

Challenges encountered in the home-neighbourhood-community and school domains: An analysis of Tonga revitalisation through Fishman's (1991) Reversing Language Shift framework

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Abstract

Minority language groups in Zimbabwe face many challenges as they strive for space for, and recognition of, their languages. This study focuses particularly on the Tonga language spoken in the Binga district of Zimbabwe. The study aims to explore the language planning goals for the revitalisation of Tonga as well as the challenges encountered in realising these goals in two domains, i.e. the home-neighbourhood-community (HNC) and the school domains. Data was gathered through interviews as well as through the use of secondary sources. For the interviews, social actors involved in the revitalisation of Tonga were used as informants. These included Binga chiefs and their communities, non-governmental organisations, publishing houses, and universities. The study reveals that the goals of Tonga revitalisation fall under language maintenance goals with an orientation towards community language maintenance, as well as language spread (acquisition) and standardisation for the HNC and school domains, respectively. Within the HNC domain, the Tonga community faced great challenges in garnering ideological consensus within the community itself, mainly due to a lack of advocacy and lobbying skills. They also faced challenges in gaining entry into domains outside the home, particularly the school domain. Following an analysis of the challenges encountered, this study argues that minority language groups cannot revitalise minority languages without support from, and collaboration with, other stakeholders, including central government. The insights drawn from this study's findings might be applicable to other minority language groups in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, for example, in respect of offering feasible alternatives to the challenges of micro-level language revitalisation.

Keywords: Language planning, revitalisation, micro level, minority languages, marginalisation, lobbying

1. Introduction

In response to the global crisis and to grassroots movements, the discipline of linguistics is shifting from treating languages as objects of study to engaging in efforts to save endangered languages (Wilhelm 2013). Language shift is a result of a number of factors, on both macro and micro levels, and sometimes these factors transcend linguistic issues. Language shift can lead to language extinction, and efforts to salvage dying and dead languages fall within language revitalisation and language revival, respectively. The current research falls within the scope of revitalisation which, according to King (2001), is an attempt to add new linguistic forms or social functions to an embattled minority language with the aim of increasing its users or uses – in other words, a way of recouping or reinvigorating the use of the native tongue. Revitalisation therefore deals with threatened languages that still have surviving speakers. Where minority languages are concerned, revitalisation is normally a micro-level initiative (Fishman 1991) which, just like macro-level language planning, requires systematic planning. The literature is littered with examples of revitalised languages, for example, Navajo in the United States, Maori in New Zealand, and Bahasa in Indonesia (Kaplan and Baldauf Jr. 1997).

Baldauf Jr. (2008) indicates that language planning involves different actors with the aim of achieving set goals. Traditionally, language planning in Zimbabwe has been an activity of central government. Government's approach to language planning has been informed by English monolingualism as a way of perpetuating the ideology of national unity, an ideology which is not shared by the majority of indigenous language groups in Zimbabwe. According to Ndhlovu (2009), this drive for post-colonial nation-building was informed by the Zimbabwean nationalistic ideology of intolerance to language diversity and multilingualism. This intolerance has resulted in the perpetuation of the minoritisation of some languages. A minoritised language is a language of which its lack of autonomy, status, diffusion, functional distribution, and standardisation make up objective characteristics derived from macrolinguistic description (Kasbarian 1997). This conceptualises the linguistic imbalances that exist within the Zimbabwean linguistic ecology, and defines government political ideologies imbedded in language. As a result, issues of language planning are consciously considered for particular languages, excluding others within the same linguistic ecology, as clearly witnessed in the Zimbabwean language-in-education policy (see Appendix B). This discrepancy in language planning has resulted in minoritised language communities raising and engaging in language planning activities. Because of this prevailing monolingual ideology, there is a lack of political will on the part of government to develop minoritised languages. Communities have therefore taken it upon themselves to initiate language planning activities to the benefit of their languages. Speakers of minoritised languages in Zimbabwe, such as Tonga, Venda, Shangani, and Kalanga, embarked on a bottom-up approach to language planning as far back as the 1970s, with the objective of achieving certain developmental goals. The Tonga Language and Cultural Committee (TOLACCO) was formed in 1976, and the Zimbabwe Indigenous Language Promotion Association (ZILPA) was formed in 2001, comprising Tonga, Venda, Shangani, Kalanga, Nambya, and Sotho (Mumpande 2006, Nyika 2008, Ndlovu 2013). These grassroots mobilisation efforts, however, came with their own challenges which in the end saw speakers of Venda, Shangani, and Kalanga backing out of these initiatives.

The revitalisation of Tonga is thus an example of this bottom-up phenomenon. However, only a few studies have been published on the processes, failures, and successes that have been achieved in this regard (see, for example, Mumpande 2006; Nyika 2007, 2008; Makoni et al.

2008; Ndlovu 2013). Apart from these studies, no single study has been done to ascertain the goals of Tonga revitalisation, or to analyse the challenges encountered in the process of this revitalisation. Such an evaluation is necessary, particularly taking into consideration the idea that these micro-level initiatives are mostly taken up by people who are not experts in language planning matters, but people who are passionate about their languages, who know what they want to achieve for the language but do not know how to attain it. This possibly explains why, generally, minority languages in the country have not shown substantive development, which could be a result of how the communities have been engaging in revitalisation activities thus far. An awareness of such factors and the realisation of militating factors offered by Fishman's Reversing Language Shift (RLS) framework may be key to successful revitalisation initiatives. It is therefore hoped that the results from this case study might be applicable to other minoritised language speakers in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, for example, with regard to offering feasible alternatives to micro-level language revitalisation. It should, however, be noted that although a number of revitalisation activities were engaged in various domains, the current study is restricted to activities in two domains only, namely the home-neighbourhood-community (HNC) and school domains. Therefore, the objectives of this study were:

- To identify the goals of revitalisation within the home domain,
- To identify the goals of revitalisation within the school domain,
- To explore and analyse what the Tonga speech community faced in order to realise their goals in the home domain, and
- To explore and analyse what the Tonga speech community faced in order to realise their goals in the school domain.

