A defiance of language policy: seamless boundaries between languages in Botswana classrooms

Mompoloki M. Bagwasi and Tracey Costley

Abstract: Botswana is a multilingual and multicultural country with 25 to 30 languages. In contrast to this everyday lived multilingualism, the country's language-in-education policy (LIEP) attempts to create a homogenous population in which only two languages are used—Setswana and English. This study investigates language use in classrooms in two schools in Botswana. It explores how the LIEP is enacted in classrooms, which language(s) are used and how. The paper argues that despite a LIEP which tends to prescribe how languages are to be used within education, there is evidence that Botswanan languages are used in much more fluid ways and that the boundaries constructed through the LIEP do not necessarily play out in the day-to-day worlds of teaching and learning in schools. The paper explores the different ways in which the current LIEP meets and diverges from everyday language practices and ends with some suggestions for future policy and practices.

Keywords: Language policy, multilingualism, education policy, classroom practices.

Note on the authors: see end of article.

Introduction

We begin our discussion with an overview of the linguistic landscape of Botswana to provide an outline of the factors that have influenced the language-in-education policy (LIEP) in recent years. It is against this backdrop that we discuss the ways in which these policies have shaped and influenced what languages are used in schools and how. We show the different ways in which languages have been positioned within the LIEP and what questions these raise for us. We then move on to discuss data collected from a larger international project on multilingual classrooms across Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia to explore in more detail how language policies are, or are not, being taken up in classrooms in Botswana. We draw from classroom observations from two schools in a multilingual area of Southern Botswana to explore how teachers and students make use of their linguistic resources in the classrooms. We explore how the current LIEP meets and diverges from everyday language practices, and we end with some suggestions for future policy and practices that encourage, rather than supress, classroom practices which more accurately reflect the nature of Botswana's multilingualism.

Policy context of Botswana

Botswana is a multilingual country which is estimated to have between 25 and 30 languages (Anderson & Janson 1997; Mokibelo 2014a; Nyati-Saleshando 2011). Even though it is commonly held that English is the country's official language and Setswana is the national language, the country does not have a formally stated national language policy. English and Setswana have acquired their *de facto* roles as official and national languages respectively mostly out of practice rather than legislation because the Constitution of Botswana does not designate such roles to them. During the time of British rule (1885 to 1966), English was used for record keeping and for administrative purposes, whilst Setswana was the lingua franca. The issue of a national *de jure* language policy was not addressed at independence (in 1966). There was, however, a requirement for members of parliament to be competent in both English and Setswana, which led to the two languages being perceived as the official and national language respectively. In fact, the LIEP is the only policy document (see Botswana Government 1977 and Botswana Government 1994) which declares them as thus.

The first National Commission on Education, which came under the banner of *Education for Kagisano* (Education for social harmony), declares Setswana as the national language in such statements as

> … a fundamental requirement is that the national language, Setswana, must be mastered by all, for it is an essential means of communication between Batswana[1] and it is the medium through which a great deal of the national culture is expressed.
>
> (Botswana Government 1977: 76)

Concerning the status of other languages in the country, Anderson and Janson (1997) and Nyati-Ramahobo (2008) point out that the Botswana Constitution is silent about the roles of the different languages that exist in the country. This silence is important, as recent data indicate that while 78 per cent of the population reportedly use Setswana at home, only approximately 18 per cent of the population regard themselves as speakers of Setswana as a first language (Nyati-Saleshando 2011). Whilst these numbers may have changed since 2011, they go some way in reflecting the position of Setswana in Botswana. With respect to English, the same survey found that 40 per cent of the population reported that they were able to read, write and understand English.

