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

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ABSTRACT

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

Key words

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

1. INTRODUCTION

In response to the global crisis and to grassroots movements, the discipline of linguistics is shifting from treating languages as an object of study to engaging in efforts to save languages (Wiheim 2014). Language shift is due to a number of factors, both macro and micro and sometimes these factors transcend linguistic issues. Language shift can also lead to extinction of languages. Efforts to salvage dying and dead languages fall within language revitalisation and language revival respectively. The current research falls within the scope of revitalisation. Revitalisation according to King (2001) is an attempt to add new linguistic forms or social functions to an embattled minority language with the aim of increasing its users or uses, a way of recouping, reinvigorating the use of the native tongue. Revitalisation therefore deals with threatened languages, languages that still have surviving speakers. Where minority

languages are concerned, revitalisation is normally a micro level initiative (Fishman 1991) which requires, just like macro level language planning, systematic planning. The literature is littered with examples of revitalised languages, for example Navajo in United States, Maori in New Zealand, and Bahasa in Indonesia (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997).

Baldauf (2008) indicates that language planning involves different actors with the aim of achieving set goals. Traditionally, language planning in Zimbabwe has been an activity of central government. Its approach to language planning has been informed by English monolingualism as a way of perpetuating the ideology of national unity, an ideology which is not shared by the majority of indigenous language groups in Zimbabwe. According to Ndhlovu (2009), this drive for postcolonial nation building was informed by the Zimbabwean nationalistic ideology of intolerance to language diversity and multilingualism. This intolerance to language diversity and multilingualism has resulted in the perpetuation of the minoritisation of some languages. A minorized language is a language whose lack of autonomy, status, diffusion, functional distribution and standardization makes up objective characteristics derived from macrolinguistic description (Kasbarian 1997). This conceptualises the linguistic imbalances that exist within the Zimbabwean linguistic ecology and maps government political ideologies imbedded in language. As a result, issues of language planning are consciously considered for particular languages, excluding others within the same linguistic ecology as clearly witnessed in the Zimbabwean language-in-education policy (See Appendix 2). This discrepancy in language planning has witnessed minoritised language communities raising and engaging in language planning activities. Because of this prevailing monolingual ideology, there is a lack of political will on the part of government to develop minoritised languages. Communities have therefore taken it upon themselves to initiate language planning activities to the benefit of their languages. Speakers of minoritised languages in Zimbabwe such as Tonga, Venda, Shangani and Kalanga have embarked on a bottom-up approach to language planning as far back as the late 1900s, with the objective of achieving certain developmental goals. The Tonga Language and Cultural Committee (TOLACCO) was formed in 1976 and the Zimbabwe Indigenous Language Promotion Association was formed in 2001, comprising of Tonga, Venda, Shangani, Kalanga, Nambya and Sotho (Mumpande, Nyika 2008, Ndlovu 2013). These grass roots mobilisation efforts, however, came with their own challenges, which in the end saw Venda, Shangani and Kalanga backing out of such initiatives.

The revitalisation of the Tonga language is thus an example of this bottom-up phenomenon. However, only a few studies have been published on the processes, failures and successes that have been achieved in this regard, for example Mumpande (2006), Nyika (2007) and (2008), Makoni et al. (2008) and Ndlovu (2013). Apart from these studies, no single study has been done to ascertain the goals of revitalising or analyse the challenges encountered in the process of Tonga revitalisation. Such an evaluation is necessary particularly taking into consideration the idea that these micro level initiatives are mostly taken up by people who are not experts in language planning matters, but people who are passionate about their languages, who know what they want but do not know how to attain it. This probably explains why generally minority languages in the country have not shown substantive development, which could be a result of how the communities have been engaging in revitalisation activities. An awareness of such factors and the realisation of militating factors offered by Fishman's RLS framework may be key to successful revitalisation initiatives. It is therefore hoped that results from this case study might be applicable to other minoritised language speakers in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, for example, in respect of offering feasible alternatives to micro-level language revitalisation. It

should however be noted that although a number of revitalisation activities were engaged in, in various domains, the current study is restricted to activities in two domains only. Therefore, the objectives of this study are:

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

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

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

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

2. METHODOLOGY

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

The development of Tonga is a product of the contributions of a number of civic society actors, publishing houses, academic institutions and the Tonga people themselves. The population for this study mainly included Binga chiefs, Binga community members, non-governmental organisations (Silveira House, Save The Children Fund-UK, Catholic Commission for Justice for Peace-Binga), educational institutions (University of Zimbabwe: African Languages Department, African Languages Research Institute), schools in the Binga District (head masters, teachers and learners), and the Zimbabwe Publishing House (ZPH). Purposive sampling was used to select the appropriate participants who could provide relevant information owing to their involvement in the revitalisation of the Tonga language. The researcher used the maximum variation or heterogenous purposive sampling in order to capture a wide range of information from different kinds of social actors who were involved in the revitalisation of Tonga. Recruitment was mainly based on availability and easy access since some parts of Binga are not easily accessible by road. In addition to purposive sampling, snowballing was also used. The researcher got referrals from participants identified through purposive sampling, of other people who could contribute towards the study.