In other words, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What were the goals of Tonga revitalisation in the HNC and school domains?
- What challenges were encountered in revitalising Tonga within the HNC domain?
- What challenges were encountered in revitalising Tonga in the school domain?

The identified challenges are analysed against the backdrop of Fishman's (1991) RLS framework.

2. Methodology

In Zimbabwe, Tonga is spoken in the Kariba district (or Zambezi Valley), the Midlands district of Gokwe, and in Matabeleland North districts, specifically Hwange and Binga (Hachipola 1998). However, the site for this study is the Binga district, which was chosen because of the high concentration of Tonga-speaking people in the area as well as its noteworthy contribution towards the development of Tonga.

The development of Tonga is a product of the contributions of a number of civic society actors, publishing houses, academic institutions, and the Tonga people themselves. The population for this study mainly included Binga chiefs, Binga community members, non-governmental organisations (Silveira House, Save The Children UK, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe), educational institutions (University of Zimbabwe: African Languages Department, African Languages Research Institute), schools in the Binga district (headmasters, teachers, and learners), and the Zimbabwe Publishing House. Purposive sampling was used to select the appropriate participants who could provide relevant information owing to their

involvement in the revitalisation of Tonga. The researcher used maximum variation or heterogenous purposive sampling in order to obtain a wide range of information from different kinds of social actors who were involved in the revitalisation of Tonga. Recruitment was mainly based on availability and easy access since some parts of Binga are not easily accessible by road. In addition to purposive sampling, snowballing was also used. The researcher was referred to others who could contribute towards the study by the aforementioned initial participants identified through purposive sampling.

The study utilised a qualitative phenomenological approach in a bid to explore the challenges associated with the micro-level linguistic revitalisation of Tonga from the perception of the revitalisers. The purpose of the phenomenological approach, according to Lester (1999), is to illuminate the specific, or to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. The latter normally translates into gathering “deep” information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation. A qualitative phenomenological approach seeks to describe rather than explain a phenomenon, and adding an interpretive dimension allows this approach to inform, support, or challenge policy and action (Lester 1999). In the present study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and secondary sources: 178 interviews were carried out with informants from the groups of social actors mentioned above between June 2013 and December 2015 as part of a broader doctoral study (completed in 2016). The interviews were conducted to solicit information on the process of revitalisation and the challenges encountered. This was augmented by information from secondary sources. Given the duration of the journey to Tonga revitalisation, some people who were directly and actively involved have either long passed on or relocated, and secondary sources, such as minutes of language committee meetings, were therefore employed to augment the data collection.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Fishman’s (1991) Reversing Language Shift framework

The data obtained was analysed in terms of Fishman’s (1991) RLS framework that served as a theoretical underpinning for understanding language revitalisation (Lewis and Simons 2010). Fishman’s framework applies a Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) that consists of eight stages divided into two components, namely the weak side (Stages 8 to 5) and the strong side (Stages 4 to 1) of RLS.

As a corrective measure, the RLS framework proposes activities that would allow for the perpetuation of intergenerational language transmission. In the GIDS, the endangered language is referred to as “X” or “Xish”, and its speakers as “Xmen”. The dominant language, which exerts pressure on and the threat to the endangered language, is referred to as “Y” or “Yish”, and its speakers as “Ymen”. “XSL” refers to the learning of the endangered language as a second language while “RLSers” refers to the people driving the process of revitalisation. Of the stages involved, the higher numbers indicate greater disruption or threat to intergenerational language transmission. Fishman (1991: 111) proposes the following principle notions for the success of grassroots initiatives:

- (a) RLS efforts must initially be primarily based on the self-reliance of pro-RLSers and on the community of Xish users and advocates whom pro-RLSers seek to mobilise and to activate;
- (b) RLSers and the Xish communities must be self-reliant in terms of, among other things, time, finance, and dedication;
- (c) Xish community dedication is also crucial, particularly in Stages 8 to 4, since the success of these stages requires effort and will from the Xish communities themselves;
- (d) Attention should be directed to crucial issues or “first things first” – this is significant because RLS, like all minority-based efforts, is more likely to be characterised by a serious shortage of resources; and
- (e) When all is said and done, any and all seriously intended RLS efforts must still stand the acid test of fostering demonstrable transmissibility across the intergenerational link.

The rationale for using Fishman’s RLS framework was motivated by the notion that this framework seeks to establish the degree to which a language has been dislocated in order to assist or revive said language. The focus of the five principle notions listed above is therefore to effect measures on language domains, literacy, and intergenerational language transmission. What is paramount, according to Fishman (1991), is directing attention to crucial issues or “first things first”, and avoiding ad hoc activities. In other words, the emphasis is on prioritising activities and directing resources accordingly. Many revitalising activities have failed to succeed owing to inappropriate prioritising of activities. This model can therefore serve as a checklist for language groups embarking on revitalising their language. According to King (2001), Fishman’s model provides an outline of the factors which are important for language survival across contexts, as well as providing suggestions concerning how these factors might be organised or prioritised. Those who attempted and failed can therefore go back to the proverbial drawing board and assess their effort against Fishman’s five principle notions.

3.2 Language planning goals framework

According to Kaplan and Baldauf Jr. (1997), language planning can be engaged in for a wide variety of objectives or general goals. Language planning goals provide answers to the purpose of language planning. The goals of language planning therefore direct language planning activities. While a number of authors discuss different types of language planning goals, Nahir (1984, cited in Kaplan and Baldauf Jr. 1997) distinguishes between 11 categories (some with subcategories), which include, to name a few, language purification, revival, reform, standardisation, and maintenance. It is important to note that language planning is seldom done with a single goal in mind.