Within Botswana, Setswana is not only a lingua franca but also a powerful identity marker, as it identifies a speaker as being a 'true' or 'genuine' Motswana. Participants in Bagwasi and Alimi's (2018: 59) study defined a *Motswana tota* (real, genuine Motswana) as somebody who 'was born in Botswana, speaks Setswana, comes from one of the eight Setswana ethnic groups and both his/her parents are born in Botswana'. Such social influence and the dominance of Setswana in the linguistic landscape of the country put a lot of pressure on speakers of other languages to take up Setswana, and this has important implications for the role and status of these languages *vis-à-vis* Setswana. For many speakers of a local minority language such as Sepedi, Afrikaans, Ikalanga or Lozi, the acquisition and use of the dominant language is seen as a mark of elevation from a small and low position to high or mainstream society, and in Botswana this reflected in a shift from minority languages to Setswana and English. Letsholo (2009) identifies such a shift in speakers of Ikalanga. Similarly, Monaka (2013) too notes a shift by speakers of Shekgalagarhi to Setswana, and Batibo (2008) highlights a loss of identity amongst Khoesan language speakers, who are increasingly shifting to Setswana. Batibo argues that the younger generations in the Khoesan communities embrace Setswana language and culture at the expense of their parents' language and highlights the risk that language shifts such as these can contribute to language loss. In Botswana, where language is viewed as a symbol of identity, such shifts in language often lead to a change in and erasure of ethnic identity.

---

[1] Plural of Motswana, which means citizen of Botswana.

Languages in schools

Botswana's LIEP has undergone several changes from the period when Botswana was under British rule (1885–1966) to the current time. For the 81 years that Bechuanaland[2] was under British rule and the 11 years following Botswana's independence, there was no well-defined LIEP (see Mafela 2009). Setswana was used as a Medium of Instruction (MOI) in the first three or four years of primary school and then English took over. This arrangement was quite flexible, allowing teachers to teach in Setswana or other indigenous languages up to the end of primary school. Mafela (2009: 59) argues that 'it is specifically the lack of a coordinated language policy at that time which provided an opportunity for the use of various forms of indigenous languages in colonial and missionary schools'. The flexible language arrangement in the class-room was, however, later replaced by more restrictive post-independence LIEPs that came in 1977 and 1992.

The first National Commission on Education which carried the banner *Education for Kagisano* (Education for social harmony) came in 1977. As its name suggests, it aimed at an education policy that would facilitate nation building and unity in an ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous country. Like in many African countries, unity and nation building were very strong sentiments in the period following independence. The Commission felt that education could be used to promote nation building and unity by promoting Setswana, the dominant indigenous lingua franca, which it presumed and declared to be the national language. The Commission felt that the education system at the time favoured English over Setswana. It argued that:

> the introduction of English as a medium of instruction as early as[3] Standard 3, and the amount of class time allocated to English clearly discriminated against the national language. … The national language, Setswana, must be mastered by all, for it is an essential means of communication.

(Botswana Government 1977: 76)

The Commission also acknowledged the role of English as the language of business, development of human resource and the link between Botswana and the international community and therefore recommended that 'English should have a place in the curriculum' (Botswana Government 1977: 31). It recommended that 'Botswana Primary schools should aim to ensure that children acquire a basic command of written and spoken English and of Mathematics which are the tools of further learning in school and are needed in many jobs'. Consequently, the Commission recommended that:

---

[2] During the protectorate period, Botswana was called Bechuanaland.

[3] Primary school grade/level is called a standard in Botswana. So, Standard 1 means Grade 1 and so on with students entering Standard 1 at around 6 years old.

> Setswana should be used as the medium of instruction for the first four years of primary school with the transition to English taking place in Standard 5, by which time children must have become fully literate in Setswana. Setswana should be given more time in the school time table, and should have the same status as English as a subject in the Primary School Leaving Examination and in the[4] selection process for secondary school. English should continue to be taught as a subject from Standard 1, with the aim of preparing children for the transition to English as a medium of instruction at Standard 5.
>
> (Botswana Government 1977: 76)

This education policy was in use for 15 years (1977–1992), but education systems require periodic reviews. So, in 1992, the first LIEP was reviewed to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to align it to a rapidly changing Botswana economy and changing cultural and linguistic values. This revised policy, which came to be known as the Revised National Policy on Education, argued that:

> there is a concern about the poor performance of primary school children in English and part of the problem is that children do not get used to using English early enough in the learning process and yet they are required to write their examinations in the language.
>
> (Botswana Government 1994: 59)

The Commission then responded to this challenge of poor performance by reducing the number of years that Setswana should be used as a MOI and increasing the number of years English should be used. It recommended that 'with respect to the teaching of languages in primary school, English should be used as the medium of instruction from Standard 2 or as soon as practical' (Botswana Government, 1994: 60). Though the Commission claims that the basis for the shift was the poor English performance and the late exposure to the language, Bagwasi (2016: 4) argues that 'the reason for the increase in the use of English in schools was a response to the high demand for the English language by the rapidly growing westernized job market in Botswana'. It seems that, in the absence of a national language policy, the LIEP has been used directly or indirectly to represent the linguistic interest of the nation and regulate language use in Botswana. This is important in the context of Cenoz's (2013) observation that education plays a major role in the sustenance of languages and that languages are learned, maintained and reinforced through education because learners spend many hours and years of their lives at school.

