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Shifting identities in Eastern Khoe: ethnic and language endangerment

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Historically the Boteti River valley and the Sua (or Makgadikgadi) Pans and its surroundings have been home for the Khoe people for thousands of years. However, in the last century alone there have been involuntary movements which have either scattered them or brought them into foster communities. These movements have resulted in the neutralisation of some of the linguistic diversity observed by early travellers and linguists. Before these social and linguistic transformations, however, the Khoe were characterised by small semi-nomadic communities which lived on hunting and gathering, and kept little livestock. This mode of life was mainly based on the availability of game and wild plants in the Makgadikgadi Pans area. This paper examines the current ethnic and linguistic situation of these communities and also attempts to show why they have shifted and why there is a real danger to the survival of these people as ethnic and linguistic entities. It also suggests practical steps in responding to the threat of ethnic extinction of the Eastern Khoe.

This position paper attempts to account for the socio-history, socio-linguistics, and language dynamics of the Eastern Khoe languages. These languages are found scattered in and around the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans in north-eastern central Botswana. Preliminary accounts of these languages (Vossen 1997, Chebanne 1998, Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000) suggest that they are seriously endangered due to various social- and historical processes (Barnard 1992, Saugestad 2001). This discussion will attempt to examine the ethnic socio-linguistic framework of the Khoe situation within a post-modernist interpretation of the Botswana language and culture policies which contribute significantly to the endangerment of the Eastern Khoe languages.

A historical perspective on Eastern Khoe ethnicity

The main languages of Eastern Khoe are Kua, Tshwa and Shua. (Grimes and Grimes Ethnologue 13th Edition 2000). These languages belong to the generally agreed Khoe and San language family (Schapera 1989, Vossen 1988). There are about 20 speech communities of this family in Botswana making up 4% of the national population of 1.5 million (Vossen 1997). Eastern Khoe languages are spoken mainly around the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans, but are also found widely spread towards the Shashe river, Serule, and Mabesekwa areas in eastern Botswana, and even farther, towards Serowe and Shoshong (Barnard 1992). There are fundamental dialectal differences among the languages spoken in these geographical places and in certain areas there are even some overlaps of dialectal tendencies (Chebanne 1998). For instance, in Mokubilo, there are more than two dialectal tendencies: the Nata Xhaise (||haise) (or Haietshware or again Xhaiechware) belongs to the Shua, and the Cire-Cire belongs to the Tshua (or Cua). Some Mabesekwa-Serule dialectal features may also be attested (Dornan 1917: 56), and these are clearly Kua. These dialectal features are not fundamental since they concern mainly a few lexical terms, some vowel differences, and some rare expressions and syntactic presentations. In all accounts, there is mutual intelligibility among these dialects. Although it is very difficult to determine the central form or the main dialect, the Nata dialect seems to be more stable (Chebanne 2002). The explanation is geographical since until very recently the Nata area, because of malaria

(Dornan 1917: 51) and some devastating livestock diseases, did not attract the main Bantu groups.

Dornan (1917) suggests that the Tati Bushmen were most probably related to the Cua or Tshwa (or Cire-Cire). Also Dornan mentions having been in contact with the Nata Bushmen, whom we now know are Shua. Dornan's account presents the earliest record of Eastern Khoe. But there are fundamental grammatical and phonological differences between recent data on Eastern Khoe (examples from Tshua and Shua) and that of Dornan, particularly regarding clicks, the syntax, and some lexical items (Chebanne, 1998). For instance Dornan (1917: 62) accounted for four clicks (|, !, ||, ≠), but recent data only report two distinctive clicks (|, ||) (Chebanne 2000). The ≠ click is attested in the northern dialects of Shua and accounts for a very tiny percentage in the lexicon. The only consonantal accompaniment attested with clicks in these languages is the velar release, and this assumes that voicing aspiration and nasalization are non-consonantal accompaniments.