4. Background to the study

Language planning is generally defined as government-authorised, long-term, sustained and conscious efforts to alter a language’s function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems (Weisten 1980, in Moto 2009: 3). The purpose of language planning is to solve language-related problems, and the main institution responsible is often governments. Government-initiated language planning entails following a top-down strategy that mostly leaves a lot to be desired in multilingual contexts. This is because altering a

language or changing a language function is normally done without consulting the people concerned, and this is often met with resistance. Secondly, some governments use language planning as a way of advancing particular agendas and interests, for example, advancing the interests of the Afrikaner group by imposing Afrikaans as an official language in apartheid South Africa, Portuguese in colonial Mozambique, English in colonial Malawi, Zambia and Botswana, to mention a few. These are examples of an imposing and domineering policy which, by their very nature, aims at reducing people's welfare. A number of post-colonial governments in multilingual polities have also adopted this approach to language planning. Government-sanctioned processes, according to Moto (2009: 3), can take one of two forms. The first form is *direct intervention in altering functions of languages*, for example, the occurrences in South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi, to mention just a few. This intervention can be positive or negative, for instance, President Kamuzu Banda's imposition of Chichewa in Malawi, Julius Nyerere's declaration of Swahili as the national language of Tanzania, and apartheid South Africa's imposition of Afrikaans. The one advantage of government intervention, though, is that where government intervenes, it normally legitimises.

The second form of government-sanctioned processes is *letting language matters take their own course*. In this instance, government does not take any interest in what is happening in various linguistic communities under its jurisdiction, but turns a blind eye and lets languages be (*laissez-faire* approach). The main disadvantage of this is that whatever language communities do will not be legitimised through policy and implemented in practice. Zimbabwe, through the ruling party government, initially chose non-involvement where the minority languages are concerned.

Prior to colonialism in Africa, language planning was not an overt activity. During the 1950s to the 1960s, language policy and planning came into existence as a way of dealing with language issues resulting from the emergence of colonial rule (Goundar 2017). Goundar notes that during this era, many linguists were recruited to help develop grammars, writing systems, and dictionaries for indigenous languages. This resulted in an interest in how best to develop the form of a language, i.e. corpus planning, as well as how to maintain stable diglossia, i.e. status planning. Language planning as an academic discipline began in the context of nation-state formation following the end of colonialism (Liddicoat and Baldauf Jr. 2008).

Due to the fact that multilingualism is a reality in most countries, language policies are largely a result of attitudes towards languages within a particular polity. These dispositions, according to Ruiz (1984: 16), are basic to language planning in that they delimit the ways we talk about language and language issues, they determine the basic questions we ask, the conclusions we draw from the data, and even the data themselves. Most post-colonial governments viewed multilingualism as a problem (cf. Ruiz 1984), and this orientation shaped their dispositions towards particular languages, thereby influencing language policy formulation by most of these governments. This orientation also influenced Zimbabwe's language planning and policy prior to and beyond independence.

Language policy and planning in Zimbabwe can be categorised into four phases. The first phase is the pre-missionary era which was characterised by a peaceful co-existence of languages within the polity, and which ended with the arrival of white missionaries in the late 1800s. During this era, ethnic groups lived side by side, each using its ethnic language. There were also inter-ethnic interactions, particularly in trade. However, according to Makanda (2009),

there were fewer problems regarding which language to use since communities devised amicable methods of carrying out trade. Due to language contact, ethnic communities existing side by side could learn one another's language, using them when needed but still maintaining individual languages in their respective communities (Zvobgo 1996). The language policy during this period was therefore de facto, with communities using languages as a resource.

The missionary era marked the second phase of language policy and planning in Zimbabwe. Early missionary work in what is now known as Zimbabwe preceded colonialism. Missionaries (the likes of Robert Moffat of the London Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodists, and the Catholic denomination) first came to Zimbabwe in the late 1800s, their main mission being evangelism. Evangelisation was very difficult, if not impossible, because of language barriers. Two options were thus available: either the missionaries had to learn the local languages, or the local people had to learn English. The missionaries chose both, which resulted in the establishment of schools and consequently the reduction of the local languages to writing (Bourdillon 1990, Zvobgo 1996). The various missionary schools came up with different writing systems depending on their geographical area of operation. The missionaries in the then Southern Rhodesia did not operate mainly from one central point because of their different denominations and the different geographical locations from which they operated. Table 1 below shows the different missionary groups, and when and where they established their mission stations (based on Doke 1931).

Table 1: Established mission stations per regional area

| Missionary group | Mission station established (named after local area) | Year of establishment | Province |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------|
| London Missionary Society | Inyati | 1859 | Matabeleland |
| | Hope Fountain | 1870 | |
| The Wesleyan Methodists | Waddilove | 1892 | Mashonaland East |
| | Epworth | 1892 | Mashonaland Central |
| Catholic Church | Chishawasha | 1892 | Mashonaland East |
| | Triashill | 1896 | Manicaland |
| Anglican Church | St Augustine's | 1898 | Manicaland |
| American Methodist | Mt Selinda | 1893 | Manicaland |
| | Chikore | 1893 | |
| Dutch Reformed Church | Morgenster | 1891 | Masvingo |

Publishing in the various dialects and languages proved costly for the missionaries, and they decided to develop a unified orthography for all languages (dialects) spoken in the country except for the languages spoken in Matabeleland. The main reason for this exclusion was the lack of mutual intelligibility between the languages spoken in Matabeleland and the rest of the country. A number of meetings were held to solve the issue of common orthography. During these meetings, the missionary initiative pushed four dialects into prominence, namely Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, and Ndau (Doke 1931: 5).

In Matabeleland, the Ndebele orthography was to be used. This marked the genesis of the division of Zimbabwe into two blocks, the Shona and the Ndebele block. This also marked the beginning of the dominance of some ethnic languages and dialects by these two indigenous

languages. Tonga, the language under study, is found in Matabeleland North Province. The Tonga people were therefore expected to learn using Ndebele.

The third phase of language policy was heralded by the partitioning of Africa by the West, starting from around 1884, with Zimbabwe not spared. The missionary era in Zimbabwe was overtaken by the arrival of Cecil John Rhodes and the British South African Company (BSAC) in the 1890s. During the early years of the settler era, 1890–1923, both the missionaries and the settlers had a common linguistic focus. According to Makoni et al. (2008), the focus during this phase was not the imposition of English on local populations, but rather on white Rhodesians developing and learning African languages while the local people learnt English.

