

Language planning in Botswana and Malawi: a comparative study

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Abstract

The article discusses language planning in two Southern African countries, Botswana and Malawi. Both countries are multilingual and multicultural. They also share a common British colonial history. At independence, the two countries retained English as the official language. In Botswana, Setswana was made the national language while in Malawi, it was Chichewa. Over the years, these languages have been developed and promoted at the expense of other indigenous languages, a situation that has prompted linguistic minorities to engage in the language-based politics of recognition. The article discusses how Botswana and Malawi are responding to the call for the official recognition of more indigenous languages in domains such as government, education, and mass media. Relevant comparisons and contrasts between Botswana and Malawi are drawn in this regard in the article. One clear common denominator is the dominance of English in official domains in the two countries.

1. Introduction

Africa is a continent that is blessed with many cultures and languages. This feature characterizes most African countries, making them multilingual and multicultural in nature. As a consequence, African countries have had to contend with the need to accommodate the diverse indigenous cultures and languages. Another common dimension in the cultural and linguistic map of Africa is the presence of European languages which spread to Africa during the colonial period. In this article, the authors explore the subject of language planning issues in Botswana and Malawi within the context already presented here. Both countries are located in Southern Africa and they belong to similar international organs such as the Commonwealth, the Southern African

Development Community, the African Union, the United Nations, just to mention a few.

Botswana and Malawi also share a common colonial experience as they were both colonized by the British. In addition, they both gained independence in the 1960s — Malawi in 1964 and Botswana in 1966. As a consequence of their colonial experiences, both share the label “English-speaking African countries.” Unfortunately, this is an inadequate label given that only a minority of the citizens of these countries are able to use English sufficiently and fluently in their daily undertakings. English is a predominant language in the educational and economic spheres in both countries. It is a language that is essential for progression in these spheres.

2. Language planning at independence

The first generation of African leaders neglected civil, political, and language rights because such rights were perceived to be potentially subversive. Building strong nation states against a background of ethnic and linguistic diversity was high on the agenda. As Englund (2003: 9) puts it, “nation building was the altar at which ethnic and linguistic diversity was to be sacrificed.” For instance, Tanzania adopted a policy which accorded Kiswahili the status of both official and national language. The *Kiswahilization* program was regarded as the cement for national unity within the *Ujaama* socialist paradigm. In Botswana, another multilingual and multicultural country, the same trend towards nation building was implemented. Botswana favored homogeneity and fostered it through the retention of English as the official language and Setswana, one of the many indigenous languages, as the national language. The Botswana government’s *Tswanification* or *Tswanalization*, a majoritarian process of cultural nationalism, “left virtually no space in the public sphere for the country’s many non-Tswana cultures, unless recast in a Tswana image” (Werbner 2002a: 676; see also Nyati-Ramahobo 2000a, 2000b; Werbner 2002b). Malawi also followed the path of assimilation, with Chichewa, the national language, being developed and promoted at the expense of other indigenous languages. This process has been called *Chichewazation* (Kishindo 1997).

The process of language planning is an interplay of various social, cultural, economic, and political considerations. Ideologies play a major role in shaping language planning directions (Cobarrubias 1983). Cobarrubias has proposed a taxonomy of language planning ideologies. This taxonomy comprises four ideologies, namely linguistic pluralism, linguistic

assimilation, internationalization, and vernacularization. It is important that we should not draw too sharp lines between the four categories of language planning ideology. Language planning ideologies can co-occur. It is possible to have one polity that exhibits more than one language planning ideology, as the cases of Botswana and Malawi will reveal.

The goal of linguistic assimilation is to have one dominant language that is used in official domains (Cobarrubias 1983). The other languages are ignored and given no official recognition. Sometimes these unrecognized languages may even become targets of eradication efforts. The *Russification* process in the former Soviet Union, the *Chichewazation* program in Malawi during the reign of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the *Kiswahilization* process in Tanzania, *Tswanafication* in Botswana and the *Hellenization* of Macedonia in Greece are some notable examples of linguistic assimilation. This ideology assumes that everyone, regardless of their linguistic origin and linguistic capabilities, should adopt the dominant language of the society in which they live.

