three areas. The challenges are outlined as evidence of power relations stemming from historical and socio-political exclusion, thus affecting the identity of the Wayeyi. It is argued that the project was a search for cultural identity, social inclusion and economic advancement. Further, it is the holistic approach to rights advocacy at the micro planning level that brought about change, giving hope for the revival of Shiyeyi.

KEYWORDS
Botswana; diversity; identity; language planning; multilingualism; Shiyeyi

Historical context
Schapera (1952) described a hierarchical structure of tribes of the then Bechuanaland, now the independent state of Botswana. It can be summarized as follows: there are the Tswana who have chiefs and land, the non-Tswana with no land but with sub-chiefs, and the rest of the non-Tswana without land and without chiefs. This structure is currently in operation. Through an assemblage of assimilationist policies including the constitution, the chieftainship act, the tribal territories act, and the language use policy, the state recognized the eight Tswana tribes (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999) who make about 18% of the population (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006; RETENG, 2008). It accorded them the right to land, chieftaincy and language at the exclusion of 37 non-Tswana tribes who make about 65% of the population (RETENG, 2008).

Setswana is therefore the national language and it is currently spoken by over 78% of the population as a first and second language (Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003). English is the official language (Prophet & Badede, 2006; Nkosana, 2011; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004). The other 26 languages have no official roles and this has placed most of them at the risk of endangerment. The cultures of the non-Tswana tribes became either moribund or dead (Chebanne, 2010). In reacting to social exclusion, the non-Tswana ethnic groups began to form linguistic associations to revive their languages and cultures (Alimi, 2016).

Around the world, most language planning activities involve the battle between English and other languages (Hornberger, 2005), stemming from historical experiences in which the tendency to assimilate into English culture is the norm. Writing about the experience of immigrants in Canada, Ellyson, Andrew, and Clement (2016) state that “the history of conquest and of socioeconomic inequalities, the harsh reality of linguistic demographic decline, and the historical tendency of immigrants to integrate into the Anglophone community have had very deep impacts in
Quebec” (p. 139). Efforts to revive an endangered language like Shiyeyi is not only a battle against the Setswana hegemony, but a world culture entrenched in English, a rising “global language, hence infringing on national languages; the reclaiming of endangered indigenous, immigrant, and ethnic languages at local and national levels” (Hornberger, 2002, p. 32).

The Wayeyi context

The Wayeyi are the most numerous citizens of Ngamiland district in Botswana (Ashton, 1937; Westphal, 1962), making about 40% of the population (Tlou, 1985). There are no recent figures because the national population and housing censuses do not include ethnicity. The district is ruled by the Tswana-speaking Batawana tribe who make about 1.3% of its population (RETENG, 2008). All 13 tribes living in Ngamiland are referred to as Batawana in official discourse. The subordinate status of the Wayeyi, and the advent of education at independence, which emphasized the use of Setswana and English only, led to the decline in the use of Shiyeyi in most villages. Currently, it is one of the endangered languages since there is no intergenerational transmission (Batibo, 1997; Bock & Johnson, 2003; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002; Vossen, 1988). However, in some villages, younger adults still speak the language, and children around the age of five understand when spoken to.

Like other non-Tswana tribes which were economically disadvantaged (Gwatiwa, 2014), the Wayeyi noted that they lived in poverty. This was despite the fact that the Okavango Delta, their main habitat (Bock & Johnson, 2003; Tlou, 1985) was the second contributor to the gross domestic product through tourism (Mbaiwa, 2005). The poverty levels in the district were higher than the rest of the country (Mokwape, 2015; Moseki, 2009; Statistics Botswana, 2015). Schools in the district were consistently underperforming (Jotia & Pansiri, 2013; UNICEF, 2008). The Wayeyi also observed that their culture was redesignated as that of the Batawana in the media and some educational materials, in accordance with the assimilation policies and practices. The Wayeyi therefore re-engaged in politics of recognition (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008; Solway & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004). They formed the Kamanakao Association (KA) in 1995 to continue the struggle which had gone on in the 1940s to preserve the remnant of their language and culture. The project was a struggle for human rights, specifically, for recognition of the Wayeyi as a people with their own language and culture. Linguistic and cultural rights are human rights; hence the advocacy program had a strong human rights approach at all levels, including at the international level. It had four programs: Language and literacy development, cultural development, and advocacy at the local, national and international level. The language and literacy programs were funded by the Lutheran Bible Translators, for material production through the writers’ workshops. Beginning in 2016 the government started funding the writers’ workshop as well. The cultural program was funded by the Wayeyi from 1999 to 2004, when government began to co-fund the annual cultural festival. Advocacy at local and national levels was fully funded by the Wayeyi in each village. At the international level, it was funded by Minority Rights Group International and its partners.