However, the period between 1923 and 1980 saw drastic changes to language policy in Zimbabwe. In 1931, the linguist Clement Doke (1931) recommended the official use of the collective term “Shona” for dialects like Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Budya, and Ndau. However, the Shona orthography was mainly based on Zezuru and Karanga, thus marginalising the other dialects. In Matabeleland, Doke (1931) recommended the official use of Ndebele in that region. All the other languages in Matabeleland were to use the Ndebele writing system. Ndebele and Shona were therefore incorporated into the introduced school system run by missionaries in 1933 (Zvobgo 1996, Ruzivo 2017). English was the main language of trade, commerce, and administration, whilst Ndebele and Shona were used in the first phases of education before switching to English after the fourth grade. Doke’s recommendations were accepted and implemented, which subsequently acted as an official seal on the dominance of Shona and Ndebele over Zimbabwe’s other indigenous languages. It also created and sealed Zezuru’s hegemony over all the other dialects within the Shona cluster, thereby indicating that some languages were so unimportant that they did not deserve to be developed and used in important societal domains. Examples of these dialects include Nambya, Kalanga, Korekore, and Tonga. Doke had, in essence, handed over death sentences to these dialects.

This situation was not accepted by the Tonga people. To appease them, the missionaries and the BSAC administration allowed teaching through the medium of Tonga at elementary level from the late 1930s to 1976. However, they did not come up with a Tonga orthography; instead, they imported Tonga learning and teaching materials from the then Northern Rhodesia, (present-day Zambia), where Tonga is a dominant language (Mumpande 2006, Nyika 2007, Makoni et al. 2008).

In 1965, at a time when most African countries were securing their independence from Britain, the Rhodesian Front, a party led by Ian Douglas Smith, issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI; Ranger 1985). Protests from Zambia and beyond erupted which resulted in the imposition of economic sanctions on Rhodesia (Ranger 1985). These economic sanctions included, amongst other things, the banning of the exportation of learning materials from Zambia. As a result, the colonial government stopped the teaching of Tonga in 1976 and replaced it with Ndebele (Mumpande 2006: 12). For the second time, the Tonga people were short-changed. This incident went down in history as the instigator for demanding recognition of minoritised languages, particularly Tonga. It brought about the realisation that the colonial government was not going to embark on any developmental initiatives for Tonga. The Tonga people therefore had to fight for their language from grassroots level.

The dawn of independence in 1980 marked the fourth phase of language policy and planning. Though the first few years of post-independent Zimbabwe were characterised by the inheritance and perpetuation of colonial language planning policies that favoured English, later years witnessed a shift in language planning towards the realisation of endoglossic languages. The rise of micro-level language development initiation was also realised.

5. Data presentation and discussion

5.1 Participant composition

The sample for the study consisted of 178 participants who were categorised according to the classifications listed in Table 2 below. Parents came from different walks of life and collaborators were part of the civic organisations involved in the revitalisation of Tonga.

Table 2: Participant composition

| Category | N | % | M | | F | |
|----------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| | | | N | % | N | % |
| Chiefs | 6 | 3.4 | 6 | 3.4 | 0 | 0 |
| Parents | 70 | 39.2 | 37 | 20.8 | 33 | 18.5 |
| Teachers | 34 | 19.1 | 17 | 9.6 | 17 | 9.6 |
| Learners | 50 | 28.1 | 25 | 14 | 25 | 14 |
| Collaborators | 18 | 10.1 | 12 | 6.7 | 6 | 3.4 |
| TOTAL | 178 | 100 | 97 | 54.5 | 81 | 45.5 |

5.2 Goals for Tonga revitalisation

Data from the interviews points to the idea that when TOLACCO was formed, its main objective was to bring Tonga back into the education domain after it was banned from school soon after the UDI of Rhodesia in 1965. Responses, particularly from chiefs and parents, indicate that they simply wanted their language in the classroom, but they did not know that their language had to go through certain linguistic developments for it to be used in the education domain. The agenda for revitalisation is also echoed in the Tonga Language and Cultural Committee and the Zimbabwe Indigenous Languages Promotion Association (TOLACCO-ZILPA) draft policy (see Appendix A). The main objective of the TOLACCO-ZILPA draft policy was for the languages concerned to be visible in the education domain as both subjects and languages of learning and teaching (LOLT). For a language to be used in the school domain, it has to be standardised, but there is no mention or discussion of language planning goals in the draft policy. Hence, in terms of language planning goals, what can be deduced from the above objectives is that the language needed to be standardised, and the writing system needed to be worked on prior to and since the formation of TOLACCO, when learning and teaching materials were sourced from Northern Rhodesia (Nyika 2008).

Interviews with social collaborators who worked with the Tonga community indicate that these collaborators realised that there was a need for two things. Firstly, there was a need for ethnic language maintenance in its broader sense, and the first goal was to ensure the maintenance (and new acquisition) of the language within the Tonga community. There was also a need to lift the status and prestige of the language so that it would meet the requirements of the school

domain. For this type of transformation to occur, extraordinary effort is required on the part of the local community (Kaplan and Baldauf Jr. 1997). Therefore, the language planning goals for Tonga in the HNC and school domains were language acquisition, maintenance, and standardisation. These language planning goals are achieved through status/prestige, acquisition, and corpus planning.

5.3 Challenges to Tonga language revitalisation

Agents of language planning at a local level are found across the board, and include (small groups of) individuals, enthusiasts, language activists, local community representatives, and traditional leaders (Ndlovu 2015). Evidence from the current research points to the fact that social actors from these groups were involved in the revitalisation of Tonga. Evidence from the findings also shows that challenges were encountered in both the HNC and the school domains. Findings with regard to the HNC will be presented and discussed first before those for the school domain are presented for discussion.

5.3.1 Challenges in seeking ideological consensus in the home-neighbourhood-community domain

Data from the current research shows that, generally, challenges were encountered in seeking ideological consensus amongst community members on the need to revitalise. Various factors were identified but it was also noted that, although diverse, these factors were not mutually exclusive. Table 3 below gives a summary of responses from various social actors on the challenges to revitalisation.