The study utilised a qualitative phenomenological approach in a bid to explore the challenges associated with the micro-level linguistic revitalisation of Tonga from the perception of the revitalisers. The purpose of the phenomenological approach according to Lester (1999) is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in

a situation and this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation. A qualitative phenomenological approach seeks to describe rather than explain and adding an interpretive dimension allows it to inform, support or challenge policy and action (Lester Ibid). In the present study data was collected through semi-structured interviews and secondary sources: 178 interviews were carried out with informants from the groups of social actors mentioned above between June 2013 and December 2015 as part of a broader study[1]. The interviews were done to solicit information on the process of revitalisation and the challenges encountered. This was augmented by information from secondary sources. Given the duration of the journey to Tonga revitalisation, some people who were directly and actively involved have either long passed on or relocated, and secondary sources such as minutes of language committee meetings were therefore employed to augment the data collection.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Fishman's (1991) Reversing Language Shift Framework

The data obtained was analysed in terms of Fishman's (1991) Reversing Language Shift framework (RLS) that served as a theoretical underpinning for understanding language revitalisation (Lewis and Simons 2009). Fishman's framework applies a Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) that consists of eight stages divided into two components, i.e. the weak side (Stages 8 to 5) and the strong side (Stages 4 to1) of RLS.

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

Fishman (1991) proposes the following principle notions for the success of grass roots initiatives:

(a)   RLS-efforts must initially be primarily based on the self-reliance of pro-RLSers and on the community of Xish users and advocates whom pro-RLSers seek to mobilise and to activate;

(b)   RLSers and the Xish communities must be self-reliant in terms of, among other things, time, finance and dedication;

(c)   Xish community dedication is also crucial, particularly in Stages 8 to 4 since the success of these stages require effort and will from the Xish communities themselves;

(d)   Attention should be directed to crucial issues or 'first things first' – this is significant because RLS, like all minority based efforts, is more likely to be characterised by a serious shortage of resources; and

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[1] This article is part of a doctoral thesis completed in 2016.

(e)   When all is said and done, any and all seriously intended RLS efforts must still stand the acid test of fostering demonstrable transmissibility across the intergenerational link.

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

3.2 Language planning goals framework

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

4. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Language planning is generally defined as government authorised, long-term, sustained and conscious efforts to alter a language's function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems (Weisten in Moto 2009:3). The purpose of language planning is to solve language-related problems and the main institution responsible is often governments. This entails following a top-down strategy that mostly leaves a lot to be desired in multilingual contexts. This is because altering a language or changing a language function is normally done without consulting the people concerned and this is often met with resistance. Secondly, some governments use it as a way of advancing particular agendas and interests, for example, advancing the interests of the Afrikaner group by imposing Afrikaans as an official language in apartheid South Africa, Portuguese in colonial Mozambique, English in colonial Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, to mention a few. This is an example of an imposing and domineering policy, which by its nature aims at reducing people's welfare. A number of post-colonial governments in multilingual polities has also adopted this approach to language planning. Government sanctioned processes according to Moto (2009:3), can take two forms:

1. Direct intervention in altering functions of languages, for example what happened in South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi, to mention just a few.

This intervention can be positive or negative, for instance, President Kamuzu Banda's imposition of Chichewa in Malawi; Julius Nyerere's declaration of Swahili as the national language of Tanzania and apartheid South Africa's imposition of Afrikaans. The one advantage of government intervention though, is that where government intervenes, it normally legitimises.

2. Letting language matters take their own course.

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

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

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

Language policy and planning in Zimbabwe can be categorised into four phases. The pre-missionary era, which ended with the arrival of white missionaries in the late 1800s, was characterised by a peaceful co-existence of languages within the polity. Ethnic groups lived side by side, each using its ethnic language. There were also inter-ethnic interactions, particularly in trade. According to Makanda (2009) there were, however, fewer problems regarding which language to use since communities devised amicable methods of carrying out trade. Due to language contact, ethnic communities existing side by side could learn one another's language, use them where needed, but still maintain individual languages in their respective communities (Zvobgo 1996). The language policy during this period was therefore de facto, with communities using languages as a resource, with clear division of labour.

