

# The Lephephe Pans Khoisan Communities and Their Sociolinguistic Dynamics as Language Endangerment

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**Abstract.** The Lephephe Pans area of Botswana, located between the northern Kweneng District and southern Central District (coordinates 25.86 E-23.36 S), has long been home to the Eastern Kalahari Khoe speech communities, specifically the Kua, Cua, and Tsua groups, who speak languages forming a dialect continuum (Mathes, 2015; Chebanne, 2014). Over the past 200 years, significant encroachment by cattle-rearing Batswana people has dramatically altered the landscape and the way of life for the Eastern Kalahari Khoe. The arrival of these cattle herders led to overstocking, overgrazing, overpopulation, over-hunting, and the consequent decline of wildlife, which was vital to the sustenance of the Khoe people. As a result, the Eastern Kalahari Khoe were forced to adapt to a new mode of life, often working under the domination of Setswana-speaking cattle owners. This shift has had detrimental effects on their culture and languages. The current sociolinguistic situation in the Lephephe Pans region suggests a severe threat to the languages of the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities. Language attrition is evident, pointing to a state of language demise, making it unlikely that these languages will be spoken by the next generation. Although linguistic documentation efforts by linguists are ongoing, these are likely to serve scientific purposes rather than achieve language revitalization. The remaining fragments of these languages already show signs of shedding lexical and grammatical features, with the next stage expected to be a complete language shift to Setswana, leading ultimately to the disappearance of these languages.

**Keywords:** Khoisan Languages, Eastern Kalahari, Marginalization, Endangered Languages, Botswana Language Policy

**Languages:** Kua, Cua, Tsua

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Khoisan (or San, as some researchers in Botswana refer to them) languages are spoken around the Lephephe Pans in Central Eastern Botswana are Kua, Cua, and Tsua (Chebanne, 2014; Chebanne, 2020). Current research by Andy Chebanne, Christopher Collins, and Tim Mathes indicates that these languages are closely related and might be mutually intelligible. Classification work by Snyman 2000 and Vossen 1988 supports this relationship. Socio-linguistic and rural development surveys by Cassidy et al. 2001 and Hasselbring (2000, 2001) estimate that up to 10,000 people ethnically associate with this language cluster. However, recent surveys by Chebanne, Collins, Mathes (Chebanne and Dlaki, 2021; Mathes, 2015), and Mogara et al. 2017 reveal that there may be fewer than 1,000 fluent speakers scattered across a vast area of eastern Botswana. Additionally, there are no systematic recordings of the indigenous knowledge systems or formal orthography conventions for these languages.

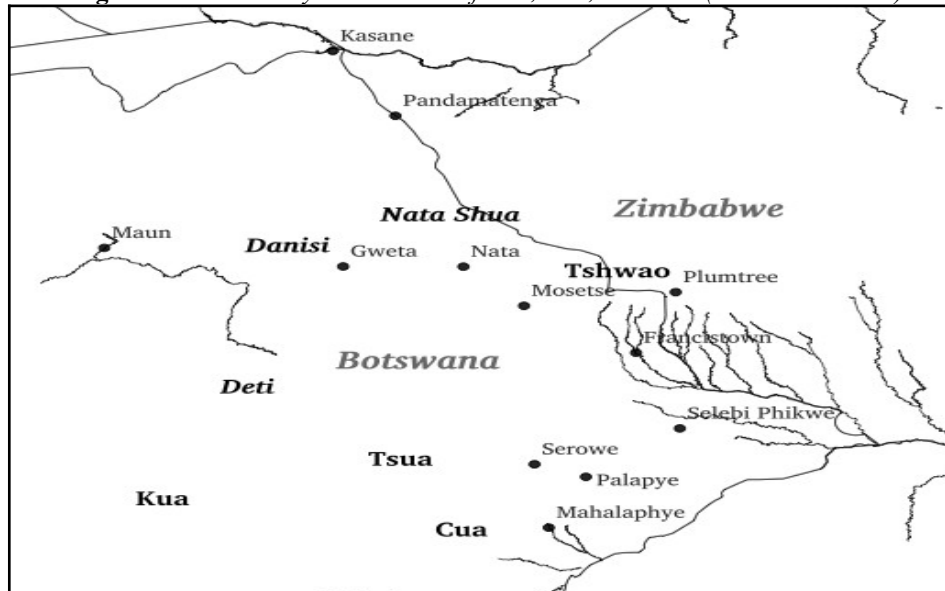
However, as is the case with many other small languages in the region, the Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages are under intense pressure from the nationally dominant language, Setswana (Chebanne, 2020; Chebanne and Dlaki, 2019a & b; Batibo, 2015a & b). This pressure has affected their patterns of language use, language attitudes, and their transmission to younger generations. Chebanne and Dlaki 2021 discussed the dangers these communities face when their small numbers and the negative attitudes of their youth towards these languages contribute to their decline. Like other Khoisan languages, Kua, Cua, and Tsua have been observed to lose clicks (Chebanne, 2022; Chebanne, 2014). This loss typically occurs in contact situations where these speech communities come under gradual domination, leading to cultural assimilation. In earlier studies, Traill and Vossen (1997) accounted for processes of click retention, replacement, and loss, proposing a specific order in which click loss occurs.