Table 3: Responses from various social actors on the challenges encountered in the HNC domain

| Participant Group | Responses |
|-------------------|--|
| Chiefs | Activities were only supported by six out of 18 chiefs. Some chiefs claimed that they were not Tonga, while others wanted to be paid for taking part in the revitalisation processes. Some chiefs and community members were afraid of political reprisals. The chiefs and their communities had never been involved in language revitalisation before and therefore did not know what was required. |
| TOLACCO | This committee did not have money nor the expertise (lobbying advocates, resource writers, linguists) to fund revitalisation activities. It also experienced difficulties lobbying the community due to the hegemony of dominant languages, Ndebele and Shona. |
| Parents | Initially, most community members were not aware of revitalisation activities going on. Some parents felt that Tonga was not adding any value to their lives or those of their children. Some parents were afraid of political reprisals. |
| Teachers | There were no teaching and learning resources to accommodate Tonga in the classroom. Examinations for all subjects, except for Tonga as a language subject, are in English, and this was a problem for Tonga as a LOLT. Tonga-speaking teachers accused non-Tonga-speaking |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| | teachers of exerting negative attitudes towards Tonga and also influencing learners. |
| Collaborators | It was difficult to convince people to rally behind the revitalisation of their language due to the dominance of Shona and Ndebele. TOLACCO lacked technical knowhow in terms of linguistic revitalisation. The community lacked financial and technical resources. At first, the community was suspicious of outside collaborators which delayed the process. Publishing of teaching and learning resources was a challenge due to low learner population figures. |
| Learners | The younger generation indicated that they did not want to be associated with Tonga because it marginalised them. They wanted to be associated with Shona and Ndebele because these were associated with upward social mobility. |

The weak side of RLS is mainly concerned with language use within the HNC domain in order to ensure intergenerational language continuity. From the data gathered, the infant stages of Tonga's revitalisation were an activity of only six out of Binga's 18 chiefs, and a few individual community members who were involved in this process. As previously mentioned, from these two groups, TOLACCO was established in 1976 and its mandate was to bring Tonga back into the school system. All 70 community members interviewed indicated that at the beginning of the process, the majority of community members were not aware of what was going on. The six chiefs who were interviewed concurred with this statement. As a follow-up question, the participants were asked why this was an activity of only a few people. In response, 83% of the participants indicated that they did not know about the initiatives, while the remaining 17% indicated that only those people who showed interest were incorporated. Therefore, in the beginning, revitalisation was an agenda of only a few people who did not take into consideration Fishman's (1991) principle notion of community support ((d) in the list in subsection 3.1). This could be attributed to the initiators' lack of information regarding the importance of community involvement and ownership of such macro-level initiatives. There was therefore no consensus within the community on the need to revitalise Tonga, and there was no community consensus on the need to bring this language back into the education system. In fact, there was no deliberate effort on the part of the initiators to mobilise the community to support the idea. As such, the formation of TOLACCO in 1976 was a noble idea that lacked support from the very people it was supposed to serve.

As the journey progressed, TOLACCO realised the need to involve the community in the project. However, gaining consensus on the need to revitalise was made difficult by various factors. From a social perspective, the community experienced challenges concerning the issues of identity. Binga district has the highest number of chiefs in Zimbabwe, numbers that could have worked to their advantage in pushing forward the agenda for revitalisation. A possible strategy could have been to use the chiefs' influence in their respective areas for they were – and still are – the custodians of culture, and culture is expressed, partly, through language. Chiefs are also politically powerful, as constituted in the New Traditional Leaders Act of 1998, Chapter 29(17) (Government of Zimbabwe 1998). They could have used their power to garner support from their respective communities. However, some chiefs claimed not to belong to the Tonga ethnic group, and were therefore not concerned with the revitalisation of Tonga (Mumpane 2006). These chiefs did not support the process by encouraging people from their areas of jurisdiction to

contribute towards the revitalisation efforts. These negative attitudes towards revitalisation from those in power also made it difficult for ordinary community members to go against their chiefs and rally behind chiefs from other areas. This situation posed yet another challenge in that chiefs from other areas could not reach out to people in another chief's area of jurisdiction.

Another challenge associated with the chiefs was that some of them refused to get involved in the revitalisation of Tonga because they were not paid for their participation. Unfortunately, at the helm of Tonga's revitalisation were a few community individuals who could not afford to pay anyone given their socio-economic status. Binga is one of the third-lowest districts on the Human Development Index (HDI) in Zimbabwe (Basilwizi 2015).

Apart from the chiefs, the young generation of that time was also initially reluctant to join the revitalisation initiatives. The hegemonic tendencies of Ndebele and Shona had been so entrenched within parts of the community that the majority of the young generation began to identify themselves with the dominant languages. This sentiment was also echoed by Mumpande (2006: 37):

The youth of today are more Shona or Ndebele than being Tonga or Kalanga. A lot of misunderstanding is going on between the old and new generations. Our ancestors are crying because our children no longer speak our languages. They even shun their own tribe and culture [...] as they do not want to be identified as Tonga.

The youth of today were also interviewed. Within Zimbabwe's political discourse, the age ceiling for the youth is 40 years. During the interviews, 65% of the youth indicated that they would align with another language at the expense of their own because of the benefits associated with these dominant languages, benefits such as access to job opportunities, and the fact that Shona and Ndebele are widely spoken. According to one interviewee, Luyando Muleya, "everybody knows that Tonga is a small language for small people which cannot be spoken in big cities like Bulawayo". In other words, it is not only a marginalised language, but the people who speak it are also marginalised and looked down upon by dominant language speakers. Resistance to revitalisation and alignment with dominant languages was therefore a way of defying marginalisation as a people. For this generation, Tonga had neither social nor economic currency, and the youth therefore saw no gain in supporting its development.

The young generation of school-going age also exhibited an extra-local orientation to language. Of the 100 learners interviewed, 83 indicated that they wanted neither to learn Tonga in school nor be taught using Tonga as a medium of instruction. They argued that using Tonga would throw them deeper into the mires of poverty they already found themselves in, and that the only way out was to study national/international languages. A Tonga-speaking teacher at Manjolo School, situated a few kilometres outside Binga Town, pointed out that these attitudes were exacerbated by some teachers' views on Tonga, particularly those who were non-Tonga speakers. She further pointed out that teachers' attitudes and behaviour can influence learners beyond the classroom. Negative influence towards Tonga was coming from people that are held in high esteem in communities, and had a lot of influence on the youth. Through these youths, English and other dominant languages encroached into the home domain.