Brenzinger et al. (1991) note that

European languages are very often labelled as being the primary danger to African languages and cultural heritage. A closer look at the reality in most African nations today reveals, however, that it is African *linguae francae* and other African languages with a national or regional status which spread to the detriment of vernaculars. Minority languages are still more likely to be replaced by those relatively 'highly valued' African languages, than by imported ones. (Brenzinger et al. 1991: 40)

One of the interesting features evident in Botswana and Malawi is that one of the indigenous languages was imposed over the other indigenous languages. Furthermore, the chosen language was the language of the dominant class, hence we see here the manifestation of power relations in the society. The assimilation process, therefore, advanced the interests of one indigenous language at the expense of the others.

In the second ideology, linguistic pluralism, the equality of official language status is given to two or more languages (Cobarrubias 1983). For instance, French and English are the official languages in both Cameroon and Canada. Belgium, on the other hand, has French, Flemish, and German as its official languages. In Finland, Finnish and Swedish are the official languages. An extreme case of linguistic pluralism is South Africa's post-apartheid language policy that has adopted eleven official languages.

The third language planning ideology is internationalization (Cobarrubias 1983). This ideology refers to the granting of official status to an

international language. This may not be the language spoken by the majority. It is a common practice in post-colonial Africa to have the ex-colonizer's language — such as English, French, or Portuguese — serving as the official language of the State. It is argued that the adoption of such a language gives citizens the means with which to interact with the outside world because the selected languages are media of wider communication. The position of English as the official language in both Botswana and Malawi falls within the internationalization ideology.

Vernacularization, the fourth language planning ideology, refers to a situation where an indigenous language is developed and made to function in domains such as education, the mass media, and government services (Cobarrubias 1983). Examples of vernacularization include Hebrew in Israel, Malay in Malaysia, Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, Quechua in Peru, and Swahili in Tanzania. The adoption of Setswana and Chichewa can be seen as a form of vernacularization.

Like other African countries, Botswana and Malawi are both multiethnic and multilingual. The question of how many languages a country has can be difficult to answer in many African countries due to problems in defining a language. A related problem is the fuzzy line separating language and dialect. In addition, in some countries, such as is the case in Botswana and Malawi, there are no comprehensive and reliable sociolinguistic databanks. It is nonetheless estimated that there are 20 different languages being spoken in Botswana (Anderson and Janson 1997: 7). According to the latest population census of Malawi (National Statistical Office 1998), there are thirteen languages in this country.

Ideally, language policies need to be informed by accurate and up-to-date information provided by research. However, that is not often the case. Language surveys are one way through which language information is accumulated. Malawi has never had a full nation-wide language survey. Instead, there have been a few isolated small-scale language surveys (e.g. Kayambazinthu 1995; Centre for Language Studies 1999). Botswana, on the other hand, has a wider picture of its sociolinguistic reality given that the country has had more sociolinguistic surveys (e.g. Vossen 1988; Hasselbring 2000; Hasselbring et al. 2001; Batibo and Smieja 2000; Smieja 2003). This places Botswana in a better position to appreciate its language diversity. The availability of such information, however, seems to be of value only to linguists and it has not been useful in terms of influencing language policy that would accommodate the different language groups found in the country.

In the absence of a comprehensive national sociolinguistic survey, census data remain the best available source of language data in Malawi. The 1998 census found that out of a total of 9,933,868 persons who were

enumerated at the national level (National Statistical Office 1998), Chichewa emerged as the most widely used language of household communication, followed by Chiyao and Chitumbuka. It has to be mentioned that not all Malawian population census reports carry language data. The first-post independence census report (of 1966) carried some language data. However, the 1977 and 1987 census reports did not contain any language data. A similar trend has also been observed in Botswana (see Nyati-Ramahobo 2000a). In the case of Botswana, the only comprehensive census that captured linguistic data was done in 1946 (Schapera 1952). The absence of data on the linguistic and ethnic composition of a country could be deliberate: "Since linguistic diversity is regarded as a problem, such data might promote ethnic awareness and disrupt the assimilation process" (Nyati-Ramahobo 2000a: 257).