Bagwasi (2016: 4) draws several conclusions from Botswana's LIEP. First, the Government of Botswana is silent about the roles of minority languages that exist in the country. Second, only two languages (English and Setswana) enjoy official recognition in the school. And, third, the LIEP compartmentalises languages—Setswana is to be used in Standard 1 and English is to be used from Standard 2. Further, Setswana is to be used to teach the subject Setswana whilst all other subjects are to be taught

---

[4] Only those learners who have a pass in English are eligible for progression into secondary school.

in and through English. As mentioned above, the LIEP recommends that Setswana should be used as a MOI at Standard 1 and English should be used as the MOI from Standard 2 and/or as soon as possible (Botswana Government 1994). Bagwasi (2016: 6) is critical of this language arrangement and argues that:

> such a policy is framed on our narrow and traditional view of multilingualism in which languages are seen as discrete, fixed and separable into different categories and functions and that effective communication, language learning and teaching can only be achieved if the languages are separated according to place, time, function, subject, department, topic and teacher. In Botswana schools, languages are presented in a sequence whereby one language is introduced after the other, and there are periods of instruction in Setswana and then there are periods of instruction in English. The language-in-education policy does not allow or make any provisions for any language mixing or concurrent use of several languages in a lesson or classroom.

In conceptualising languages as separate and discrete entities, the policy fails to take into account the lived experience of students and teachers, potentially imposing boundaries and practices which may not exist in practice. What might be more appropriate is an 'integrated view of language which regards multilingual practices as products of language users' multiple repertoires that are employed in a contingent and flexible manner' (Kubota 2014: 3). This understanding of multilingualism as representing a set of fluid and responsive practices is also central to the concept of translanguaging (García & Kleyn 2016; García & Wei 2014; Lewis *et al.* 2012), which sees language as a resource that speakers draw from in order to make meaning. In this sense, languages from the perspective of their users do not exist as discrete, bounded entities but rather as one system of language. This means that from a translanguaging perspective, the current LIEP is problematic in that it sets up a false division between Setswana and English. In setting up this dichotomy, it potentially forces students and teachers to use language in a way that limits rather than facilitates opportunities for meaning making. Similarly, in promoting only Setswana or English, the policy imposes monolingual norms onto a multilingual context and in so doing fails to recognise the diversity of language practices that are found in schools and classrooms in Botswana.

What we have, then, is a policy environment that constructs languages and language practices in ways that may not reflect the actual language practices people make use of and engage in on a day-to-day basis. As Ball (1997) suggests, although often seen as offering solutions and solving problems, policies pose problems for individuals. The problems occur from the fact that policies are things that need to be acted upon and responded to. When we think about education policies such as the current LIEP in Botswana in this light, we can begin to see that the types of problems it poses, and the solutions that are developed will vary at the national, regional and local level. There will also be variation within school districts as well as within

individual schools and classrooms. This means that policies rarely (if ever) produce identical responses but rather produce responses that are locally informed and developed (Costley & Leung 2009; 2014). It is in this vein that we are interested in understanding how teachers and students in Botswana respond to the challenges posed by the LIEP, and this paper is centred around two interrelated research questions, which are:

1. How is the language-in-education-policy being enacted in schools and classrooms in Botswana?
2. What languages are used in classes and how are they being used?

Methodology

This study is the first of a series of findings from data collected as part of a project entitled 'Bringing the outside in: Merging local language and literacy practices to enhance classroom learning'. The main objective of this larger study is to explore ways in which everyday multilingual practices can be harnessed to enhance experiences of education in Botswana, Tanzanian and Zambian schools. The data discussed in this paper draws specifically from the work that is taking place in Botswana. The permit to conduct research in Botswana schools was obtained through the University of Botswana's Office of Research Development, which ensured that all ethical considerations were met. Further, all participants in the study were asked to consent to take part in the study by signing a consent form which was written in English and Setswana. Parents or guardians were asked to sign on behalf of their children (under 16 years old), and all learners and teachers have been given pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity.