Early missionary work in what is now known as Zimbabwe preceded colonialism. Missionaries (the likes of Robert Moffat of the London Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodists, the Catholics, and others) first came to this area in the late 1800s, their main mission being evangelism. Evangelization was very difficult if not impossible because of language barriers. Two options were available: either the missionaries had to learn the local languages, or the local

people had to learn English. The missionaries chose both which resulted in the introduction of schools and consequently the reduction of the local languages to writing (Zvobgo 1996, Bourdillon 1990). The various missionary schools came up with different writing systems depending on their geographical area of operation. The missionaries in the then Southern Rhodesia did not operate mainly from one central point because of their different denominations and the different geographical locations where they operated from. Table 1 shows the different missionary groups and when and where they established their mission stations (based on Doke 1931).

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

Table 1: Established mission stations as per regional area.

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

In Matabeleland, the Ndebele orthography was to be used. This marked the genesis of the division of Zimbabwe into two blocks, the Shona and the Ndebele block. This also marked the beginning of the dominance of some ethnic languages and dialects by these two indigenous languages. Tonga, the language under study, is found in Matabeleland North Province. The Tonga people were therefore expected to learn using Ndebele.

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

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

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

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

5. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Participant composition

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

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

5.2 Goals for Tonga revitalisation

Data from the interviews points to the idea that when the Tonga Language Committee was formed, its main objective was to bring back Tonga into the education domain after it was banned from school soon after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of Rhodesia in 1965. Responses particularly from chiefs and parents indicate that they simply wanted their language in the classroom, but they did not know that their language had to go through certain linguistic developments for it to be used in the education domain. The agenda for revitalisation is also echoed in the Tonga Language and Cultural Committee and the Zimbabwe Indigenous Languages Promotion Association (TOLACCO-ZILPA) draft policy (See Annexure 1). The main objective for the TOLACCO-ZILPA draft policy was for the concerned languages to be visible in the education domain as both subjects and languages of learning and teaching (LOLT). However, for a language to be used in the school domain, it has to be standardised, but there is no mention or discussion of language planning goals in the draft policy. So, in terms of language planning goals, what can be deduced from the above objectives therefore, is that the language needed to be standardised, the writing system needed to be worked on since prior to the formation of TOLACCO, learning and teaching materials were sourced from Northern Rhodesia (Nyika 2008).

Interviews from social collaborators who worked with the Tonga community (Basilwizi, a non-governmental organisation, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Save the Children Fund UK) indicate that they realised that there was need for two things. There was need for ethnic language maintenance (ELM) in its broader sense. The first goal was to ensure the maintenance (and new acquisition) of the language within the Tonga community. There was also a need to lift the status and prestige of the language so that it would meet the requirements of the school domain. For this type of transformation to occur, extraordinary effort is required on the part of the local community (Kaplan & Baldauf Jr 1997). Therefore, language planning goals for Tonga in the HNC and school domain were language acquisition, maintenance and

standardisation. Such LP goals are achieved through status/prestige, acquisition and corpus planning.

5.3 Challenges to Tonga language revitalisation

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

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

Data from the current research show that generally challenges were encountered in seeking ideological consensus amongst community members on the need to revitalise. Various factors were identified but it was also noted that although diverse, these factors were not mutually exclusive. Table 1 below gives a summary of responses from various social actors on the challenges to revitalisation.

Participant Group	Responses
Chiefs	Activities were only supported by 6 out of 18 chiefs. Some chiefs claimed that they were not Tonga. Some chiefs wanted to be paid for taking part in the revitalisation processes. Some chiefs and community members were afraid of political reprisals. The chiefs and their communities had never been involved in language revitalisation before and therefore did not know what was required.
TOLACCO	Did not have money to fund revitalisation activities. Did not have expertise (lobbying advocates, resource writers, linguists). Had difficulties lobbying the community due to the hegemony of dominant languages, Ndebele and Shona.
Parents	Initially most community members were not aware of revitalisation activities going on. Some parents felt that Tonga was not adding any value to their lives and those of their children. Some parents were afraid of political reprisals.
Teachers	There were no teaching and learning resources to accommodate Tonga in the classroom. Examinations for all subjects except for Tonga as a language are in English and this was a problem for Tonga as a language of teaching and learning. Tonga speaking teachers accused non-Tonga