3. Language planning in Botswana and Malawi

The language planning process that has taken place in Botswana is described in detail by Nyati-Ramahobo (1999), particularly the activities of the then National Setswana Language Council (NSLC), which existed between 1986 and 1996. As the name implies, this language body focused solely on Setswana. This is despite the fact that there are other indigenous languages spoken in Botswana. The establishment of the NSLC, which operated under the Ministry of Education, should be seen in the light of the status of Setswana as a national language. The process of language planning in Botswana has tended to be delegated to the Ministry of Education perhaps because of the close link between language and education.

When it was established, the National Setswana Language Council was given the task of ensuring that the appropriate orthography was used. According to Nyati-Ramahobo (1999: 136) it was then "... the legal guardian of the written and officially spoken language." The 1993 National Education Commission noted the pivotal role that the NSLC played in the promotion of Setswana, but noted further that its operations were not suitable for the multilingual Botswana society. Consequently, it recommended that the Council be renamed as the Botswana Languages Council, with the responsibility of developing a more embracing language policy that would cater for the different languages spoken in Botswana. Like its predecessor, the NSLC, the Botswana Languages Council operates under the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, there is no evidence available to suggest that the establishment of the Botswana Languages Council has borne any fruits in terms of the development of a more embracing language policy for the country.

The direct influence of politicians on language planning is not that apparent in Botswana while in Malawi, the opposite is true. This is particularly the case with the influence that was exerted by Banda, who ruled Malawi during the first 30 years of its independence (1964–1994). During his era, language planning was guided by the desire to have one indigenous language as the symbol of nationhood. In line with this aspiration, some significant developments occurred. The first significant development was the official demise of Chitumbuka, the lingua franca of the Northern Region (Vail and White 1989) and secondly, the consolidation of Chinyanja (later called Chichewa) as the national language. Malawi's language planning was engineered by Banda. He asserted such a great influence on language planning that the final outcome was largely his personal views rather than views from language experts or policy makers. He was the unquestionable language planner and language policy maker. Language planning and language policy were guided by the desire to use a single national language (Chichewa) as "a unifying agent in an ethnically and linguistically divided country" (Kishindo 1998: 252). Chichewa, therefore, benefited a great deal from that policy.

The language policy of the Banda era can be summed up as follows. The policy strongly supported English as the main official language. Secondly, in relation to indigenous languages, the Banda's administration implemented a language promotion regime (cf. Kymlicka and Patten 2003) that favored Chichewa at the expense of the other languages. The language tolerance regime (cf. Kymlicka and Patten 2003) was largely in the field of religion, where publishing religious literature in languages other than Chichewa was permissible. Other public domains such as education and the mass media were exclusively reserved for Chichewa. The political atmosphere was not even conducive to grassroots efforts to develop and promote their own languages. As such, no language or cultural associations were in operation during Banda's rule.

The first post-independence, multiparty general elections were held in 1994 and they were won by the United Democratic Front (UDF). The new administration made some language policy reforms, such as issuing directives on languages of the national radio's broadcasts, dissolving the Chichewa Board and replacing it with a Centre for Language Studies, and issuing a directive on mother tongue instruction. This new era has not produced a comprehensive language policy for Malawi. Instead, "the new era has been characterised by the issuing of directives by the Head of State and government officials rather than a well-wrought language policy" (Kishindo 1997: 96). It is also important to mention that this era has witnessed the emergence of language-based politics of recognition in the form of language and culture associations.

4. Constitutional provisions for language rights

In 1986, the different African states, Botswana and Malawi included, adopted *The Language Plan of Action for Africa* under the auspices of then Organisation of African Unity. Consequently, in examining language issues in Africa, one needs to reflect on the extent to which the individual countries have attempted to actualize the ideals enunciated in this declaration. The declaration urged member states to develop language policies that reflect the cultural and socioeconomic realities that prevail in their respective states (Organisation of African Unity 1986). In addition, the countries were encouraged to strive for the development of the different indigenous African languages. In order to achieve their intended goals, the countries were supposed to develop clearly defined language policies and appropriate legal provisions.