The first phase of data collection was in 2020, in two villages. The first (Village A) is semi-urban and approximately an hour from the capital, Gaborone. Though this settlement has a population of over 200,000 cosmopolitan and multilingual/multicultural inhabitants and a modern infrastructure, it is categorised as a village because of its traditional structures, which are headed by traditional rulers called *dikgosi* (chiefs). The dominant language in Village A is Setswana; however, there are small communities of Shekgalagarhi, Ikalanga and speakers of Khoesan languages for whom Setswana and English are additional languages. Two focal primary schools (Schools A and B) were selected, and a total of 24 lessons and four teachers from two Standard 1 and two Standard 3 classes were observed in these two schools. The choice of Standard 1 and 3 was based on the fact that, as discussed above, the Botswana LIEP requires Setswana to be used as the MOI in Standard 1 and English from Standard 2. Standard 2 is considered a transitional year in which learners are transiting from Setswana to an English

medium. The learners and teachers are expected to have transitioned to English as the MOI by Standard 3. School A is located in a ward where Setswana dominates, while School B is located in a ward where there is a recognisable or established presence of Shekgalagarhi language. Different lessons (English, Setswana, Mathematics, Cultural Studies, Science, Creative and Performing Arts) were observed and recorded using a small dictaphone, and the recorded data was then transcribed, paying particular attention to the language use of the students and teachers. A further 140 participants were surveyed in Village A, but the data we discuss in this paper draws specifically from the classroom recordings that were collected in Schools A and B.

The data handling and analysis has been an iterative process and has followed a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014). Adopting such an approach means that we have been able to work out patterns and themes from the data, building and testing our hypotheses as we have moved in and out of the data, rather than imposing a pre-existing set of criteria on to it. To do this, we have made use of different rounds of initial/open coding (Friedman 2012) that led to final codes being established. From here, we have identified key themes and patterns in the data, which we discuss in more detail below and in relation to our research questions.

How are policies being enacted in classrooms in Botswana?

The first important observation is that in the two schools in this study, only Setswana and English feature in all the classroom recordings, even though Shekgalagarhi, Ikalanga and Khoesan languages feature widely in the communities in which the schools are located. While the use of Setswana and English is outlined in the LIEP, our data show that policy and practice do not always align. For example, as discussed above, the current LIEP states that Setswana is the MOI in Standard 1, meaning that all subjects should be taught in Setswana. However, what we find in our data is a picture that is much more complicated and dynamic, with many examples of teachers using English in Standard 1 as illustrated in Extracts 1 and 2 (from a Mathematics lesson in School A). Here, the teacher was observed presenting most of the content in English with occasional uses of Setswana by both the teacher and the students.

> **Extract 1**
> Teacher: Now we are going to do half past nine. If the time is half past nine the hour hand
>   is pointing to which figure and the minute hand is pointing to which figure PM?[5]
> Learner: Nna ga ke itse go dira
>   *Myself, I don't know how to do it*

[5] PM, along with KG and TS, are codes used to disguise learners' names. Other transcription conventions used in the data discussed here include [LG], which refers to laughter, [CG] which refers to coughing, () which refers to silence and [NS] which refers to noise.

Teacher: mmh just tell us le nna I don't know what to do when the time is half past nine.
Where do I put the minute hand?
Mmh just tell us, I too do not know what to do when the time is half past nine. Where do I put the minute hand?

Extract 2

Teacher: Emang pele tlogelang PM ke nako ya gagwe a dire se a batlang go se dira
Please wait, just leave PM alone it's her time, allow her do what she wants to do
Learner: you put the hour hand between nine.