- | → l the dental click is always retained
- ! → k the alveolar-palatal click is replaced by the velar plosive
- || → ll the lateral click is always retained
- ‡ → c the palatal click is replaced by the palatal fricative

Since clicks are associated with the acoustic features of being abrupt, noisy, grave, and acute, these characteristics influence their phonetic status in the phonology of a language (Chebanne, 2014). In linguistic contact situations, clicks such as the palatal and alveolar are the first targets for loss, as shown in example (1). Currently, the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities are sandwiched between the Bakwena and Bangwato Setswana-speaking groups, who dominate them culturally and linguistically (Chebanne and Dlaki, 2019a; Chebanne and Dlaki 2019b; Mathes, 2015). Map 1 illustrates

the location of these three Khoisan speech communities in Eastern Botswana.

**Figure 1: Present-Day Distribution of Kua, Cua, and Tsua (Chebanne 2022a)**



This paper aims to first report on the sociolinguistic situation of the minor languages Kua, Cua, and Tsua spoken in the east-central region of Botswana, and around the Lephephe Pans. Secondly, it investigates the degree and extent of endangerment of these languages, using Kua, Cua, and Tsua as a case study to illustrate how minority languages in Botswana, the region, and other parts of Africa are being marginalized and critically endangered. Thirdly, the article accounts for the level of marginalization of Kua, Cua, and Tsua and examines how the current sociolinguistic situation poses a serious threat to their survival. The study assumes that if these languages are critically endangered, they will no longer be spoken by child-bearing adults and will only be found in restricted domains of language use, such as home use by the elderly, cultural activities, and special gatherings like funerals, weddings, and indigenous healing ceremonies involving older people. Moreover, the number of these speakers is progressively diminishing with the passing of the older generation, as shown in the research by Chebanne and Dlali 2021.

The point that the discussion will make is that the Eastern Kalahari Khoe speech communities of the Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages have historically and currently faced negative social attitudes from Setswana language speakers who found them in the region (Chebanne, 2020). Traditionally coming from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, they are among the poorest in the country (Chebanne and Dlali, 2019b). As hunter-gatherers and Khoisan, they are susceptible to negative socio-economic relations and consequently victims of forced cultural and language assimilation (Batibo,

2010; Chebanne, 2010). The small demographic figures that characterize these speech communities also leave them helpless under the imposing influence of other language groups (Batibo and Chebanne, 2020). Therefore, they are precisely qualified as endangered languages.

## **2.0 Linguistic Research on Khoisan in Botswana**

There are few studies on the Lephephe Pans' languages due to their small numbers and the fact that in Botswana, they are generally lumped together as San (Khoisan). Their linguistic identities are overlooked, and they are often subsumed under the main Setswana-speaking groups such as the Bangwato and Bakwena (Chebanne, 2020). Recent documentations by Chebanne and Dlaki (2019a, 2019b) and Mathes 2015 indicate that the Kua, Cua, and Tsua populations are under serious threat, with the languages spoken fluently primarily by elderly people aged 60 and above. Those below 60 have lost much of the grammar and vocabulary and can remember only a little. These languages are no longer being passed on to the younger generation. Therefore, the assumption is that Kua, Cua, and Tsua are highly endangered languages that will not survive into the next generation, given the age and declining number of fluent speakers.