The constitution of Botswana advocates for equal rights, freedom of speech, and free association. The constitution does not, however, specifically provide for language and cultural rights. This contrasts with what prevails in Malawi, where the constitutional amendments enacted in 1995 did not only enshrine the principle of human rights, but went further to forbid discrimination in terms of language and culture. Chapter 4, Section 26 of the Malawi constitution specifically provides that every individual shall have the right to use the language of their choice. Language and cultural rights are treated in this new constitution as being an integral part of human rights. Malawi is not the only country in Southern Africa which treats language and cultural rights as constituting fundamental human rights. The other countries that have done so are Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. In view of what has taken place in other Southern African countries, the silence of the Botswana constitution on this matter can be seen to be out of step with the trend in the region.

Within SADC and indeed Africa as a whole, South Africa's constitutional provisions on language rights are unique. The position of language rights in the South African constitution is strengthened by the provision for the creation of two bodies whose task is to serve as language rights watchdogs. These bodies are the Pan South African Languages Board (PanSLAB) and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (Henrard 2001). PanSLAB is mandated to investigate complaints from any individual or institution about language rights violations. Depending on its findings, PanSLAB may recommend steps to be followed by the relevant party.

The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities is empowered to promote

respect for the rights and interests of South Africa's numerous cultural, linguistic, and religious minority communities. Among the powers of the commission are:

- i. to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise, and report on any burning issue related to the rights of cultural, religious, or linguistic communities;
- ii. to facilitate the resolution of conflicts between any community and the state;
- iii. to receive and deal with complaints and requests from cultural, religious, or linguistic communities (Henrard 2001).

5. Articulation of language policy in the national vision

One of the recent developments in both Botswana and Malawi has been the formulation of some goals or ideals which attempt to define the societies that these countries seek to build within a given period. In Botswana this is called "Vision 2016" while for Malawi it is "Vision 2020." The years cited indicate the time when these countries hope to have realized these ideals. For Botswana, the country will be celebrating its fiftieth independence anniversary in 2016. In terms of language matters, it can be simply said that Malawi's Vision 2020 is silent on the language question. One is inclined to assume here that the absence of any reference to this matter emanates from the fact that it is already encompassed in the constitution. Botswana meanwhile has made a commitment to addressing this matter, which as already mentioned, is not part of the constitutional provisions. One of the statements in the vision document states that:

The education system will recognise, support and strengthen Botswana's wealth of different languages and cultural traditions. There will be no disadvantage suffered by any Motswana in the education system as a result of a mother tongue that differs from the country's two official languages. (Presidential Task Group 1997: 3).

In addition, there is an expression of a commitment towards the development of the different languages spoken in Botswana. What we have here are positive statements by the Botswana government which acknowledge the need to develop and promote the different languages spoken in the country. This is also a radical shift from the previous policy, which has always avoided issues pertaining to the different indigenous languages. The articulation of matters pertaining to the different languages spoken

in Botswana is consistent with the current mood of agitation for the recognition of the different indigenous languages which characterize Botswana's language arena. The challenge for Botswana is to come up with appropriate strategies that would enable it to turn this dream into reality. To date, roughly eight years since the formulation of the vision, no progress has been made with respect to issues pertaining to the different languages spoken in Botswana which are currently marginalized in the education and economic spheres.

6. Politics of recognition: language and culture associations

The demand for language and cultural rights in Africa has been on the increase over the years. The culture of multiparty democracy has given rise to the politics of recognition in multilingual and multicultural nations (Englund 2003; Mazonde 2002; Werbner 2002a, 2000b). This section of the article briefly explores some of the developments that have taken place in Botswana and Malawi with regard to the emergence of and activities of diverse cultural groups. A closer look at the events in the two countries reveals that such societies emerged much earlier in Botswana than in Malawi. This is probably because of the contrasting political conditions that existed in the two countries. Whereas Botswana enjoyed a more accommodative and pluralistic society since its independence in 1966, the same cannot be said about Malawi, which was under a one-party system until Kamuzu Banda was voted out of office in 1994. In addition, Botswana have a saying that "*mmualebe o a bo a bua la gagwe*." This essentially means that every individual is entitled to express their opinion. This kind of attitude has created a climate of free expression which can be seen to have contributed towards the development of the different cultural organizations intent on promoting language rights.