Review of literature and theoretical framework

Scholars have defined language planning (LP) in different and yet similar ways (Bakmand, 2000; Baldauf, 2012; Cooper, 1989; McKay & Hornberger, 1996; Tollefson, 1991). This paper adopts Cooper’s (1989) classical approach in which he defines LP as “a deliberate effort to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or function allocation of their language codes” (p. 45). It is worth noting that minority language codes are normally left out in the function allocation process. Minority groups are in most cases not only linguistically marginalized, but economically, politically and socially marginalized, as it is the case with the Wayeyi as described above. Cooper (1989) states that these factors are normally the primary motivators for LP.

Tollefson (2006) described the critical approach to language policy as one that critically examines the traditional and mainstream approach to language policy. He stated that this approach aims to
bring about social change and is influenced by critical theory. Tollefson (2006) also viewed language policy as a “state disciplinary power … used to promote inequality by undemocratic structures in which those who make decisions are not accountable to those who are affected by them” (p. 208). Ricento and Hornberger (1996) and Hornberger (2006b) provided an integrated model of LP, bringing together approaches, types and goals for LP. The approaches operate at the policy planning (on form) and at cultivation (on function) levels.

Fishman (1991) observed that “millions of people throughout the world are consciously engaged in efforts to reverse language shift—thousands do so as members of movements whose explicit goal is RLS[reversing language shift]” (p. 381). He further asserts that these efforts are under-represented in both social science and sociolinguistic literature. He presents an alternative language planning and policy (LPP) theory “which attempts to provide insight into the struggles of some societies toward intergenerational linguistic continuity” (p. 393). The eight stage graded intergenerational disruption scale (GIDS) for reversing language shift is divided into two sections, stages 8 to 5, which describe RLS on the weak side, seeking diglossia, and stages four to one, which represents conditions for RLS on a strong side, if seeking increased power sharing. What we do not know is whether all cases of weak RLS efforts seek diglossia or if some aspire for power sharing while still on the weak side of reversing language shift.

Milligan (2007) presents the Systems Thinking (ST) approach to LP. While this model is not yet incorporated into mainstream LP literature, its main contribution is the emphasis on the connectedness of status, corpus and acquisition planning. Further, it presents the concepts of negative and positive LP. The former focuses on influence against the use of a particular language, while the latter focuses on the use of a particular language. In a sense, focusing on the use of Setswana and English only is positive LP for these languages, but negative LP for Shiyyeyi and other languages.

Hornberger (2005, 2006a) presents the idea that in places where ideological spaces are closed, it is for educators, communities and individuals to open up and fill up those opportunities for advancing silenced languages. The activities of the Wayeyi opened up ideological and implementation spaces for accepting cultural diversity in Botswana. It is essentially the works of Fishman (1991), Hornberger (2005, 2006b), Ricento and Hornberger (1996), and Tollefson (2006), which influenced my analysis and discussion of Shiyyeyi language planning.

LP is no longer understood as an activity restricted to governments alone, but rather inclusive of other agencies and even individuals (Baldauf, 2012; Cooper, 1989; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, 2006b). In the literature, micro language planning is used in two senses. One refers to planning at the lower levels of government, such as the school and classroom (Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, & Bryant, 2012; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). In another sense, it refers to non-state authorized planning activities (Baldauf, 2012; Omoniyi, 2007, as cited in Alimi, 2016). It is the second sense that the term is applied to Shiyyeyi language planning, since it was initiated and carried out by a non-governmental organization, the Kamanakao Association (KA). The term macro language planning will therefore refer to government or state authorized and sponsored planning.

**Methodology**

This work employed elements of an ethnography research design, and snowballing (or chain-referral) (Katz, 2006) as a sampling procedure for selecting villages. Ethnography elements included participant observation of peoples’ beliefs, social interactions and behaviors over a period of time (Naidoo, 2012). The researcher was part of the Wayeyi community who was involved in decision making on the activities of the Association. Specifically, the author was the coordinator of the KA, a role which involved planning (together with the executive committee), ensuring that all branch committees were informed and supported on the upcoming activities, visits and celebrations by the secretary. She was responsible for strategic planning, training and international fund and fund-raising for the organization. At gatherings under study, she was a participant observer. As a result, she had to step in and out of the situation for data gathering, making explanations to issues raised
when necessary, yet taking notes and evaluating the activities. In this regard, the interpretation of data by the researcher became part of the research process (Naidoo, 2012). As each village was visited, information on which other village had a Wayeyi population led to a visit to that village, and the sample kept increasing. Thus, snowballing was the main sampling technique, in addition to obvious knowledge of where the Wayeyi were resident in the two major districts.