Research on Khoisan languages in Botswana reveals that the problem of language shift and language death is particularly critical for many Khoisan speech communities (Chebanne and Dlaki, 2021a; Chebanne and Dlaki 2017b; Chebanne and Dlaki, 2019; Mathes, 2015; Mogara et al., 2017). According to Batibo (2005a: 155), only 15.8% of the languages in Africa are "relatively safe" due to their status, prestige, and demographic standing, while the remaining 84.2% are either severely or moderately endangered. Brenzinger and Batibo 2010 observed that more than 10% of African languages will become extinct within the next few generations. Sommer 1992, in a continent-wide survey, found that at least 200 languages were either completely extinct or in a critical state. Chebanne 2010 demonstrated that Khoisan communities are undergoing significant loss of their languages and cultural ethnic identities.

The research undertaken by Chebanne (2020, 2018) and Batibo (2015a & b) highlight the challenges faced by minority languages, particularly those of the Khoisan groups. The primary issue is not the existence of these languages but their lack of status in state language policies, which threatens their survival (Chebanne, 2020). Historically and socio-economically disadvantaged, these languages continue to suffer from neglect (Chebanne, 2010). Negative attitudes from dominant groups have further marginalized Khoisan languages and cultures, resulting in linguistic and cultural hegemony (Khoisan). This marginalization leads to the discarding of Khoisan communities' linguistic and cultural values, forcing them to assimilate into the lifestyles of dominant ethnic groups. This assimilation poses a threat to their identity and existence as distinct speech

and cultural communities (Batibo, 2015a & b; Chebanne, 2012, 2015, 2010; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002).

### **3.0 Data Collection and Research Methodology**

Collins and Chebanne from 2014 to 2016 (Chebanne, 2018). Chebanne continued to focus on the grammar and lexicon of these languages from 2014 to 2020 (Chebanne, 2022a). A sociolinguistic survey was carried out between 2013 and 2018 by a team of researchers led by Andy Chebanne and Budzani Mogara (Mogara et al., 2017). The survey employed a snowballing technique to identify speakers or their relatives and was funded by the Office of Research and Development (ORD) at the University of Botswana. Data obtained from this research project, conducted between 2013 and 2015, has formed the basis for discussing the marginalization and endangerment of these languages, which Chris Collins, in collaboration with Andy Chebanne, is currently documenting (Chebanne, 2020; 2010; 2014).

To determine the level of vitality and continued use of languages within these communities, the authors of this chapter utilized data from the 2014-2015 research project, as well as from studies by Chebanne and Dlali 2021 and Chebanne 2018. This investigation focused on the age of informants still proficient in the language, patterns of language use within the Lephephe Khoisan community, levels of language attitudes, the extent of language transmission to younger generations, cultural activities and names associated with the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities of the Lephephe Pans, and whether people preferred to be identified as Kua, Cua, Tsua, or Khoisan (Basarwa) (Chebanne, 2020). The data collection was limited to the Lephephe area of Botswana, where these linguistic continuums of Kua, Cua, and Tsua are found. The scope was also constrained to recent research due to the absence of historical records on these languages. In Botswana, the term "Khoisan" often presents a vague understanding, as it assumes the languages are a single entity, while in reality, there are three distinct language families within the Botswana Khoisan languages (Chebanne, 2020).

### **4.0 Theoretical Framework**

To systematically and critically analyze the data, the Marked Bilingualism model was employed to assess the sociolinguistic situation of the Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages of the Lephephe Pans (Batibo & Chebanne, 2020). These languages face socio-political, economic, and demographic imbalances with Setswana, the dominant national language, which exerts intense pressure on the Kua, Cua, and Tsua speech communities (Batibo & Chebanne, 2020; Batibo, 2005a & b). According to the Marked Bilingualism model, when two languages of unequal strength come into contact, a pressure-resistance relationship arises (Batibo & Chebanne,

2020). Speakers of the Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages typically learn the stronger language, Setswana, to become bilingual (Batibo & Chebanne, 2020; Batibo, 2005a & b). The imbalance in strength between the language groups in contact has made this model to be known as the 'Marked Bilingualism model' (Batibo & Chebanne, 2020). The theory posits that language shift occurs due to weak resistance to a stronger language or an unconditional willingness by speakers to adopt the dominant language for specific socio-economic benefits (Batibo, 2015a & b; 2004). With the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities losing resistance, their languages face endangerment and eventual extinction (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998).