Some of the language associations which have played a key role in advancing the interests of marginalize languages groups in Botswana are the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga (S.P.I.L.) and the Kamanakao Association. These societies have undertaken a wide variety of activities geared towards the promotion of Ikalanga for S.P.I.L. and Shiyeyi for the Kamanakao Association over the years. S.P.I.L. emerged in 1980s while the Kamanakao Association was registered in 1995. According to Nyati-Ramahobo (2002: 690) the name Kamanakao means "'their remnants' a name reflecting its main aim, to develop and maintain the remnants of the Shiyeyi language and culture, as part of the overall Botswana national culture." It's worth noting here that both S.P.I.L. and

the Kamanakao Association pledge their loyalty to Botswana, and they are not seeking to call for secession.

In Botswana, the politics of recognition have seen the Wayeyi demand the use of Shiyeyi in preschools as well as in the early grades of primary education (see Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). In addition, the Wayeyi have also asked for the use of Shiyeyi in adult literacy programs. These Wayeyi demands for the public recognition of their language have been made against a background of Setswana and English hegemony (see also Nyati-Ramahobo [2000a, 2000b] for the Wayeyi case and Solway [2002: 723–725] on cultural organizations in Botswana in general).

One of the latest developments in Botswana has been the formation of a coalition that brings together the different cultural organizations. This new organ, RETENG — literally translated to mean “we are here” or “we are present” — is geared towards providing a coordinated effort targeted at the promotion and preservation of the linguistic and cultural diversity that prevails in Botswana. It is an organization that cuts across the different marginalized groups. Through this body, several workshops have been organized which are aimed at the development of writing systems of some local languages such as Sekgalagadi, Sebirwa, Sesubiya, Setsiretsire, and Setswapong. RETENG has already received funding from some international organizations, such as Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, in order to undertake its activities.

The first language and culture association to be formed in post-Banda Malawi was the Society for the Advancement of Chiyao. It was formed soon after the demise of the Banda regime in 1994. It consisted of intellectuals and journalists. Initially, Pascal Kishindo, a linguist at the University of Malawi, had wanted to form clubs that would discuss orthography and creative writing in the local languages of Malawi (Kayambazinthu 1998). This initial idea was then expanded into the Society. One of its goals was to draft a bill that would be tabled in parliament, seeking the declaration of Chiyao as one of the optional subjects in the school curriculum. The Society also intended to establish a Yao Cultural Centre that would work towards teaching and preserving Yao culture. The Society then began to lose its original objectives as some Yao politicians started to use it to satisfy their political motives. Upon realizing this, the founder, Pascal Kishindo, withdrew. There was no one else to keep the Society alive. It withered without achieving any of its objectives.

The manipulation of cultural associations for political gain has not been experienced in Botswana. This is principally because members of these associations belong to the different political parties. These associations also have clearly defined goals which make them appealing to people of

different political persuasions. The issue of language rights has nonetheless not escaped the attention of politicians. During the 2004 elections in Botswana, all political parties, including the ruling one, committed themselves to recognizing and developing the different languages found in the country.

In 1998, an association known as the Abenguni (or Ngoni) Revival Association was formed in Northern Malawi. It had three objectives. The first objective was to revive the language that is not being passed on to future generations. That Chingoni is moribund is well documented in the literature. The second objective was to bring unity to the Ngoni of Central and Northern Malawi. Thirdly, the association aimed at fostering Ngoni identity. The association then began teaching Zulu, a variant of Chingoni (Kayambazinthu 1998). Kishindo (2002: 221) has remarked that "the futility of the exercise can be likened to flogging a dead cow." The Abenguni Revival Association now runs classes in the Zulu language. These classes are open to all interested individuals. Apart from teaching Zulu, the Association also teaches traditional songs in Zulu. These activities take place at Mzuzu Museum.

The most vibrant of the language and culture associations formed after the demise of the Banda dictatorship is the Chitumbuka Language and Culture Association (CLACA) (see Kamwendo 2002). It was formed in 1994 with the aim of preserving the culture and language of the Tumbuka, one of Malawi's indigenous languages. CLACA's membership comprises the elite — the clergy, teachers at various levels of the education sector, writers, media practitioners, politicians, traditional leaders, and businesspeople. Its main weakness lies in the fact that it lacks grassroots support. It has not put mechanisms in place that will enable ordinary people to be active participants in the promotion of their languages. This is a marked contrast to those language associations that operate in Botswana, such as S.P.I.L. and Kamanakao Association. These associations have put mechanisms into place that allow for the active participation of the local people, which include, among others, communication with ordinary people at the ward level. Elders in the communities also play an active role as resource persons and experts on the culture and languages of these groups.