The aim was to find out what the Wayeyi wanted to achieve with regards to their language and culture, and why? Specifically, the study aimed at answering the following questions: (a) What aspirations do the Wayeyi have, with regard to their language and culture?; (b) what ideologies, orientations, goals and motivations underpinned their activities, and how do these fit into the classical approach to language planning theory described above?; and (c) what have the Wayeyi achieved at the national level, on Shiyeyi language and culture?

Several activities and sources provided data for the researcher to decipher the ideologies, orientations, goals, and motivations underlying the Wayeyi aspirations for Shiyeyi LP. These activities and actions included the following: Regional workshops for developing the writing system, village meetings organized for the chief to meet communities following his installation, meetings to plan for the court case seeking recognition for the chief and tribe, public education meetings to give updates on progress on the matter at the United Nations, meetings of the writers’ workshop to develop materials, the annual cultural festival, structured interviews with six elders and three youths, and documents.

Qualitative data was collected through audio and/or video recordings and the author took extensive notes. Content analysis technique was used to decipher answers to these questions. The classical approach to language planning was applied with a focus on statements of ideology, goals/motivations, and orientations. Research assistants had to code these according to a table indicating these units of analysis. These were then categorized under each type of language planning: Status, corpus or acquisition planning as discussed below, where applicable. The researcher also applied the critical approach (Tollefson, 1991, 2006) in analyzing the data. That is, finding out the underlying policies influencing the ecology of languages in Botswana, what language rights are being denied, and what ideological and implementation spaces are being created by advocacy and other forces (Hornberger, 2005). Rules of procedures were to listen to the selected tapes and videos across villages. The criterion for reliability was the recurrence of themes from different villages, meetings and people over a period of time. Quotations were those that seemed to capture the main spirit of the discussions on a particular theme.

A total of 21 villages were visited and revisited between 1997 and 2015, making a total of 45 gatherings. Data utilized in this paper was from five regional workshops, five village visits by the chief, three writers’ workshops, three formal speeches at the festivals and interviews with three elders and two children aged eight and ten. Selected recordings were those that had good sound and the speakers expressed what could be seen as the people’s aspirations for their language and culture. The recordings represented the regional spread of villages in Ngamiland and the Central district where the meetings were held. Data from these meetings is indicated in the text by name of the village and the date of the event. Permission for names of speakers had not been obtained, and hence were not mentioned. Participants at all meetings were aware that they were being recorded, and some of the videos are played at the annual cultural festival. Permission to use the data from interviews was obtained during the interviews.

Findings
Wayeyi aspirations for their language and culture

Shiyeyi language planning was taking place in an environment of tension and power struggle. The underlying ideology for language planning at the macro level was assimilation and the maintenance of power by the Tswana, as opposed to nurturing diversity (Chebanne, 2010; Jotia &
Shiyeyi and other languages were proscribed by official policy and practice, specifically, the National Revised Policy on Education of 1994 (Ministry of Education, 1994).

The mention of English in the constitution and its promotion in education reflected the ideology of internationalization. Not only were the non-Tswana to assimilate into Tswana culture, but all the people of Botswana were to assimilate into the English culture for modernization and scientific advancement (Tollefson, 1991). Linguistic diversity was, and still is, seen as a problem instead of a right or resource (Ruiz, 1984, 2010). The main aspiration for Shiyeyi language planning was to change the status quo. The Wayeyi aspirations will be discussed under the various headings below for relevance.

**Shiyeyi language planning ideology, and orientations in the framework of the classical approach to LP**

Cobbarubias (1983) discussed four ideologies, which motivate decision making in language policy formulation: Assimilation, pluralism, vernacularization, and internationalization. At the micro level, Shiyeyi language planning aimed to advocate for a paradigm shift in ideology, goals and orientations to language planning, in order to achieve a just society. It stemmed from an ideology of embracing multiculturalism, pluralism and unity in diversity as a development agenda. The Wayeyi aspired for a maintenance-permission continuum (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1989), in which other languages can be permitted for use in schools and other social domains as necessary, while maintaining the national and international languages. “Ta tjuwa ku kyoo zindime koozo ku hwetwa moni irediyo yoo, uwumwe ni uwumwe kati zi yivwa ngati ti zi iyaya” (We could be listening to all these languages on radio, so that everyone can hear them and learn them), an elder said. The project aimed to create ideological and implementation spaces as well as voices for policy transformation (Hornberger, 2006a) and provide an enabling environment to implement positive, even though small, steps in the right direction. It was a project that sought to encourage those who imagined multilingual schools, reflecting multilingual societies surrounding them, to start building multilingual, multicultural bridges with grasses, stones and anything they have. The importance of mother tongue education in a context in which under performance has been the norm–leading to poverty–was another motivator for the project.