This model was found relevant to our paper, given that Kua, Cua, and Tsua were in a situation of socio-political, economic, and demographic imbalance with Setswana, the dominant national language. Setswana exerted intense pressure on these languages while simultaneously attracting the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities with its socio-economic advantages, such as wider use, access to education and job opportunities, social prestige, and use in higher domains. Furthermore, Setswana was the language used by the cattle owners on whose farms the Kua, Cua, and Tsua people worked. This situation led the Kua, Cua, and Tsua people to prefer Setswana, often looking down upon their ethnic languages and cultures. Consequently, language endangerment became imminent, as there was a net loss of resistance within the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities.

## **5.0 Discussion on the Current State of Kua, Cua, and Tsua**

### **5.1 *Linguistic Knowledge and Use***

Research by Mathes 2015 and Chebanne and Dlali 2019 studied the proficiency of speakers of Kua, Cua, and Tsua, presenting fluency determinations by age groups. Documentation work by Collins and Chebanne also assessed speakers' fluency in providing linguistic data (Chebanne, 2014; Mogara and Batibo, 2016). Results from various sources revealed that language knowledge and use among the Kua, Cua, and Tsua people varied significantly (Chebanne and Dlali, 2019; Chebanne, 2018). The older generations, particularly those in their late 60s, were fluent in these languages. Three categories of people were identified: the old (60 years and above), the middle-aged (40 to 59 years), and the young (20 to 39 years). The level of proficiency of these three groups in Kua, Cua, and Tsua is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Informants' Reported Proficiency in Kua, Cua, and Tsua**

Level of Proficiency	Age		
	20-39	40-59	60+
Fluent	0.00%	32.6%	90.10%
Limited Knowledge	7.10%	53.2%	6.20%
Understands Only Some Words	25.2%	14.2%	3.70%
No Knowledge	67.7%	0.00%	0.00%

From the results in Table 1, the following observations were made: First, most young people under the age of 39 had either no knowledge of Kua, Cua, and Tsua or very limited knowledge, primarily only being able to pick up a few words. Most of them were proficient only in Setswana, which they had acquired at home and used in all their daily activities. Additionally, the younger generation was also able to communicate in English.

Elderly people over the age of sixty (60), were generally fluent in Kua, Cua, and Tsua. According to our sample, over ninety percent (90%) spoke these languages fluently at home and in settlement activities. In contrast, only about one-third (32.6%) of middle-aged adults claimed to be fluent in Kua, Cua, and Tsua, while the rest had limited knowledge or only understood some words. It appears that, although most members of this group are of child-bearing age, they have not been very active in transmitting their languages to the younger generation, either due to their limited knowledge or because they no longer saw value in them. This lack of transmission explains the low level of language knowledge among the youth. Consequently, these languages are at risk of extinction once the older generation passes, as the younger generations do not speak them.

## **5.2 Domains of Language Usage**

Whilst Kua, Cua, and Tsua are still spoken by the elderly, the speech is limited in terms of language use domains. According to the research findings, the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities had a repertoire of two main languages: their indigenous ethnic languages (Kua, Cua, and Tsua) and Setswana, the national and widely used language of Botswana. Young people were fluent in Setswana and used it for most of their daily activities. Conversely, the older and some middle-aged individuals used Kua, Cua, and Tsua at home and during social and cultural gatherings, but they predominantly used Setswana in communal or official interactions. Table 2 below shows the domains in which Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages are used in their communities, illustrating similar patterns of language use in these domains.