The objectives of CLACA can be summarized as follows:

- (i) to organize functions that can enhance and promote the advancement and preservation of the Chitumbuka language and culture through literature, video, arts and crafts;
- (ii) to revive, teach, and promote the Chitumbuka language and culture for the benefit of the young and future generations;

- (iii) to work in collaboration with institutions such as museums, UNESCO, UNICEF, universities, the Ministry of Education, and other institutions in the field of culture and languages in Malawi;
- (iv) to call on the Government of Malawi to pass legislation in parliament enabling the revival and preservation of the Chitumbuka language and culture;
- (v) to affiliate itself with organizations that have similar interests, aims, and objectives (see Kamwendo 2002).

While in both Malawi and Botswana, language associations epitomize a desire to have certain languages officially recognized, what is being asked for is not the same in the two countries. For example, the three Malawian associations are mainly concerned with language issues, while some of Botswana's associations go beyond language matters and embrace issues such as land rights, chieftainship, and ownership of cattle (see Nyati-Ramahobo 2000a). Some of the Botswana associations, like the Kamanakao Association, therefore, tend to have a wider mandate.

There are also differences between the two countries in terms of the operational strengths of the organizations. The Malawian associations are younger and less well established than their Botswana counterparts. Some of the associations in Botswana also have well established sources of funding. These associations, particularly S.P.I.L. and Kamanakao Association, have even embraced the use of technology in their operations as reflected by their ownership of websites, a feature that is nonexistent in Malawi.

7. Language policy in Botswana and Malawi

A comprehensive language policy for Malawi is long overdue. Malawi's language policy, like Botswana's language policy (as discussed by Nyati-Ramahobo 2000a), is not clearly stated. It can only be deduced from documents. Malawi's comprehensive language policy will have to seriously consider how the language question should be ranked on the national development agenda. Language issues generally rank low in comparison with jobs, crime prevention, housing, and health.

7.1. *Current language policy in specific domains*

7.1.1. *Language in the education sector.* In both Botswana and Malawi, English is the dominant language in the educational sphere. The trends in the state-owned schools in the two countries are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *Language policy trends in the education sector*

Educational level	Botswana	Malawi
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Setswana serves as the medium of instruction for the first two years (Standards 1 and 2) ii. English is one of the subjects at Standards 1 and 2 and becomes a medium instruction from Standard 3 to 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Chichewa serves as the medium of instruction for the first four years (Standards 1 and 4) ii. English is one of the subjects at Standards 1 and 4 and becomes a medium instruction from Standard 5 to 8 iii. Mother tongue instruction in Chiyao and Chitumbuka is currently in a pilot phase
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. English serves as the sole medium of instruction ii. All Batswana children take Setswana as a compulsory school subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. English serves as the sole medium of instruction
Tertiary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. English serves as the sole medium of instruction ii. A minimum of a credit in English required for enrolment at university level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. English serves as the sole medium of instruction ii. A minimum of a credit in English required for enrolment at university level

7.1.2. *Language in the government.* All the three branches of government — the executive, legislature, and judiciary — in both countries conduct their business largely in English. The vast majority of government documents are in English. In Botswana, the legislature uses both English and Setswana during parliamentary debates and *The Hansard* is written in both English and Setswana. One of the standing orders in Botswana parliament is that when a member of parliament starts his presentation in one of these two languages, he must use it throughout the presentation.

In Malawi, the legislature has English as its sole official language. The proceedings of parliament are solely in English and *The Hansard* is written in English only. One's desire to participate in parliamentary politics is limited by the English language requirement, which dictates that all prospective members of parliament have to pass an English language proficiency test before they can be allowed to contest in elections. This provision contradicts the constitutional provision already referred to which accommodates all languages and cultures that exist in Malawi.

7.1.3. *Adoption of mother tongue instruction.* Whereas Botswana has not as yet made a definitive decision on the use of mother tongue instruction at primary school levels, Malawi has already done so. The need to consider mother tongue instruction in Botswana was highlighted by the National Commission on Education set up to review the education system in 1993 (Republic of Botswana 1993). Subsequent to the work of this Commission, the Government of Botswana commissioned a consultancy which was tasked with addressing this issue. The Government has not yet acted on its report.