At a regional workshop at Motopi on August 15, 1997, an elder said in Shiyeyi “Ti yemwaa ti wa wumbwa ni infono a Warwa, ti wa fwana ku kwara ruldime rwetu, ti yane mashikati etu indji tshwe” (We were not made in the image of the Batawana, we need to write our own language and have our own chiefs). This was an orientation to one’s language as a right, and not only the language but the entire culture with specific reference to the right to leadership. “Ke batla go ithuta Seyeyi ka gore ke ngwao ya rona” (I want to learn Shiyeyi because it is our culture) answered the ten year Chabi (2008). The underlying ideology is anti-assimilationist, a direct challenge to the prevailing model.

**Types and goals for Shiyeyi language planning**

From the definitions of language planning (Cooper, 1989) and the work of many scholars such as Ricento and Hornberger (1996), the classical approach has identified three types of language planning: Status planning (about uses or functions of language), corpus planning (about language structure) and acquisition planning (about the users of language by learning it). This section describes the three types of LP as applied to Shiyeyi language and the goals to be achieved under each type.

**Status planning.** Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989) described linguistic rights as existing on a continuum from assimilation to maintenance, through the enactment of laws and regulations. It is through status planning that majorities and minorities are created by the state (Kymlicka, 2000) and
allocated or denied power accordingly as described by Schapera (1952) above. In the case of the Wayeyi, the laws mentioned above minoritized them and their language became endangered, reflecting the grave consequences of state laws on human life (Tollefson, 1991).

Applied linguists have identified over twenty goals, which planners around the world aim to achieve in different linguistic contexts (Nahir, 1984; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Using these inventories, the status planning goal for Shiyeyi was language maintenance, which Nahir (1984) described as “preservation of the use of a group’s native language as first or second … where pressures threaten … a decline in the status of the language” (p. 315). The endangerment of Shiyeyi motivated the maintenance goal. The other goal was to revive the language, which Nahir (1984) described as “turning a language with few or no surviving native speakers into a normal meaningful means of communication in a community” (p. 301). It is sometimes referred to as revitalization, which Hornberger, De Korne, and Weinberg (2016) defined as an “increase in number of speakers and domains of use” (p. 45). The Wayeyi aimed to reverse language shift (Fishman, 1990, 1991, 2001), and revive and revitalize the dying aspects of their language and culture, and bring it to its original status of a vibrant language spoken by all generations. Thus, ideological clarifications for Shiyeyi had been attained (Fishman, 1991).

At the macro planning level, Shiyeyi was viewed as a minority language with low prospects of survival. At the micro level, the Wayeyi had big dreams for their language. In their own words, they articulated their goals and aspirations, encouraged one another to speak Shiyeyi and make it visible. “Awana wetu ku ti pomisa ati shikya anga wa ha yizire Shiyeyi—ti hwete Shiyeyi” (Our children are angry at us, as to why we did not teach them Shiyeyi, let us speak Shiyeyi) said Hamusipa during an interview (Hamusipa, March 22, 2008). They wanted Shiyeyi to be used in schools, media, church and the kgotla4. “Panga ipu ku shi wara wana ku shikwere, tjuwa ku kyanii ti wa fwana ni zizha zii zimwe, awana wetu tjuwa ku hweta shikwawo apamwe ni apamwe” (If they were learning it in school, we could be like other tribes, our children could be speaking their native language everywhere) (Seronga, November 28, 1998).

They also reasoned that as a people, they were important because they brought the mokoro (a dug-out canoe) into the Okavango Delta (Tlou, 1985), where it is used to transport tourists (Nyati-Saleshando, 2011) and has been adopted by other tribes for fishing (Botswana Tourism Board (n.d). One man said in Setswana, “Go jewa madi ka rona mme re sa bonwe” (The country enjoys income using us and yet we remain invisible (Seronga, November 28, 1998). These are aspirations of a people seeking recognition of the value of their language and culture’s contribution to the nation. They are also voices seeking identity and inclusive policies and practices which acknowledge their existence. Shiyeyi status planning goals at the policy level was therefore nationalization, while at the cultivation level they sought to maintain and revive their language and culture.

Corpus planning. Haugen (1983) described language planning processes to include norm selection, codification, implementation and elaboration. Once the Wayeyi agreed to develop their language (norm selection – in status planning), then codification had to begin. Corpus planning efforts for Shiyeyi began in 1962 when Professor Ian Westphal from the University of Cape Town took interest in studying Shiyeyi and developing the writing system and a dictionary. He had to abandon the project due to the disapproval of the Batawana and the colonial government (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002).

