

VEHICULAR CROSS-BORDER LANGUAGE COMMISSIONS
REPORT ON THE DISCUSSIONS BY
THE SETSWANA LANGUAGE WORKING GROUP
5 NOVEMBER 2009

INTRODUCTION

The above was one of the sessions which took place at the ACALAN Conference to Launch the Southern Africa Region's Language Commission on Vehicular Cross-Border Languages (VCBLS) held at Gauteng from 3 to 5 November 2009.

Prof Ayo Bagmbose, a member of the ACALAN Task Force presented the Terms of Reference for the Language Commission, a copy of which was later circulated amongst all the delegates. General discussions followed in the form of questions and comments for clarity.

Delegates were instructed to break up into Working Groups according to the selected languages, namely, (a) Setswana and (b) Chichewa / Chinyanja. Their task was to further deliberate on the terms of reference and then present a Draft Report back to the plenary session.

SETSWANA DRAFT REPORT

Prof Batibu and Prof Mmusi shared the chairing of working group session of the Setswana LC. The session began with self-introductions by all members present. It was followed by special introductions by the following delegates selected to be in the Setswana Language Commission. They were requested to introduce themselves as well as inform the meeting about their Setswana expertise and interests. The language commissioners came from Botswana and South Africa respectively, Namibia was not represented due to failed attempts to locate/identify any.

BOTSWANA MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Dr Pearl Seipone Seloma (University of Botswana)

Mr Benjamin L. Janie (University of Botswana)

Dr Thapelo Joseph Otlogetswe (University of Botswana)

Ms Maserame Hannah David (Botswana College of distance and Open Learning)

SOUTH AFRICAN MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Prof Sheila Onkaetse Mmusi (University of Limpopo)

Mrs Theriso Tsambo (North-West University)

Prof PM Sebate (University of South Africa)

Ms Masebolai Thubisi (Setswana National Language Board /PANSALB)

The delegates elected Prof Sheila Mmusi as the Chairperson and Ms Maserame David as the Secretary of the Setswana Language Commission.

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TASKS OF LC'S (I)

On the three main tasks, namely, ***Initial Fact-Finding, Research and Advocacy (Surveys & Assessments)***, members of the LC could work find out what the situation is in Botswana, South Africa and Namibia. Botswana reported to be having a corpus, even though it is work in progress. Such information should then be distributed to members of the commission so that gaps can be identified. The Chairperson would then have to organise a database and determine where to store it. Dr Seloma and Dr Otlogetswe can assist with the initial fact finding on the Botswana side and the language commissioners in South Africa would have to also collect such information on their side for the database.

2. TASKS OF LC'S (II)

On the ***L1 and L2 proficiency of the relevant populations***, the delegates indicated that there is no systematic research that has been done on proficiency in, and attitudes towards Setswana. The delegates indicated that there must be documentation somewhere regarding L1 and L2 statistics, which will need to be located. The commission needs to establish the extend to which Setswana is spoken, as well as research on attitudes towards the language. Population census /and statistical surveys in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia can be used to obtain information on numbers of speakers of L1 and L2 Setswana.

Departments of Education can be contacted for information on ***the use of the language as a medium*** as well as at what levels of education and for which subjects, in all three countries. Members of the LC need to do a survey on the kind

of facilities and opportunities (formal and informal) that exist for learning the language by speakers of other languages. The LC also needs to establish what the situation is at the foundation phase in terms of language learning for both L1 and L2. If there are gaps in the system the LC can then devise strategies to recommend, advice, and or correct these.

Audits of the **availability of print and electronic media** in the language can be obtained through broadcasting institutions and print institutions. In South Africa, agencies such as the Media Diversity and Development Agency (MDDA), the telecommunications regulator (ICASA), the Government Communications and Information Systems (GCIS), and others can be of assistance in this regard. Websites of such agencies can be of use.