**Table 2: Domains of Usage of Kua, Cua, and Tsua**

Domain of Usage / Interaction Type	20-39	40-59	60+
speaking to siblings	0.00%	14.50%	88.20%
speaking to parents	5.60%	42.70%	93.20%
speaking to children	0.00%	7.60%	10.70%
interacting in settlement	0.00%	9.10%	15.80%
interacting at the shop, clinic, church, etc.	0.00%	0.00%	9.20%
speaking at Kgotla (Ward) meetings	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
writing messages	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

The table suggests that Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages are primarily used in specific social and cultural contexts, particularly among older adults when discussing matters of tradition. These languages are not commonly used for communication with younger generations or in public and official settings. Instead, Setswana dominates these spheres, being the primary language for home communication, interactions with younger people, and all settlement and official matters. It is the language used at Kgotla (Ward) meetings and for written communication. Despite the linguistic continuum that makes Kua, Cua, and Tsua mutually comprehensible, speakers of these languages do not use them interchangeably. For example, a Kua speaker will not use Kua to communicate with Cua or Tsua speakers, and vice versa.

### 5.3 Community Attitudes

One important observation in marked bilingualism model is the way language shift occurs as a consequence of negative attitudes. The study explored language attitudes within the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities, as these attitudes often reflect how an ethnic group desires not to maintain and use their language. Informants were asked about their preferred languages for speaking and teaching their children, as well as their preferences for using these languages in various contexts. The responses, highlighted in Table 3, reveal the community members' tendencies and preferences regarding language use, shedding light on their commitment to preserving their linguistic heritage amidst the dominance of Setswana in public and official domains.

**Table 3: Informants' Preferred Domain(s) for Kua, Cua, and Tsua**

Preferred Domain(s) of Kua, Cua, and Tsua	Only L1	L1 + Setswana	Setswana + English
as a language of the home	48.30%	31.70%	20.00%
as a language in the settlement	38.30%	35.00%	26.70%
as the language of instruction in school	16.70%	36.70%	46.60%
as the language of radio broadcasting	60.10%	20.20%	19.70%
as the language on television shows	10.00%	59.80%	30.20%
as the language of Kgotla community meetings	56.7	26.6	16.7
as the language of official dealings	16.7	36.6	46.7



Firstly, as it can be observed, informants expressed a preference for using Kua, Cua, and Tsua not only at home but also within the broader community, as they believed this would help preserve the languages and cultures, enhancing their identity and self-esteem. Many, especially the older generation, were unhappy with the idea of their languages and cultures being "swallowed" by another language. However, some informants advocated for using Kua, Cua, and Tsua alongside Setswana, recognizing the socio-economic opportunities associated with Setswana. Conversely, a segment of both young and old informants opposed the use of Kua, Cua, and Tsua beyond home settings, viewing them as limited and insufficient for social advancement.

Secondly, although the majority of informants preferred Setswana and English to remain the media of communication in schools, a significant number expressed a desire for Kua, Cua, and Tsua to be used either alone or alongside Setswana. This preference indicates that the community, as a whole, values mother-tongue education and would like to see it implemented, even in situations where children's proficiency in these languages is nearly non-existent.

Thirdly, many informants wanted Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages and cultures to be broadcasted on the radio. They believed this would foster positive attitudes towards their languages and demonstrate their importance alongside Setswana, thereby boosting the community's image and self-esteem. While many were aware of radio programs featuring music, performances, and cultural activities of various ethnic groups, very few informants desired to see Kua, Cua, and Tsua used on national television shows.

Fourthly, although Setswana is the usual language for *Kgotla* (Ward) meetings in the country, many informants wanted Kua, Cua, and Tsua to be used, either alone or alongside Setswana. This preference demonstrates their desire for their own languages to be mediums of communication at the *Kgotla*, as it would bring them closer to their culture and way of life and enable a clearer understanding of the issues being discussed, particularly for the older generation.

Fifthly, most informants preferred Setswana and English to remain the languages for official dealings. This preference is likely due to the diverse ethnic backgrounds of staff in government offices and the fact that most official documents are written in English or Setswana.

#### ***5.4 Identity Preservation***

As the final aspect of investigating the vitality of Cua and Tsua, the authors examined the degree of ethnic identity by considering key identity features: linguistic identity, cultural identity, autonymic identity, and ethnonymic identity. They aimed to determine how committed the Cua and Tsua communities were to preserving their uniqueness as ethnic groups.