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

Table 1: Challenges encountered in the HNC domain-responses from various social actors

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

As the journey progressed, TOLACO realised the need to involve the community in the project. Gaining consensus on the need to revitalise was however made difficult by various factors. From a social perspective, the community had challenges concerning the issues of identity. Binga District has the highest number of chiefs in Zimbabwe, numbers that could have worked to their advantage in pushing forward the agenda for revitalisation. The strategy could have been to use the chiefs' influence in their respective areas for they were and still are the custodians of culture. Culture is expressed, partly, through language. Chiefs are also politically powerful as constituted in the New Traditional Leaders Act of 1999, Chapter 29(17). They

could have used their power to garner support from their respective communities. However, some chiefs claimed not to belong to the Tonga ethnic group and were therefore not concerned with the revitalisation of Tonga (Mumpande (2006). These chiefs did not support the process by encouraging people from their areas of jurisdiction to contribute towards the revitalisation efforts. Such chiefs' negative attitude towards revitalisation also made it difficult for ordinary community members to go against their chiefs and rally behind chiefs from other areas. Such a situation posed yet another challenge in that, chiefs from other areas could not reach out to people in another chief's area of jurisdiction.

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

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

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

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

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

Apart from challenges from chiefs, the young generation and teachers, a substantive number of parents also felt that Tonga was not doing them and their children any good. Muleya (2015) said that she was encouraging her children to use English at home because she wanted them to master the language so that they could go to big cities and get employed. Mastering English was seen as an avenue to a better life. Mrs Muleya was not the only parent in this category. Out of the 70 parents interviewed, 21 shared the same view. This meant that languages other than Tonga were invading even the home domain and some parents were encouraging it.

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

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

Therefore, the main LP goals within the HNC domain were language maintenance against threats from Shona, Ndebele and English. This was done through status/prestige language planning. The status/prestige bestowed upon a language in most cases determines the success of the revitalisation plan. However, the main difficulty was the lack of the ideology of authenticating the value of the language in its relationship to the Tonga community as a whole. O'Rourke (2015) emphasises that if social and territorial roots are absent, a linguistic variety can be seen to lack value. Tonga lacked roots within the community and that is why initially people could not rally behind its revitalisation .

5.3.2 Challenges in entering the school domain

In its quest for revitalisation, the Tonga Language Committee was not concerned with just the vitality and security of the Tonga language within the home-neighbourhood-community domain. They did not forget their quest to embark on extending their language in terms of domain use. Just like in the 'weak side' of reversing language shift, the advocates for Tonga development faced challenges in extending the domains for Tonga language use as indicated in Table 2 below.

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

| Learners | They did not want to be taught in Tonga. They wanted a language that would help them get jobs. |

Table 2: Challenges encountered in the school domain-responses from various social actors

TOLACCO revitalisation activities were halted at the height of Zimbabwe liberation war around 1978/9. After gaining independence, the government inherited the colonial language-in-education policy (Nyika 2008, Makoni et al. 2008). Due to its disappointment in the independent government, TOLACCO decided to revive its activities. It joined hands with language committees from the Venda and Kalanga minority languages and formed what was called the VETOKA committee in 1985. The aim was to ensure that their languages were taught in schools. This particular activity can be placed at stage 4 of Fishman's (1991) GIDS, which deals with the incorporation of Xish in the education system under 4a and 4b type of schools. The 4a type schools are run and controlled by minority language communities. They offer an environment that gives a great deal of parental involvement and support. This type of school would have been a perfect opportunity for RLS and a perfect opportunity for Tonga to thrive in the education system without competition or threat from the hegemonic tendencies of Shona, Ndebele and English. However, at this juncture, both TOLACCO and VETOKA committees were faced with a number of challenges. To begin with, the period between 1976 and when VETOKA was formed in 1985 was characterised by lack of community consensus on the ideological status of minority languages. The committees wanted to venture into higher domains before sorting in-house problems. Findings from interviews carried out show that the Tonga people had different perceptions and attitudes towards their language. They did not speak with the same voice in relations to the agenda of both TOLACCO and VETOKA. This was in violation of what Fishman calls directing attention to crucial issues or 'first things first'. It was crucial that they organise themselves first and then move with the same vision into higher domains.