Apart from challenges from chiefs, the young generation, and teachers, a substantial number of parents also felt that Tonga was not doing them or their children any good. Luyando Muleya

(2015) said that she was encouraging her children to use English at home because she wanted them to master the language so that they could go to big cities and gain employment. Mastering English was seen as an avenue to a better life. Mrs Muleya was not the only parent in this category. Out of the 70 parents interviewed, 21 shared the same view. This meant that languages other than Tonga were invading the home domain, and some parents were even encouraging it.

Given the above, it was difficult for the few chiefs and individuals to do anything meaningful for the revitalisation of Tonga without the support of the broader Tonga community. The main challenge was that those lobbying for the revitalisation of this language did not take the time to establish a strong sense of language awareness in the communities, such that there was no realisation that language promotion is a fundamental constituent of access to opportunities, self-empowerment, and development (Webb 2009). It is also noteworthy to mention that language planning occurs at different levels, and these different levels represent different kinds of prestige, in this case, local-oriented community prestige and status of their language as an act of ethnic language management. It should also be noted that speakers play a crucial role in ascribing value to their own languages. TOLACCO and the few individuals who were promoting the revitalisation agenda did not harness and package the attractiveness of the product they were selling to the community. There was a need for strong advocacy, a skill that the Tonga people did not have. Given their socio-economic and educational backgrounds, the Tonga community could not afford to engage advocacy officers who were trained in the job. With this realisation, they sought collaboration with civic society and individuals. A Roman Catholic commission, the Binga Justice for Peace Project (BJPP), came on board in 1999. BJPP had personnel with lobbying skills but, like the Binga community, they lacked the financial muscle to promote the ideological consensus agenda through community assessment needs and awareness campaigns. Around 2001, financial help came from Save the Children UK, USAID, and some individuals. From there on, awareness campaigns started in earnest, and they contributed to the degree of success of Tonga's revitalisation that is realised today.

The rationale for grassroots mobilisation is based on the argument that the affected language community should be at the centre of language revitalisation efforts (Fishman 1991, Batibo 2005). It also reinforces the fact that language planning occurs at different levels and for a variety of purposes (Kaplan and Baldauf Jr. 2013). The issue of ideological consensus is vital in linguistic revitalisation for a number of reasons. Lobbying the community is a way of ensuring support from the end users since people cannot be expected to rally behind what they do not know. For two decades, between 1976 and 2000, TOLACCO failed to make inroads because it lacked community support. The Tonga community as a whole could not rally behind TOLACCO because the former, particularly the younger generations, did not see the benefits of Tonga revitalisation. Consensus by end users is important to avoid what Beukes (2009) calls a "gap between 'intention' and 'performance'". People support and implement what they know and what they feel they can benefit from. Without prior consensus, revitalisation may become a bone of contention, even among its own advocates (Fishman 1991). There was therefore a need for RLS advocates to work firstly on lobbying for and raising awareness of the "attractiveness" of the Tonga language because some of the Tonga people had lost faith in their language in favour of the dominant languages. This was eventually made possible by collaborative efforts from civic society from 1999 onwards.

Therefore, the main language planning goal within the HNC domain was language maintenance against threats from Shona, Ndebele, and English. This was done through status/prestige

language planning. The status or prestige bestowed upon a language in most cases determines the success of the revitalisation plan. However, the main difficulty was the lack of the ideology of authenticating the value of the language in its relationship to the Tonga community as a whole. O'Rourke (2015) emphasises that if social and territorial roots are absent, a linguistic variety can be seen to lack value. Tonga lacked roots within the community, and that is why people initially could not rally behind its revitalisation.

5.3.2 Challenges in entering the school domain

In its quest for revitalisation, TOLACCO was not concerned with just the vitality and security of Tonga within the HNC domain. They did not forget their quest to embark on extending their language in terms of domain use. Just like in the weak of RLS, the advocates for Tonga's development faced challenges in extending the domains for Tonga language use, as indicated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Responses from various social actors regarding the challenges encountered in the school domain

| Participant Group | Responses |
|-------------------|---|
| Chiefs | Some teachers and school headmasters did not want to use Tonga in their schools. Some learners did not want to use Tonga at school. |
| TOLACCO | There were no teaching and learning resources, and there was no money to make these available. The committee did not have the expertise (resource writers, linguists). There were very few Tonga-speaking teachers. |
| Parents | Some parents did not want their children to be taught in Tonga. Some parents blamed teachers for influencing their children to identify with Shona/Ndebele at the expense of their own language. |
| Teachers | There were no teaching and learning resources to accommodate Tonga in the classroom. Examinations for all subjects except for Tonga as a language were in English, and this was a problem for Tonga as a LOLT. Tonga-speaking teachers accused non-Tonga-speaking teachers of exerting negative attitudes towards Tonga and also influencing learners. |
| Collaborators | The community wanted to force a non-standardised language into the school domain. TOLACCO could not change the curriculum because schools are government-owned. The community was initially suspicious of outside collaborators, thus delaying the process. Publishing of teaching and learning resources was a challenge due to low figures of the learner population. The language-in-education policy excluded Tonga. The District Education Officer could not enforce the teaching of and in Tonga because of the lack of resources |
| Learners | They did not want to be taught in Tonga. They wanted a language that would help them gain employment. |

TOLACCO revitalisation activities were halted at the height of Zimbabwe's liberation war around 1978/9. After gaining independence, the government inherited the colonial language-in-

education policy (Makoni et al. 2008, Nyika 2008). Due to its disappointment in the independent government's efforts, TOLACCO decided to revive its activities. It joined hands with the Venda and Kalanga language committees and formed what was called the VETOKA committee in 1985. The aim of this committee was to ensure that Venda, Tonga, and Kalanga were taught in schools. This particular activity can be placed at Stage 4 of Fishman's (1991) GIDS, which deals with the incorporation of Xish in the education system under 4a- and 4b-type schools. 4a-type schools are run and controlled by minority language communities. They offer an environment that provides a great deal of parental involvement and support. This type of school would have been a perfect opportunity for RLS and for Tonga to thrive in the education system without competition or threat from the hegemonic tendencies of Shona, Ndebele, and English. However, at this juncture, both the TOLACCO and VETOKA committees were faced with a number of challenges. To begin with, the period between 1976 and 1985, when VETOKA was formed, was characterised by a lack of community consensus on the ideological status of minority languages. The committees wanted to venture into higher domains before sorting out in-house problems. Findings from the interviews conducted show that the Tonga people had different perceptions and attitudes towards their language. They did not speak with the same voice in relation to the agenda of both TOLACCO and VETOKA. This is in violation of Fishman's fourth principle notion ((d) in the list in subsection 3.1) of RLS, namely "directing attention to crucial issues or 'first things first'". It was crucial that the members of these committees organised themselves first and then moved with the same vision into higher domains.