The goals for corpus planning for Shiyeyi were standardization and graphization of the language at the policy planning level. At the cultivation level, it was to modernize and renovate it in the purest state possible. “Uwoto wetu wavo yaramuma, wa tikya mokoro, shikya ku wo yera uwoto ngaho, ka ungwetu?” (Our canoe, called uwoto in our language, has now been changed to mokoro (a Setswana word) why can’t they just call it uwoto? (Ditshiping, January 28, 2001). They wanted their culture to be communicated in their language, a goal to keep the language alive and pure.

The Wayeyi aimed to reduce the language into writing and develop materials for education, adult literacy and general reading (Kamanakao Association, 1998). These materials would reflect Shiyeyi culture (Nyati-Ramahobo & Bankgotsi, 2010) as the Wayeyi searched for their right to identity and
the remnants of their language and culture. Linguists were identified from the Departments of African Languages and Literature, French and English, at the University of Botswana, and one from the Lutheran Bible Translators. They met in 1996 to plan the way forward (Alimi, 2016; Gowlett, 1997; Nyati–Ramahobo, 2002).

Work in this area focused on codification (Haugen, 1983), which entailed graphization (developing the writing system), grammatization (developing grammar rules) and lexicalization (developing word lists or vocabularies) and standardization of the dialect to be adopted. Linguists attended the regional workshops, and audio recorded spoken Shiyeyi from 1997 to 2000. They also carried out individual interviews to seek further data on specific items for linguistic analysis. Discussions took place between the Wayeyi in Botswana and those in Namibia during cultural festivals, which are attended by both in each country every year. The idea was to harmonize the orthography. It was discovered that the Shiyeyi in Namibia was heavily influenced by Lozi language, and this had affected the way the Namibians write Shiyeyi. It was decided that separate orthographies should be developed in each country in order to facilitate literacy in a familiar version of Shiyeyi. Material development has been more rapid in Botswana than Namibia, while policy and practice were more favorable in Namibia. From 2000 to 2007, several drafts of the orthography had been produced, checked with speakers during workshops, and agreement was reached on standardizing the Okavango West dialect. The final writing system for Shiyeyi was published in 2007 (Chebanne, Rodewald, & Nyati–Ramahobo, 2007). Lukusa (2002, 2009) published a grammar book and a dictionary. A picture dictionary and other materials were produced and continued to be.

A booklet was produced to elaborate on terminologies and to simplify the complex orthography document (Veith, 2013). The picture dictionary was revised to include new terms that were generated during the translation of some complex materials such as Vision 2016 and the HIV/AIDS booklet. These translations made it necessary for new terms to be developed, and some were resuscitated from elderly people and some words had to be coined. This process is likely to continue as long as more materials are being translated. With regards to the implementation phase, which is described as the production of books, pamphlets and so on (Haugen, 1983), this work continued through the writers’ workshop as the permanent forum for developing materials. The development and implementation of Shiyeyi corpus led to stage 8 of Fishman’s GIDS being achieved.

The marketing strategies included selecting one member in each village and its surroundings to be responsible for selling the materials. The annual cultural festival was a research site where Shiyeyi folklore, poetry and other aspects of culture were studied by linguists. New aspects of the culture were discovered. “Ne kesa itse gore nka bona muzhamburo, sale ke o bona kele mo nyenyane” (I never thought I could ever see muzhamburo again, I last saw it when I was very young, said a member of the Ngamiland district Council in attendance (Maun, April 18, 2003). The festival brought the language to life in song, poetry and formal speeches, which is stage 7 on the GIDS, thus supporting corpus, status, and acquisition planning. New words were discovered in speech, song and poetry. Young people began to gain self-esteem as their language was used in a formal gathering. They began to pick some words and learn about the language. They became creative as they competed for prizes in the various cultural categories, engaging their parents to help them read the language, identify and practice for cultural events. This can be seen as stage 6 at its rudimentary phase. Literacy and school-ready materials, books, CDs, videos, and Shiyeyi branded items were sold during the festival. The materials were deposited in major libraries in the country and served as gifts to government officials for awareness raising when the opportunity arose.

Another project which supported the implementation of Shiyeyi corpus is the Wayeyi Bible Translation Project (WBTP), funded by the Lutheran Bible Translators (see Nyati–Saleshando, 2011). The project aimed to translate the New Testament into Shiyeyi. The Jesus’ Film has also been translated, awaiting funding for production.

**Acquisition planning.** The Wayeyi purposed that their language should be passed on to the children. An elderly man at a workshop said “Shiyeyi ku mana shati mana, ti ku iyaaya awana
wetu, ti ku hweta nawo, intshweke tii ti shari ku iyaaya awana wetu indime etu” (Shiyeyi is disappearing, we should teach our children, talk to them in our language, we are the only tribe which is not passing our language to our children) (Rakops, November 4, 2000). At Etsha 13, September 27, 2014, another elder said “Shikya tati inca pu ruldime rwetu, namushi hurumente ipoku ikwhee zishazi koozo ati zi tambusa zizha zazo” (Why do we continue to despise our language, government is now encouraging all tribes to revive their cultures and speak their languages). Acquisition planning was therefore the main motivation for Shiyeyi corpus and status planning. It had to be written so that it can be learnt and used in important social domains. It is also an important marker of the people’s identity (Fishman, 1991) and the DNA of their culture.