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

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

As they continued lobbying government, the minoritised communities also realised that the other major constraint they were facing in the education sector was the lack of learning and teaching materials in their languages. The publishing houses in Zimbabwe during that time were not eager to publish learning and teaching materials in minority languages citing lack of viability because of the limited numbers in minority language speaker populations (Nyika

2007). This realisation led to the formation of the Venda, Tonga and Kalanga Publishing House known as VETOKA Publishing House in 1985. Its mandate was to ensure the publishing of learning and teaching materials in these three minority languages. Despite this effort, VETOKA did not last. Mumpande (2006) cites four factors that led to the failure of this publishing house. VETOKA failed to secure enough money to kick-start the project, as well as to sustain the running of the project. Mumpande (ibid) further argues that the people involved lacked the necessary advocacy and lobby skills to get people to write the books. As if this was not enough, the publishing house also suffered the loss of two of its leading members, Gwakuba Ndlovu, who left for Swaziland in search of greener pastures, and Malaba who passed away. According to one advocacy officer, VETOKA could have had time and dedication on their side, but they lacked finance and expertise. Without these two resources, revitalisation efforts were doomed.

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

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

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

In terms of human resources, personnel from the Binga District Education Office interviewed in 2014 indicated that finding teachers who were trained to teach Tonga as a subject and teach in Tonga posed difficulties. The majority of teachers in the district come from the dominant languages with few trained to teach in this language. Teacher deployment in Zimbabwe does not take into consideration the issue of language (Makoni 2008). Makoni argues that Ndebele-speaking teachers who are deployed in a predominantly Nambya or Tonga community to teach Grade 1 are not likely to be proficient enough to teach in these languages. Some teachers come with no Tonga competence at all, and with no intention of learning the language. It is against this backdrop that the various ministers of education could not authorise the teaching of Tonga as a subject, and in the medium of Tonga.

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

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

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

6. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE REVITALISATION OF TONGA

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

The basic lesson that can be learnt from this study is that initiatives for minoritised language revitalisation should come from communities themselves. Most governments, particularly in postcolonial Africa adopted the ideology of monolingualism based on the language of the colonisers. This defeats initiatives on linguistic diversity and multilingualism. The findings of this paper indicate that the revitalisation of Tonga owes its success to the support and commitment of the Tonga speech community towards initiatives meant for the development of their language. The success of community development projects depends on the willingness of the community itself in taking ownership of the project. It is crucial for community members to look at language issues from the same perspective and show commitment to what they believe in.

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

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

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

7. CONCLUSION

In brief, this article has discussed the challenges faced in the process of revitalising Tonga through the adoption of bottom-up approaches, focussing on the home-neighbourhood-community and the school domain. Although bottom-up approaches are feasible, the process is bedevilled by a number of challenges. Most minorised groups lack in Fishman's notion of self-sufficiency in various crucial areas of revitalisation. In Zimbabwe, most, if not all minoritised language communities are marginalised economically. As a result, their lack of financial muscle to fund revitalisation activities and the lack of language planning skills made it impossible for them to deal with revitalisation issues on their own. The hegemonic tendencies of Shona and Ndebele also make issues of ideological consensus difficult since some minoritised language speakers would rather identify with dominant language speakers at the expense of the

development of their language. There is therefore need to make people aware of the currency and value of minoritised languages if they are to appeal to the end users. The Zimbabwean national political ideology modelled around monolingualism also makes grass root initiatives difficult. Above all, minority language speakers have to deal with a government that is not sensitive to the needs of minority language communities. The onus is therefore upon the communities to rise up and do something for their languages. Where they lack, it is always advisable to collaborate with others. The insights drawn from this study's findings might be applicable to other minority language communities in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, for example, in respect of offering feasible alternatives to the challenges of micro-level language revitalisation with a view to preserving their unique identity and serving their language-related needs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The TOLACO- ZILPA draft policy

Interpretation of terms

In this section:

i)   Indigenous language means the following languages: Kalanga, Ndebele, Shona, Tonga, Sotho, Venda, Shangani and Nambya.

ii)   Area(s) means district(s)

1.   Subject to this section, the indigenous languages of Zimbabwe including Sign language and English shall be treated equally, taught and examined from the first grade to university provided that, in each area or part of the area, the dominant indigenous language and English shall be taught.

2.   The medium of instruction in any area or part of the area shall depend upon which indigenous language is more commonly spoken and understood by the majority of the pupils and shall be used in addition to the English language.

3.   All indigenous languages shall be taught as subjects on an equal time allocation basis as the English language.

4.   Subsection 4 of Section 62 of the Education Act is to be deleted

(Minutes of ZILPA meeting, 7 April 2001)

Appendix 2: Section 62 of the Education Act of 1987

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

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

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

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

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

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