Malawi has meanwhile already taken a major step in this direction, a thing that could enlighten Botswana as it approaches this issue. On 28 March 1996, the Secretary for Education issued a directive that from then onwards, Standards 1 to 4 should be taught through mother tongues (see Kamwendo 1997; Kishindo 1998). Interestingly, reactions to the announcement were largely negative. Various criticisms were raised in the mass media, especially in the print media. First, it was argued that no local research had been conducted to determine the relevance, practicality, and acceptability of the policy. Critics warned that it should not be assumed that what has worked elsewhere can also work in Malawi. The second criticism was that there were no consultations with the relevant stakeholders. The policy came in a top-down style, and not in line with the new political dispensation in which consultation and transparency are preferred. Third, it was feared that the policy would strengthen ethnic loyalties at the expense of national unity. Fourth, there was concern that there were no teaching materials for the many languages involved. In addition, the production of such materials in the many languages would be an economic burden. Fifth, some critics argued that what Malawi needed most was better teaching of English. Such critics feared that the mother tongue policy would lead to a further deterioration of the already declining standards of English. The sixth criticism was that Malawian languages lacked the appropriate terminology with which to teach science and technology, hence English would be the best option as a medium of instruction. Currently, the mother tongue instruction policy is in a trial phase that started in 2004 encompassing Chiyao and Chitumbuka languages.

7.1.4. *Language in the mass media.* Language policy in the mass media in the two countries will be discussed here under three categories, namely the radio, television, and the print media. The mass media has a critical role to play in the promotion of indigenous languages. Unfortunately, the mass media seems to be far from fulfilling this role. In general, the use of English tends to cut across these three areas, and it is certainly the

most dominant language in the mass media, particularly on the television and the print area.

Since the end of the Banda dictatorship, Malawi has moved from a one-radio to multi-radio country. There are now over ten private radio stations in Malawi. There are no restrictions as far as the languages of broadcast are concerned. Botswana has also liberalized the airwaves in terms of allowing private radio stations to operate. There are presently only two private stations whose broadcast area is restricted to Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana, and the surrounding areas. There are also two government-owned radio stations which broadcast to the entire nation. Unlike in Malawi, the radio stations are restricted in terms of which languages to broadcast in. Nyati-Ramahobo and Chebanne (2001: 5) point out, "private stations are not permitted to operate for as long as they indicate the use of so-called minority languages." The only languages that are permitted are English and Setswana. Botswana is currently working on a policy that is geared towards facilitating the establishment of community radio stations.

In both countries, there is only one television station, Botswana television in Botswana and Television Malawi in Malawi. In Botswana, the television broadcasts strictly in English and Setswana. In Malawi, it does so in English and Chichewa. In both instances, English is the dominant medium of communication. The other indigenous languages are still excluded from the television broadcasts.

In both countries, the print media is free to publish in any language, but still English is the predominant language. In Botswana, there is only one privately-owned weekly newspaper, *Mokgosi*, which is published entirely in indigenous language, Setswana. The sixteen-page government-owned newspaper, *Daily News*, devotes only two pages towards the end to the use of Setswana. The rest of the pages are in English. Ikalanga, one of the marginalized indigenous languages, often appears in one of the private papers, *Mmegi*, in the form of a half-page article presented once a week. The advertisements that appear in the papers are essentially in English. There is currently no Malawian newspaper that publishes entirely in an indigenous language. Two weeklies, *The Malawi News* and *The Weekend Nation*, do publish a few pages in Chichewa, leaving the bulk of the space to English. The print media in both countries, therefore, continue to be dominated by English.

8. Conclusion

In the article, we have discussed language planning in Botswana and Malawi, taking into consideration the two countries' respective national

visions and language use domains such as government, education, and the mass media. In both countries, English remains the most dominant and prestigious language. It is also important to mention that in both Botswana and Malawi, the politics of language-based recognition continue to flourish. Linguistic minorities are demanding the recognition of their languages given the current dominance of Setswana (in Botswana) and Chichewa (in Malawi) in the official domains.

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