The other challenge was that Tonga communities could not establish their own schools because they did not have the political and financial muscle to do so. In other words, they lacked Fishman's second principle notion (b) of self-reliance. These communities could not do it by themselves, and between the period 1976 and 2001, they could not source financial assistance of any kind.

This left the communities with the option of 4b-type schools, i.e., government-funded and -controlled schools. The main disadvantage of this option was that minority language speakers could not replace Ndebele with Tonga in schools. In other words, they could not change the curriculum because they were not in charge – the government was, the same government which lacked the political will to help their cause. The best the communities could do, and did, was to continue lobbying the government, although the government had not shifted its stance since inheriting the colonial language-in-education policy at independence.

As they continued lobbying government, the minoritised communities also realised that the other major constraint they were facing in the education sector was the lack of learning and teaching materials in their languages. The publishing houses in Zimbabwe during that time were not eager to publish learning and teaching materials in minority languages, citing lack of viability because of the limited numbers in minority language speaker populations (Nyika 2007). This realisation led to the formation of the Venda, Tonga and Kalanga Publishing House, known as VETOKA Publishing House, in 1985. Its mandate was to ensure the publishing of learning and teaching materials in these three minority languages. Despite this effort, VETOKA Publishing House did not last. Mumpande (2006) cites four factors that led to the failure of this institution. Firstly, VETOKA failed to secure enough funding to kickstart and sustain the project. Mumpande (2006) further argues that the people involved lacked the necessary advocacy and lobbying skills to get people to write the books. As if this was not enough, the publishing house also suffered the loss of two of its leading members, namely Gwakuba Ndlovu, who left for Swaziland in search of

greener pastures, and Million Nsala Malaba, who passed away. According to one advocacy officer, VETOKA could have had time and dedication on their side, but they lacked finance and expertise. Without these two resources, revitalisation efforts were doomed.

The difficulties that bedevilled VETOKA Publishing House led to the fall of the VETOKA coalition. Shona and Ndebele remained in the classroom while the rest of the indigenous languages were locked outside. The Venda and Kalanga groups were disappointed and subsequently gave up (Ndlovu 2013). TOLACCO resumed its lobbying of government but the government was not in a hurry to change anything. In 1987, central government eventually amended the colonial Education Act, but Section 62 (see appendices) posed the main challenge to Tonga revitalisation. This Act not only placed Tonga and other minority languages at the mercy of the Minister of Education, but also gave the impression that Shona and Ndebele were more valuable than minority languages. Most ministers also faced the challenge of authorising the teaching of Tonga when there were no human and material resources available to allow the smooth rolling-out of Tonga in the teaching and learning fraternity.

The challenge of producing material resources was multi-pronged. To begin with, the literature resources that were used in education prior to the banning of Tonga in schools in 1976 were from Zambia, the former Northern Rhodesia. Unfortunately, the materials were all burnt during the liberation struggle, and reproducing them was out of the question. The Tonga community thus had to produce its own corpus but lacked the technical knowhow. The University of Zimbabwe, under the auspices of the African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) came to the rescue in 2002. The corpus produced by ALRI was used in the writing of teaching and learning resources, as well as the setting of the first Grade 7 examination in 2010. It should be noted, however, that when ALRI came on board, it was not a smooth take-off. The main challenge, according to Professor Emmanuel Chabata, the Director of ALRI at the time, was that the Tonga people initially did not seem to trust anybody outside their community, thus delaying the process of revitalisation.

ALRI did not solve all the challenges as far as material production was concerned. There were only a few experienced writers in the Tonga community and they could not handle the writing of teaching and learning materials. Civic organisations like Silveira House, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) Binga, Save the Children UK, and Basilwizi Trust then came on board between 2001 and 2002, and provided technical support and funds for the training of Tonga writers. Books were written for primary-school level, but the Tonga speakers encountered yet another difficulty in that the community grappled with issues of publication. As with the period in which VETOKA Publishing House existed, the major challenge in publishing Tonga materials was the modest size of the Tonga population. Publishing houses did not, and generally still do not, deem it economically sound to publish for small numbers. Help ultimately came from the Zimbabwe Publishing House in 2010, which published teaching and learning resources under the series “Bwacha Lino” and “Hluvuko Wa Hina” for both primary and secondary levels.

In terms of human resources, personnel from the Binga District Education Office who were interviewed in 2014 indicated that it was difficult to find teachers who were trained to teach Tonga as a subject and to teach in Tonga. The majority of teachers in the district come from the dominant languages, with few trained to teach in this language. Teacher deployment in Zimbabwe does not take into consideration the issue of language (Makoni et al. 2008). Makoni

et al. argue that Ndebele-speaking teachers who are deployed in a predominantly Nambya or Tonga community to teach Grade 1 are not likely to be proficient enough to teach in these languages. Some teachers come with no Tonga competence at all, and with no intention of learning the language. It is against this backdrop that the various ministers of education could not authorise the teaching of Tonga as a subject, nor the medium of Tonga as a LOLT.

In addition, some school heads and teachers in the district resisted the teaching of Tonga as a subject, and the medium of Tonga as a LOLT. Chief Sinansengwe (2014) indicated that at one point, communities had to chase away some school heads and teachers who were against the teaching in and of Tonga. This shows that resistance to Tonga revitalisation was coming from all directions. Getting Tonga into the classroom therefore became a mammoth task.