Informants responded to several questions related to ethnic identity, and their responses are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4:** *Kua, Cua, and Tsua Identity Preservation*

Participants who would like...	Age		
	20-39	40-59	60+
...their languages to be preserved.	8.4	75.0	36.6
...their culture and traditions to be revived.	24.6	66.7	77.8
...their children to be given ethnic names.	15%	91.7	94.4
...to be given ethnic names.	8.3	18.2	5.6
...to be identified as Kua, Cua, and Tsua/San.	54.3	92.1	79.7

As shown in Table 4, the informants in the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities had mixed feelings about preserving their identity. They faced a dilemma in trying to maintain their unique identity in a situation where it seemed nearly impossible to reverse the changes. The older generation was particularly keen on preserving their linguistic and cultural identity, aiming to revive the use of their languages, customs, traditions, songs, and rituals to safeguard their history and social practices, as noted by Chebanne (2010; 2014) in other Khoisan sociolinguistic contexts. However, the younger generation largely believed this was no longer feasible, given the dominance of Setswana language and culture, which offered significant socio-economic benefits, including broader communication, access to education, and engagement with national affairs.

The older generation prefers Kua, Cua, and Tsua children to have ethnic names to preserve their history and ethnic roots, while the younger generation favors Setswana and English names for easier acceptance in interactions with other ethnic communities and simplicity for teachers in pronunciation and writing. Despite this, the informants themselves are mostly reluctant to adopt Kua, Cua, and Tsua names because they are already known by their Setswana names and do not wish to change their established autonymic identity. This highlights a generational divide between the desire to maintain cultural heritage and the practical need for social integration and convenience.

In spite of the negative attitudes toward the Kua, Cua, and Tsua, informants were notably proud to identify as Kua, Cua, Tsua, or San (Mosarwa). They emphasized the importance of declaring their ethnic identity as a form of ethnic pride and self-esteem, despite having lost much of their language and culture. This response aligns with findings from previous studies in other Khoisan communities, such as Batibo 2005b in the #Hoan community, Batibo (2015 a & b) in the south-central Khoisan area, Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000 in the Makgadikgadi Pans Khoe communities, Mogara et al. 2017 in North Eastern Botswana, and Mogara and Batibo 2016 among Khoisan youth in Botswana. These highly endangered communities recognize that after losing their linguistic, cultural, and autonymic identities, their ethnonymic identity is their last stronghold

before being wholly absorbed into the dominant Setswana-speaking society. Unfortunately, the Kua, Cua, and Tsua have reached a stage where their languages are no longer passed down to younger generations, as observed by Chebanne and Dlali 2021.

## **6.0 Other Contributing Sociolinguistic Factors**

The dwindling numbers of speakers has tragic consequences for these speech communities as they can no longer vibrantly speak their languages. The Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages are therefore critically endangered, as they are no longer transmitted to younger generations, are limited to restricted domains of use, and are generally viewed negatively by their own speakers despite a desire to preserve them. This situation results from several factors, including the national language policy (Chebanne and Kewagamang, 2020; Chebanne, 2022; Chebanne and Dlali, 2021), which only recognizes English and Setswana, excluding other Botswana languages from public roles. This policy has led speakers to perceive their languages as useless, lacking socio-political or economic value. Additionally, the small population size of the Kua, Cua, and Tsua communities has made their languages vulnerable, as they are overwhelmed by the dominant and pervasive Setswana language.

The Kua, Cua, and Tsua languages are marginalized due to a historical legacy of cultural and economic subjugation that has fostered negative attitudes towards Khoisan languages and culture (Mogara et al., 2017). Traditionally considered socially inferior by pastoralist-farming groups such as Bantu speakers, the hunter-gatherer Khoisan communities have often abandoned their languages or shed linguistic peculiarities like clicks (Chebanne and Nthapelelang, 2000; Vossen, 1997). According to Batibo (2005 a & b), these languages are fighting a losing battle, further exacerbated by the hegemonic pressure from Setswana-speaking groups (Chebanne, 2020). Batibo 2015 also noted patterns of identity loss due to assimilation into the dominant Batswana society during trans-cultural contact with Setswana speakers.