On the **availability of textbooks and other works**, publishing companies and their websites can be consulted. A sub-committee needs to be established to look into the quality of the materials that are being developed for Setswana.

Members of the LC will have to collect information on **popular art forms in the language**, including movies and home videos

The LC will have to obtain or create an inventory of teachers of Setswana in L1 and L2 from primary school to tertiary level. They will also have to develop or obtain an inventory of terminologists, journalists, editors, translators, interpreters, linguists, and other language practitioners to establish what the **human resources** picture is like for this language. Such a survey would also have to include the type of training received by both linguists and language practitioners.

3. TASKS OF LC'S III

The LC needs to develop a database on scholars and institutions **conducting research** in the language as well as what the nature of the research is. The LC also has to identify possible funders of research in Setswana with the aim of encouraging collaborative research in the language. It was proposed that the LC'S must be strategic enough to co-opt expertise, from areas such as government, PANSALB, Setswana Language Body, Lexicography Units (South Africa), universities, Tomela ya Puo in Botswana, and others.

4. TASKS OF LC'S IV

Reform and harmonization of orthography will need serious discussion through face to face meetings of the two sub-committees (Botswana and South Africa). The LC will need funds according to Dr Sebati's experience with the Setswana National Body in South Africa.

Consultative meetings will have to be held with relevant stakeholders and comments will be incorporated into the final document of the new harmonized orthography.

Strategies will have to be devised in order to popularise the harmonized orthography. The LC needs to consult and cooperate with existing national structures, such as PANSALB, NLB's, Setswana Lexicography Unit, Tomela ya Puo, and others. The question of funding of the LC was raised, as all this work will require financial resources.

The Botswana panelists indicated that they need to arrange a meeting with the Ministry of Youth Arts and Culture and Curriculum to brief them on ACALAN and the Setswana Language Commission. On this issue Prof Batibo explained that the headquarters of ACALAN usually liaises with the African Union to engage our governments on how to proceed with ACALAN decisions

In as far as the **creation of terminology** is concerned, particularly in the areas of **science and technology** the delegates suggested that the LC will have to engage stakeholders that deal with Setswana on a daily basis such as, the Legislature; Parliament; Department of Arts and Culture; South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Botswana Broadcasting Corporation, and others who are involved in the creation of terminology on a daily basis.

Because the review of orthography is an ongoing process, the LC should coordinate their lexicography work with other institutions involved in this task, especially in the science and technology area. There is therefore a need to find out which organizations are involved in this. Instead of creating new words, the LC should opt for the adoption of the terminology created and standardised by others, and then harmonise.

The LC will have to liaise with publishers to produce **grammar books, dictionaries, inventories, glossaries, terminologies, thesauruses, and reference grammars** for a sound lexical base. Catalogues from publishers and libraries also need to be utilised,

to develop a database. The writing of drama books for school children needs to be encouraged.

On *the development of strategies for the use of the language in official domains*, PANSALB in South Africa, for example gives awards to members of parliament who use their L1s in Parliament. It could also help to encourage public officials to use the languages of the areas they are officiating in. It could also be effective to encourage musicians to use their L1. Job interviews could also be conducted in African Languages instead of English.

There is a need to encourage the use of African languages in *trade* and in advertising in electronic and print media. South Africa is already using African languages in advertising in the electronic media.

Some of the delegates did not subscribe to the possibility of *harmonising Sign Languages as Sign Language* is an independent language with no Setswana base. In Botswana a book is about to be published on the Botswana Sign language. The delegates decided not to engage further on the harmonisation of sign languages.

The LC needs to forge a partnership with institutions such as the Human Language Technology institution in South Africa and the Meraka Institute as they are already involved with developing technology for African languages, including Setswana.

ADVOCACY

South Africa with its eleven-Official Language Policy already has plans underway to bring Setswana to the level of English and Afrikaans. In Botswana the Tomela ya Puo Foundation is already on board to promote more recognition of Setswana

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