The writers’ workshop as a material development forum for Shiyeyi also facilitated the teaching of out-of-school and pre-school classes (stage 5 on GIDS). The lessons also included song and dance to young ones to capture their interest and to encourage them to participate during the cultural festival, develop their self-esteem and establish their identity as Wayeyi. The positive impact of these lessons is described by Nyati-Saleshando (2011).

The writers felt that their involvement in this work had enhanced their speaking and writing abilities. They reported that they had gained more vocabulary and they were happy that they could write their language. During an interview Peloyankwe (2015) said, “Pele ne ke palelwka ke go bua le haele sentence, ne ke utwa hela, jaanong bona le go kwala kea kwala” (Before (meaning before joining the writers’ workshop) I could not make a sentence in Shiyeyi, I could only understand, now you see, I can even write it down). One of the longest serving members of the writers’ workshop, Ramphisi, said in Shiyeyi (Ramphisi, April 3, 2015) “Tjopanii shisuu umutu naa ku shi siya, tana kandi ti ka fwa, ta chwaara nanyina” (Can one leave such work, unless I die, we have really made progress).

On June 8, 2011, Gopolang Maropamabi, a young Muyeyi from Seronga village, opened a Facebook page, LETSLEARNSHIYEYI. As of September 11, 2017, the page had 7,556 members. On this page the youth interact and teach each other Shiyeyi and discuss other Wayeyi related matters such as the history and culture. Veith (2012) stated that she took interest in the group as she had to learn Shiyeyi for her Bible translation work. In doing so, she observed that the group “has in a short time, since its inception, already begun to have an impact in the real world of the language community” (Veith, 2012, p. 2). Maropamabi (2016) felt that the page has achieved what he intended it to achieve:

To provide an opportunity for members to learn to read, write and speak Shiyeyi, personally I have improved my Shiyeyi. What I would like to see are video resources to teach pronunciation. (Email, April 18, 2016)

Relating Shiyeyi language planning efforts to Fishman’s GIDS, it can be described as being on the minimum RLS program, at stages 8-5, with 20 points - stage 6 being positive to negative and a positive ideological clarification, similar to Yiddish Utra-Orthodox (Fishman, 1991, p.405). The corpus of the language has been developed, there are cultural events to highlight and further develop the language, there is minimum motivation for parents to use the language at individual, family and community levels and there is some form of a literacy program. However, intergenerational continuity remains a challenge and therefore the need for going beyond stage 5 exists.

Achievements

The goal for Shiyeyi language planning was to challenge the status quo and change ideology, goals and orientations to language planning by capturing and broadcasting “the human experience of individuals facing consequences of state language policy” (Tollefson, 1991, p. 204). The voices of the Wayeyi people reflected their experiences imposed by the state’s assimilationist policies and they wanted to see real change. This movement questioned the traditional approach to language policy of one language, one nation, and one culture as the only way to achieve national unity. It demonstrated how this traditional model has failed to unite the country into people who are equal before the law, but living in a hierarchical relationship of “super ordinates and subordinates” (Sello-Mogwe, 2002, p. 2).
The project also questioned ideologies, which “make inequality seem to be a natural condition of human system” (Tollefson, 2006, p. 43). When asked as to why she did not support the activities of the KA, Mbwe a Muyeyi said in Setswana (Mbwe, July 22, 2001) “Rona re hodile re itji bo-Moremi hela ele bone dikhoshi tsa rona, bo-Kamanakao ha re ba yitji” (We grew up knowing the Moremis as our only chiefs, we did not know anything about Kamanakao). People had come to believe that it is natural to be ruled by a chief from another tribe and it is okay not to be able to speak your language.

The achievements must then be looked at with the lens of the impact the holistic and grass-root (Veith, 2012) or bottom-up approach (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) had on the national scene, with regards to the three themes emerging from the data: First is change in ideology from a monolithic ethos to multilingual and multicultural ethos and accepting diversity and doing something about it. These languages must be spoken on radio so we can learn them, they said. Second is bringing about change in power structures and relations. We were not made in anybody’s image but we should have our own chiefs, they emphasized, thus not only seeking diaglosia, but power sharing as well. Finally, the impact on the target language and people—the Wayeyi. Let us speak our language and pass it onto our children, they encouraged one another. The holistic approach adopted by the Wayeyi was in three senses: Advocating for all linguistic and cultural rights, doing so at the community, national and international levels, and the use of multiple entry points: Litigation, micro language planning and cultural revival.