## **7.0 Possible Measures Against Language Loss**

Language loss in Africa is wide spread as reported by Batibo ((2005a; Batibo, 2010). Given the advanced stage of endangerment that Kua, Cua, and Tsua have reached, language maintenance measures alone are insufficient, as these measures are typically applied to relatively vital languages (Auburger, 1990). To revitalize these languages, authoritative support is crucial, necessitating government intervention or active input from benevolent organizations. This process requires extensive documentation, codification, literacy development, and the active teaching and writing of the languages, similar to the successful revival efforts seen

with Modern Hebrew (Fishman, 1991: 291) and Maori (Bobaljik et al., 1996).

Without a change in government policy and support or other tangible efforts, the situation of Kua, Cua, and Tsua, like other similar cases in Botswana and the region, will remain dire. These languages are on their deathbed, and their imminent demise seems inevitable (Chebanne, 2022; Batibo, 2010; Batibo, 2005a). However, linguists from the region and beyond could salvage the linguistic data contained in these languages through extensive research. It is encouraging that a number of scholars have embarked on documentation and descriptive studies of Kua, Cua, and Tsua. Notable efforts include the ongoing work of Chris Collins and Andy Chebanne on Kua grammar and lexicon, and the area surveys by Antony Traill and Vossen 1997 examining click sound losses in these languages.

Urgent documentation work is needed for the language, culture, and literary expressions of Kua, Cua, and Tsua, as these languages are uniquely rich in these areas. Active codification, including the preparation of teaching and reading materials, would be beneficial in helping the youth learn their languages and cultures, similar to the successful efforts for Naro (Visser, 2000). However, the success of such efforts depends heavily on the socio-economic and cultural value associated with the use of Kua, Cua, and Tsua, underscoring the need for a drastic change in the current national language policy (Chebanne, 2022). Fortunately, a change appears likely in the foreseeable future, as the government has introduced a draft languages policy in education that is more inclusive. Some minority languages are already being used as mediums of instruction in certain schools, which is a significant step forward for these languages. This policy change could prevent the extinction of Kua, Cua, and Tsua (Chebanne and Kewagamang, 2020). However, as these languages are in the process of being lost, there are also other linguistic changes occurring within them, as reported by Chebanne 2014 and Chebanne and Dlali 2021.

The process of language endangerment in Africa is uniquely characterized by the fact that the "killer" languages are not colonial or settler languages like English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, as seen in America, Australia, and East Asia. Instead, the primary threats to African languages are the dominant indigenous languages, particularly those that have acquired national status and prestige or that predominate in certain regions of a country. These dominant languages marginalize smaller or minority languages through their socio-economic and demographic hegemony (Chebanne, 2015; 2020; Batibo, 2015 a). As a result, Khoisan communities are fighting a losing battle (Batibo, 2005 a & b), and the loss of their languages has been occurring for over a decade (Batibo, 2015). This dynamic, as pointed out by Grenoble and Whaley 1998, Mufwene (2002; 2005), and Crystal 2000, highlights a distinct pattern of language endangerment on the African continent.

## 8.0 Conclusion

The case of Kua, Cua, and Tsua is typical of many other marginalized languages in Botswana, the region, and Africa as a whole. These languages are vulnerable due to several factors: their historical legacy, small number of speakers, lack of association with tangible socio-economic gains, negative attitudes from their communities, and, most importantly, the absence of governmental support (Chebanne, 2002; 2010; Nyathi-Ramahobo, 2000; 2004; Visser, 2000). Indeed, the situation of marginalized languages in Africa has been exacerbated by the promotion of major languages as national, official, or provincial languages, which has solidified their hegemony. In the current language situation, major languages exert neo-colonial hegemony on minority languages. Notwithstanding, elsewhere, it is encouraging to see countries like Zimbabwe and Mozambique revising their national language policies to grant public roles to minority languages, thereby enhancing their vibrancy and significance. Botswana has also made progress by revising its language policy to include minority languages, leading to the introduction of mother tongue literacy in some schools. This policy shift helps to make minority languages more vibrant, boosts the self-esteem of their speakers, and underscores their utility. It is hoped that more countries will adopt similar measures to support and revitalize their minority languages.

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