The ways in which English and Setswana are used in Extracts 1 and 2 are common in the data we collected from our Standard 1 classes. These are important as the ways the languages are being used, in particular the use of English, go against the LIEP for Standard 1, demonstrating that the LIEP is not strictly adhered to. There are a number of possible explanations for this. One might be that given the high expectation by parents and society for learners to acquire English at school, teachers may feel pressured to expose learners to English at earlier stages in the curriculum. It could also be that some learners, especially those from educated and middle-income families, started school with some basic competence in English which they acquired from home or and English medium preschool and which reflects language practices they may use regularly outside of school (Mokibelo 2014b). These learners are often able to cope with the use of English by teachers. However, learners from lower income families and households where parents and carers may have had interrupted and/or incomplete education often start school without any such competence in English and often struggle to cope with the teacher's use of English. A further possible explanation is also that the fluidity we see in the use of both languages is an indication by both teachers and learners that separation of languages is difficult and to some extent unnatural. Viewed from this perspective, what we are seeing here might be a closer representation of the multilingual and/or translanguaging practices and language uses that may be characteristic of wider, everyday practices that involve teachers and learners drawing from their broader linguistic repertoires to make and negotiate meaning.

In much of our data collected from Standard 3 classes where, according to the LIEP, English is the MOI, English was found to be the predominant language—but there were translingual uses of Setswana and English, as illustrated by Extracts 3, 4 and 5, taken from a Standard 3 class in School A.

Extract 3

Teacher: KG o santse a ntse mo setilong, KG ngwanaka o santse o ntse mo setilong, wena kana o yo ke salang le ene mo classing akere?
KG you are still sitting on your chair. KG my child you are still seated on your chair; You are the one who has to remain behind with me after class, right?

Extract 4

Teacher: Ehee, at home, when you wake up akere *(isn't it)*?

Learner: Ee mma
   Yes mam

Extract 5

Teacher: We talked about this, Candy one o seo, ke gone o tlang, o reetse thata ngwanaka wa utlwa.
   We talked about this, Candy you were not in class, you just arrived, so listen properly my child okay.
   What do we say in the afternoon?
   Yes KM, what do we say?

Learner: Good afternoon

The examples above suggest that, despite what the policy says, the language practices of learners and teachers do not necessarily adhere to the fixed and rigid ways in which languages are framed within the LIEP and are in fact much more fluid and dynamic, with language operating more seamlessly and without fixed boundaries. Our data echo Mafela's (2009: 74) observation that 'the language situation in Botswana classrooms resonates with many others around the world, where code alteration strategies are more the norm than the exception, in spite of official language policies that dictate otherwise'. The presence of more dynamic translanguaging practices in the classrooms highlights that the LIEP is somewhat out of touch in attempting to keep languages apart and creating boundaries between languages. What our data show is that learners and teachers are busy bringing them together and thereby creating more linguistically fluid learning environments.

What languages are used in classes and how?

In the current study, we found many different examples of translanguaging practices in which teachers and learners draw from Setswana and English and different patterns of translanguaging are evident. For example, in our data the teachers tended to translanguage in order to present content, provide translation, give instructions and manage the classroom as well as to compliment learners (see García & Kleyn 2016; García & Wei 2014; Mazak & Carroll 2016). This is important, as teachers seem to be using available language resources to present their lessons. The use of available languages helps learners and teachers to synthesise information as well as identify and choose parallels that can help them to best express meanings in dynamic multi-layered and multi-directional ways (see Lewis *et al.* 2012).

The extracts below demonstrate the different functions that the movements between languages & translanguaging practices are performing in the classroom contexts we observed. Brevik & Rindal (2020: 928) argue that 'teachers who encourage the use of other languages during target language instruction assume that proficiency

is transferable across languages'. In Extract 6, for example, a Standard 1 teacher in School B uses Setswana in an English class for giving instructions, asking questions and translating content from English to Setswana to help learners to understand it.

> **Extract 6**
> Teacher: A re opeleng re tlhwaahetse hle bathong [NS].
> > *Let us sing more passionately guys [NS].*
> Learners: (singing) [NS]
> Teacher: Very good. Who can read here? () [NS]. Gatweng? Capital letters!
> > *Very good. Who can read here? ( ) [NS]. What? Capital letters!*
> Learner: Capital letters.
> Learner: Capital letters.
> Teacher: Ee, in the test, in the test you will see capital letters. O tla bona go kwadilwe gotwe capital letters, [NS] jaana [CG] capital letters.
> > *Ok, in the test, in the test you will see capital letters. You will see capital letters [NS] written like this [CG] capital letters.*

In Extract 7 below, a Standard 1 teacher in School B uses Setswana in an English lesson for explaining and translating. The teacher utilises the available linguistic resources to aid comprehension by explaining, expanding a point and translating and, by so doing, bridging whatever communication gap may exist. The teacher makes use of the learners' existing linguistic repertoire, which is important as we know that learners taught through a medium that they do not have any background in often find it difficult to speak or learn in it (Williams & Cooke 2002; Probyn 2005; Alidou & Brock-Utne 2006). Brevik & Rindal (2020) argue that making use of a learner's L1 is a recognition of prior knowledge and comprehension skills that the learner can bring to the learning environment. This knowledge and comprehension skills, once activated, can be used as scaffolding to comprehend the language of the classroom.