The first theme is the development of multilingual ethos or accepting diversity at the national level. In describing the work of the two linguistic associations in Botswana, namely, the Kamanakao Association (KA) and the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language (SPIL), Alimi (2016) stated that “the activities of these associations … have played an important role in altering the linguistic landscape in favor of multiculturalism as an inherent characteristic of the country” (p. 67). The nation’s psyche has moved to acknowledging and accepting diversity, an indication of social change. In 2008, President Khama said “My government’s position is that our arts, culture and heritage must be celebrated nationwide so that we can truly enjoy our unity in diversity,” quoted in Nyati-Saleshando (2011, p. 577). Speaking at the Wayeyi cultural festival in 2016, the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Slumber Tsogwane said, “Government supports cultural diversity as a cornerstone of democracy” (Segokgo, 2016, p. 1). These statements were ground breaking from the official discourses of a monolingual state that had wrapped the country since independence. These were new ways of talking (Hornberger et al., 2016) about our national identity, thus creating ideological and implementation spaces for diversity. The President’s initiative to fund cultural groups in 2008 put the discourse into practice.

In 2008 the UNESCO mother tongue day, which was initially celebrated by KA and RETENG since 2003, was institutionalized by government as the Botswana Languages Day and celebrated in various parts of the country (Alimi, 2016; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006). This program has added value in depicting and celebrating the multilingual nature of the country. The holistic approach to advocating for linguistic and cultural rights at all levels, including the international community, supported efforts for Shiyeyi language planning.

The second theme, which emerged from the data, was the need for structural change or a change in power relations. Tollefson (1991) maintained that “respect for diversity is important, but ultimately inadequate as a solution to linguistic inequality … a commitment to structural equality is necessary” and it “is inseparable from democracy” (p. 211). The holistic approach adopted by the Wayeyi for Shiyeyi LP challenged power relations by installing their chief and asking government to recognize him and then proceeded to the courts. By developing their language, and seeking for the recognition as a tribe, the Wayeyi were asserting their identity as a separate people from the Batawana, and laying a foundation for a change in power structures.

In response to the 2001 court ruling, the concluding observations and letters from the United Nation’s Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD, 2002 & 2006), the government reviewed the chieftainship act. This resulted in the new Bogosi Act of 2008, which provided for the recognition of Non-Tswana tribes. Sections 77 to 79 of the Constitution were
amended to increase the number of representatives in the House of Chiefs from 12 (eight Tswana tribes and four elected representatives) to 35, inclusive of people from non-Tswana tribes (Nyati-Saleshando, 2011). On December 21, 2015, the government recognized the Vekuhane, also known as the Basubiya tribe in the Chobe district. The Wayeyi were recognized on May 28, 2016 and their chief was recognized on November 17, 2016; unfortunately, he passed away on January 27, 2017. The second chief was recognized on March 27, 2017. These were positive outcomes of grass-root LP, which have the potential to enhance self-esteem among the Wayeyi to use their endangered language. Recognition of the Wayeyi and other tribes would bring about a major structural power change and bring them much closer to equality before the law. Milligan (2007) asserts that “cultural manipulations have ramifications upon the perceived attractiveness of the language and this, in turn, alters populations using” the language (p.196).

The third theme is the impact on the target language and the people. Alimi (2016) quotes the Principal Education Officer, Curriculum Development and Evaluation, as cited in a newspaper, saying “Shiyeyi is one of the most developed minority languages in the country” (p. 62). It is one of the six languages found to be ready for teaching in schools by a consultancy commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Batibo, Mathangwane, & Tsonope, 2003). There is evidence that Shiyeyi is more spoken in public than it was ten years ago. One elder said this in Setswana, at the funeral of the first Wayeyi chief, “Pele ne ke tshaba go bua Seyeyi, jaanong le mo basing ke bua hela” (I used to be shy to speak Shiyeyi, nowadays, even on the bus I speak it) (Gumare, May 18, 2003). One of the radio lessons for standard six includes an aspect of Wayeyi weddings and the segment includes spoken Shiyeyi. This lesson has been running for the past six years on national radio as a result of the government’s encouragement of other cultures in the curriculum (Molosiwa, 2009). It is not uncommon to hear Shiyeyi songs at funerals in Wayeyi villages. While it has not reached the formal domains, Shiyeyi seems to be making inroads into informal territories. The people seemed to have gained self-esteem and confidence. In order to reverse language shift, Shiyeyi needs to move to stages 4 to 1. Such prospects are dependent on the persistence of the Wayeyi people and their continuation in opening up and filling the ideological and implementation spaces available (Hornberger, 2005).