In a bid to expand the domain of use for Tonga, the government might have seemed to concede to the demands of Tonga and other minority languages, but the main challenge was due to the lack of an implementation strategy. This happened with the Education Act of 1987 (Government of Zimbabwe 1987), as well as with the Secretary's Education Circular of 2002 (Government of Zimbabwe 2000), which indicated that from January 2002 the minority languages Kalanga, Tonga, Venda, Nambya, and Sotho would be assisted to advance a grade per year until they could be taught and examined at Grade 7. However, no assistance was given to any minority language in terms of human and material resources. The Tonga people were dealing with a government that consistently let minority languages down, a government that was not sensitive to the needs and plight of people at grassroots level. On the other hand, the Tonga community failed to meet Fishman's (1991) principle notion of self-reliance. They could arguably have set up their own publishing house and made available teaching and learning support materials to enable the then Minister of Education to authorise the use of Tonga in the school system.

In short, the goals of language planning within the school domain were difficult to attain because the Tonga speech community initially failed to honour Fishman's (1991) principle notion of "first things first". Bearing in mind the type of prestige and status given to languages within the education domain, Tonga did not stand a chance as it lacked prestige in many ways. The lack of technical knowhow and other resources also resulted in the failure to satisfy Fishman's notion of self-reliance. However, it should be known that Tonga is currently being used as LOLT in the lower levels of primary school and is learned as a subject from primary school to university level. Learning and teaching materials have also been made available, and these were locally produced.

6. Lessons learnt from the revitalisation of Tonga

A number of lessons can be learnt from the Tonga revitalisation project. Bottom-up language planning is a daunting but feasible task that calls for self-reliance, dedication, and commitment on the part of the speech community. Among other things, the following lessons are crucial.

The first basic lesson that can be learnt from this study is that initiatives for minoritised language revitalisation should come from the communities themselves. Most governments, particularly in post-colonial Africa, adopted the ideology of monolingualism based on the language of the colonisers. This defeats initiatives on linguistic diversity and multilingualism. The findings of this article indicate that the revitalisation of Tonga owes its success to the Tonga speech community's support for and commitment towards initiatives meant for the

development of their language. The success of community development projects depends on the willingness of the community itself to take ownership of the project. It is crucial for community members to look at language issues from the same perspective and to show commitment to what they believe in.

Although micro-level initiatives can come from any sector of the community, it is crucial to ensure that the majority of the community rallies behind the initiatives, what Fishman (1991) calls “community ideological consensus”. Without support from the end users, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for the initiatives to be successful. The Tonga community could not make inroads for more than a decade because there was no consensus on revitalisation amongst the community members. It is also crucial to take the young generation on board otherwise revitalisation efforts will go to nothing. The vitality of a language can only be maintained if it is used across generations.

Most minoritised communities in Zimbabwe, and most likely elsewhere, are characterised by poverty. They are not financially fit to fund revitalising activities and they also lack expertise in terms of language revitalisation. Lack of self-sufficiency, according to Fishman (1991), is a recipe for disaster. It is against this background that minoritised languages should collaborate with other stakeholders while remaining vigilant and guarding against outsiders who may come with different agendas.

With this in mind, it is also crucial to follow Fishman’s notion of “first things first” if revitalisation activities are to be successful. Inappropriate prioritising of resources and activities has often led to delays, and sometimes failures, in achieving set goals. For more than two decades, the activities of TOLACCO yielded nothing because the priorities were not aligned with the goals. Community consensus on the need to revitalise Tonga and the development of the language should have superseded bringing Tonga into the classroom

7. Conclusion

This article has discussed the challenges faced in the process of revitalising Tonga through the adoption of bottom-up approaches, focusing on the HNC and school domains. Although bottom-up approaches are feasible, the process is bedevilled by a number of challenges. Most minoritised groups lack Fishman’s notion of self-sufficiency in various crucial areas of revitalisation. In Zimbabwe, most, if not all, minoritised language communities are economically marginalised. As a result, their lack of financial muscle to fund revitalisation activities and the lack of language planning skills make it near impossible for them to deal with revitalisation issues on their own. The hegemonic tendencies of Shona and Ndebele also make issues of ideological consensus difficult since some minoritised language speakers would rather identify with dominant language speakers at the expense of the development of their own minority language. There is therefore a need to make people aware of the currency and value of minoritised languages if these languages are to appeal to the end users. The Zimbabwean national political ideology modelled around monolingualism also makes grassroots initiatives difficult. Above all, minority language speakers have to deal with a government that is insensitive to the needs of minority language communities. The onus is therefore upon the communities to rise up and do something for their languages. Where these communities are lacking, a solution may be found in collaboration with others. The insights drawn from this study’s findings might be applicable to other minority language communities in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, for example, in respect of offering feasible alternatives

to the challenges of micro-level language revitalisation with a view to preserving their unique identity and serving their language-related needs.

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Appendix A: The TOLACCO- ZILPA draft policy

Interpretation of terms

In this section:

- i) Indigenous language means the following languages: Kalanga, Ndebele, Shona, Tonga, Sotho, Venda, Shangani and Nambya.
- ii) Area(s) means district(s)
 1. Subject to this section, the indigenous languages of Zimbabwe including Sign language and English shall be treated equally, taught and examined from the first grade to university provided that, in each area or part of the area, the dominant indigenous language and English shall be taught.
 2. The medium of instruction in any area or part of the area shall depend upon which indigenous language is more commonly spoken and understood by the majority of the pupils and shall be used in addition to the English language.
 3. All indigenous languages shall be taught as subjects on an equal time allocation basis as the English language.
 4. Subsection 4 of Section 62 of the Education Act is to be deleted

(Minutes of ZILPA meeting, 7 April 2001)

Appendix B: Section 62 of the Education Act of 1987

1. Subject to this section, the three main languages of Zimbabwe namely Shona, Ndebele and English shall be taught in all primary schools from the first grade as follows:-

a. Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona, or

b. Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of residents is Ndebele

2. Prior to fourth grade, either of the languages referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which language is commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils.

3. From the fourth grade, English shall be the medium of instruction, provided that Shona and Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on equal time allocation basis as the English language.

In all areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to those specified in subsection (1) (2) and (3).