> **Extract 7**
> Teacher: Tla o e mpontshe [NS] (). Ee, we start with a capital letter [NS]. Fa o simolola seele hela a ke Sekgowa a ke Setswana o simolola ka thaka e tona, ra utlwana?
> > *Come and show me [NS]. Yes, we start with a capital letter [NS]. When you start a sentence whether in English or Setswana you start with a capital letter, ok?*
> Teacher: () [NS] John, John ke leina la motho le simolola ka thaka e tona. John [NS]. Katso, o simolola ka thaka e tona. Name of places. Maina a mafelo. Maina a batho, maina a mafelo. A ko o mphe lefelo.
> > *John, John is a name of a person and starts with a capital letter. John [NS]. Katso, starts with a capital letter. Names of places. Names of places. Names of people, Names of places. Give me names of places.*

The current data also shows that teachers translanguage to manage classroom behaviour or misconduct as well as to praise learners. In Extract 8 below, the same

Standard 1 teacher in School B uses Setswana to manage classroom behaviour or misconduct as well as instruct the learners to use English, which should be the medium of instruction in this lesson. In Extract 9, they use a different language to compliment a learner who has given a correct answer.

Extract 8

Teacher: The capital letters. Tse, di simolola seele. Katso tswala exercise book ya gago and listen. Close your exercise books [NS]. Look at the chalk board [NS]. The capital letters, di simolola seele. A ko o mphe seele sa Sekgowa. A re bueng seele ka Sekgowa. [NS] a re tšhomeng tlhe bathong, Sekgowa. Ee, Winnie, ba gaise hoo, ka Sekgowa [NS]. Ee.

The capital letters. These ones, they start a sentence. Katso close your exercise book and listen. Close your exercise books [NS]. Look at the chalk board [NS]. The capital letters, they start a sentence. Give me a sentence in English. Yes, Winnie, do better than them, in English [NS]. Yes.

Teacher: Heela stop talking [NS].

Hey stop talking [NS].

Teacher: Heela sit down. Sit down.

Hey sit down. Sit down.

Extract 9

Teacher: Very good. Who can read here? () [NS]. Gatweng? Capital letters.

Very good. Who can read here? ( ) [NS]. What? Capital letters.

Teacher: Ehee good girl. Ramotswa ga a kwalwe jaana, o tshwanetse gore a bo o mo simolola ka thaka e ntseng jaana akere?

Yes good girl. You cannot write Ramotswa like this, you have to start with this letter.

Discussion and future directions

Although the LIEP promotes separation and isolation of Setswana and English (Setswana in Standard 1, English from Standard 2, Setswana for the subject Setswana and English for all other subjects), the current data show that language use in the classrooms visited in this study is much more fluid and dynamic than that imagined in, or mandated by, the LIEP. Although the data (from the recordings and observations) reflect the LIEP, in that there is more use of Setswana in Standard 1 and more use of English in Standard 3, the extracts show that rather than being separate, Setswana and English are used flexibly in all subjects across Standard 1 and 3. This indicates that teaching and learning are carried out through the use of language practices that work in and for particular classes, and these practices are often in direct contradiction to the policy.

In terms of the LIEP, what we do see powerfully reflected back in the data is the lack of use of languages other than Setswana and English in the schools and classrooms

in which data was collected. It is clear from our data that the direct sanctioning and privileging of Setswana and English above all other languages within educational policy over the last 50–60 years has played a significant role in marginalising other languages in Botswana. Although the schools in which our data were collected are located in highly multilingual areas, our recordings did not pick up the use of any languages of the wider community in the classrooms, which is striking, given the multilingual nature of the communities in which these schools are set. Such an absence shows how the LIEP has been taken up and acted upon, creating clear boundaries around the languages of school and learning and the languages of the broader communities. Our classroom recordings do not capture the use of any other languages except Setswana and English.