**Challenges**

Shiyeyi language planning is faced with four main challenges: The first is the issue of power relations between the ruling Batawana in Ngamiland and the Wayeyi, which had delayed the recognition of the latter (Pheage, 2016). As the Wayeyi seek their identity, social justice and inclusivity, the Batawana power base is challenged, as they had considered the Wayeyi as their people (Ramsay, 2016; Hamusipa, March 22, 2008). During the seventeen years the Wayeyi lost two chiefs (leaders of the struggle) and a regent. Despite these sad episodes and difficult moments against the government, they sustained the course. The Batawana have been opposed to the development of Shiyeyi since 1962, as stated earlier.

The second challenge is the slow pace to implement the use of other languages in education. Botswana accepted the recommendation to pursue mother tongue education at the Universal Periodic Review in 2009 (www.upr.info.org). The government seems to make a distinction between language and culture. There has been much progress on cultural revival by supporting cultural festivals for any tribe wishing to celebrate their culture, including the Wayeyi. However, a direct promotion of minority languages, especially in education, has not been highlighted to the same level. Third is the fact that language is a habit, and those who can speak Shiyeyi have developed the habit to speak Setswana. While the majority of those who still speak the language expressed the desire for the use of the language, and encouraged each other to speak it to their children, there was little evidence that they used Shiyeyi in the daily chores. This means the role of individuals, families, communities and society as change agents is minimum, that is stage 6 on the GIDS is positive to negative. The ideology of assimilation within a diverse ecology seemed to divert the attention of agents to the status quo while desiring change. During the meetings, they continued to use Setswana
in private conversations, but used Shiyeyi when they stood up to make a contribution to the discussions. It may take an immersion education program to produce more natural speakers and achieve intergenerational continuity by moving to stages 4 to 1.

Finally, it is the inability of the Wayeyi to initiate their own formal schools, such as it is the case with Maori in New Zealand (Hornberger, 2006a). In their presentations, they aspire to have the language taught in schools, but they do not suggest ways in which they can build their own schools. However, they refer to the poverty levels in their main district as a hindrance. In order for Shiyeyi to be revived, it must be taught in schools and there must be intergenerational transmission (Fishman, 2001). Despite these challenges, the Shiyeyi language will persist for some time to come and continue to develop.

**Conclusion**

Botswana’s positive image in the international community served as a mirror for citizens to see if the country is living up to its reputation. The invisibility of the majority of citizens on the national scene highlighted the need for their participation in the success story. It is the democratic environment which provided ideological and implementation spaces and voice for those who felt aggrieved to advocate in ways that challenged the core of power relations between citizens. While progress is slow, change has become inevitable.

Shiyeyi language planning efforts have demonstrated that micro-language planning employing the holistic human rights-based approach can create fertile ground for social change in language ethos, power structures and language revitalization. Further, it has demonstrated how bottom up efforts (Hornberger, 2005) can open up ideological and implementation spaces for language development at the corpus, status and acquisition planning levels, in a closed ideological context. The case of Shiyeyi informs LP theory in that very little is known about LP in Botswana with regards to minority languages. Fishman (1991) points out that movements such as the KA are under-represented in the literature. As more such cases are made available, they inform LP to be more “theoretical, predictive and explanatory” (Hornberger, 2006b. p.34). It has questioned the language planning goals and orientations and shed light on how the state denies linguistic rights to certain citizens. LP is taking place in the context of negative LP (Milligan, 2007), in that policy at national level aims to get rid of other languages, except Setswana and English.

Shiyeyi LP has shed light on success stories in micro language planning as a tool for advocacy for the revitalization of an endangered language. The success is mainly in its navigation of a hostile environment through peaceful means to bring about change. These efforts need to be continued to gain momentum and influence status planning at the macro level for greater achievements. Botswana’s new Vision 2036 states that “All ethnic groups will have equal recognition and representation at the Ntlo ya Dikgosi” (House of Chiefs), (Vision 2036 Presidential Task Team, 2016, p. 26).

The Wayeyi project had strong leadership, informed decision making in advocacy, and had strong grass-root support and strong international awareness and support. Its activities at the local level were well organized and well attended, integrating corpus, status and acquisition planning, as well as advocacy for cultural rights. There is more to be done to achieve the Wayeyi aspirations, specifically, the greater need to go beyond stage 5 on the GIDS.

**Notes**

1. The Wayeyi are also referred to as the Bayeyi or Bayei—this is due to the influence of the noun class prefix of the Setswana language, which uses Ba– instead of Wa- as the prefix for names of tribes.
2. Kamanakao means their remnant.
4. A traditional meeting place where civil cases and community consultations are held and are presided over by the village chief.


References