Within Botswana, much positive work is happening in terms of advocating for a greater use of languages that are not officially recognised in the LIEP. Currently, preparations are underway for the introduction of some minority languages (such as Shekgalagarhi, Ikalanga and Nama) in some primary schools next year. Further, some language associations are engaged in finding out what needs to be done to extend the recognition of languages beyond being simply tokens to be celebrated at public events (Mokibelo 2015; Nyati-Saleshando 2011). Mokibelo (2014a) and Nyati-Saleshando (2011) highlight the positive role that activism and language revitalisation programmes are playing in preserving the position of regional languages.

We would like to continue to build on this positive work and also see schools and classrooms as a vital space in which change can and needs to begin to take place. A key challenge is to find ways of enabling teachers and students to capitalise upon these practices in order that they are empowered to incorporate more than these two languages in classroom spaces. Our data is important here in that it shows, quite clearly, that teachers and students are already highly skilled at operating successful, flexible multilingual practices in classrooms. The data show that there is an already established precedent and framework for moving fluidly between Setswana and English in the classroom in order to facilitate teaching and learning and that this is the basis upon which further change could successfully be built.

What we see in the data is that language policies that seek to impose rigid boundaries between languages are problematic in terms of implementation as they fail to recognise the complex and fluid ways in which language is used as a meaning making resource in multilingual contexts. A policy ideology that recognises and endorses a more nuanced and fluid understanding of language practices would not only be a more accurate basis upon which to frame language but would also be much closer to the lived reality of the participants in this study, as well as those in other similar contexts. Such a policy would allow students and teachers to bring all of their resources into the classroom and see their full linguistic resources recognised as positive resources for learning, rather than deficits to be overcome, and would conceptualise schools and learning as multilingual behaviour that takes places in multilingual spaces.

References

Alidou, H. & Brock-Utne, B. (2006), 'Teaching Practices: Teaching in a Familiar Language', in H. Alidou *et al*. (eds), *Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa—the Language Factor* (Paris, ADEA), 84–100.

Anderson, L.G. & Janson, T. (1997), *Languages in Botswana* (Gaborone, Longman Botswana).

Bagwasi, M.M. & Alimi M.M. (2018), 'A Study of Botswana's Perception of One Another: Citizenship and National Identity in Botswana: Us and Them Dichotomy', *Marang: Journal of Language and Literature*, 30: 50–70.

Bagwasi, M.M. (2016), 'A Critique of Botswana's Language Policy from a Translanguaging Perspective', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 18(2): 199–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664 208.2016.1246840

Ball, S. (1997), 'Policy Sociology and Critical Social Research: A Personal Review of Recent Educational Policy and Policy Research', *British Educational Research Journal*, 23(3): 257–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192970230302

Batibo, H.M. (2008), 'The Circumstances of Language Shift and Death in Southern Africa', in C. Vigouroux & S. Mufwene (eds), *Globalization and Language Vitality: Perspectives from Africa* (Chennai, Continuum Publishers), 51–69.

Botswana Government (1977), *Education for Kagisano: Report of the Botswana National Commission on Education* (Gaborone, Government Printer).

Botswana Government (1994), *The Revised National Policy on Education* (Gaborone, Government Printer).

Brevik, L.M. & Randal, U. (2020), 'Language Use in the Classroom: Balancing Target Language Exposure with the Need for Other Languages', *TESOL Quarterly*, 54(4): 925–53. https://doi. org/10.1002/tesq.564

Cenoz, J. (2013), 'Discussion: Towards an Educational Perspective in CLIL Language Policy and Pedagogical Practice', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(3): 389–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2013.777392

Charmaz, K. (2014), *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London, Sage).

Costley, T. & Leung, C. (2014), 'English as an Additional Language: Symbolic Policy and Local Practices', in C. Leung Little & P. Van Avermaet (eds), *Managing Diversity in Education: Languages, Policies, Pedagogies* (Bristol, Multilingual Matters), 27–39. https://doi.org/10.21832/ 9781783090815-004

Costley, T. & Leung, C. (2009), 'English as an Additional Language across the Curriculum: Policies in Practice', in M. Gearon, A. Kosogriz & J. Miller (eds), *Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Classrooms: New Dilemmas for Teachers* (Bristol, Multilingual Matters), 151–71. https://doi. org/10.21832/9781847692184-011

Friedman, D. (2012), 'How to Collect and Analyse Qualitative Data', in A. Mackey & S.M. Gass (eds), *Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition: A Practical Guide* (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell), 180–201. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444347340.ch10

García, O. & Li Wei. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education* (London, Palgrave Macmillan). https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765_4

García, O. & Kleyn, T. (eds) (2016), *Translanguaging with Multilingual Students* (New York, Routledge). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315695242

Kubota, R. (2014), 'The Multi/Plural Turn, Postcolonial Theory, Neoliberal Multiculturalism: Complicities and Implications for Applied Linguistics', *Applied Linguistics*, 45: 1–22. https://doi. org/10.1093/applin/amu045

Letsholo, R. (2009), 'Language Maintenance or Shift? Attitudes of Bakalanga Youth towards Their Mother Tongue', *Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(5): 581–95. https://doi. org/10.1080/13670050802153459

Lewis, G., Jones, B. & Baker, C. (2012), 'Translanguaging: Origins and Development from School to Street and Beyond', *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18(7): 641–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2012.718488

Mafela, L. (2009), 'Code-Switching in Botswana History Classrooms in the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development', *Language Matters*, 40(1): 56–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/10228190903055568

Mazak, C. & Carroll, K.S. (eds) (2016), *Translanguaging in Higher Education: Beyond Monolingual Ideologies* (Bristol, Multilingual Matters). https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783096657

Mokibelo, E.B. (2015), 'Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in the Education System and Society of Botswana', *US–China Education Review*, 5(8): 488–502. doi:10.17265/2161-6248/2015.08.002

Mokibelo, E.B. (2014a), 'Why We Drop Out of School: Voices of School Dropouts in Botswana', *The Australia Journal of Indigenous Education*, 43(2): 185–94. https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2014.26

Mokibelo, E.B. (2014b), 'The National Language as a Language of Instruction in Botswana Primary Schools', *Language and Education*, 28(5): 421–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.892126

Monaka, K.C. (2013), 'A Sociolinguistic Study of Shekgalagarhi: Issues of Survival in the Shadow of Setswana', *Nawa: Journal of Language and Communication*, 7(2): 42–53.

Nyati-Ramahobo, L. (2008), *Minority Tribes in Botswana: The Politics of Recognition* (London, Minority Rights Group International). Available online: www.refworld.org/pdfid/496dc0c82.pdf (Accessed 14 May 2019).

Nyati-Saleshando, L. (2011), 'An Advocacy Project for Multicultural Education: The Case of the Shiyeyi Language in Botswana', *International Review of Education*, 57: 567–82. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-011-9254-4

Probyn, M.J. (2005), 'Learning Science through Two Languages in South Africa', *International Symposium on Bilingualism*, 1855–73.

Williams, E. & Cooke, J. (2002), 'Pathways and Labyrinths: Language and Education in Development, *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3): 297–322. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588415

Note on the authors: Mompoloki Mmangaka Bagwasi is a professor in the English Department at the University of Botswana, where she has been teaching for about three decades. She researches and publishes on topics relating to the multilingual nature of Botswana and its inherent issues of language inequality, language and identity, language policy and language and education. Her recent publications include: 'Education, multilingualism and bilingualism in Botswana' in *International Journal of Sociology of Language*, 'The major educational policies, models and ideas that have influenced Botswana's education system' in *Policy Futures in Education*, and 'A critique of Botswana's language policy from a translanguaging perspective' in *Current Issues in Language Planning*. She has also published in such journals as: *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *International Review of Educational Journal*, *Language Culture and Curriculum* and *Issues in Political Discourse Analysis*.
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0898-0448
bagwasimm@ub.ac.bw

Tracey Costley, adopting an ethnographic perspective, researches English as additional language learners in multilingual classrooms in the UK and worldwide. She is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex. She researches multilingualism with a particular interest in language policy, classroom practices and the development of academic literacies and has published in journals such as *System*, *English for Specific Purposes* and *Language and Education* and with publishers such as Multilingual Matters, TESOL Quarterly and Routledge, Taylor Francis.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8357-3960
tcostley@essex.ac.uk