There must have been some inter-Khoe influence and the intra-Khoe dialectological diffusion since the 1930's which resulted in the disappearance of the ethnic and linguistic diversity mentioned in Grimes and Grimes (Ethnologue 13th Edition 2000). What now remains are some Khoe ethnonyms and glossonyms (i.e. names of ethnic and language groups) which remind one of the situation of some few decades ago (Ethnologue 13th Edition 2000). Almost all the communities have lost the hunter-gatherer habits and have taken employment as cattle herders and agricultural helpers (Gadibolae 1993).

The Khoe are no longer a majority in the area of their historical habitat (Barnard 1992, Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). In a period of some few hundreds of years they were encroached upon by the Wayeyi, Bakalanga-Nambya, and Bakhurutse. Later the Bangwato-Batawana dominated the area, and most importantly caused much Khoe movement in the areas because of their pastoral farming habits and the system of drawing "unpaid pastoral labourers" (Gadibolae 1993) from the Khoe. The process of assimilation therefore took a linguistic toll as the Khoe adopted the language of the pastoral masters and their dialectal characteristics became rather confused. Only octogenarians can still vaguely remember the characteristic differences between the different speech communities (Chebanne, 2000).

Dialects and languages and ethnic clusters: the current situation

According to Andersson and Janson (1997) the area designated here as Eastern Khoe comprises the Khoe communities of Shua (/Xhaise, Deti, Cara, Ts'ixa, Danisi) and Tshwa (comprising the Tshwa, Kua, Tshuwau, and Haitshware). The Grimes, Ethnologue (2000, 13th edition) gives yet another classification: these are the Gabake-ntshori (G//abake or G//abake-Ntshori or Hiechware or Chuware); the Ganade (Ganadi); the Hiechware (Chware or Tshwa or Cua); the Hiotshuwau (Tyuu or Hiochuwau); the Kossee (Kossee-Ntshori); the Kwe-Etshori (Kwee); Shua (Shua-Kwe or Tshumakwe). There are two main problems with these classifications. The first is that spelling differences result in languages being given two names. The second is that the surveys made are based on conflicting assumptions that a) these are languages where lexical data will show that these are dialects, or b) these are dialects where again data will show that they are variations within the same language.

In view of the nominal diversity of languages in the Eastern Khoe area, the first task that was undertaken by Chebanne and Nthapelelang in their study of 2000 was to conduct a socio-linguistic survey limited to people aged 70 years and above to address the following:

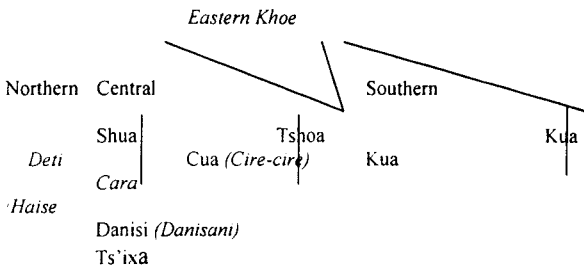
- the name of the speech community (current and past);
- the vitality of the language (who spoke it, in what situations, etc);
- the name of neighboring speech communities;
- the ethnic composition of the speech community;

- the linguistic characteristic of the speech community (what they thought made them linguistically different from other speech communities);
- instances of bi- or multilingualism;
- the name of historical places inhabited by the speech community and its neighbors;
- the social habits / activities of the speech community.

From these elderly informants, the study was able to establish that the Boteti and the Makgadikgadi Basin were historical places for various Khoe communities. The names of historical speech communities that readily came to their memories were:

- Šua Khoe (or Shua Khoe, mainly inhabiting the salt pans of Makgadikgadi);
- Chum Khoe (mainly inhabiting the Boteti river valley also called by their neighbors, Deti Khoe (Deti is a Shua language). Some speakers referred to themselves as Cua and Kua);
- /Hai Khoe (mainly inhabiting the Dzoroga – Gweta areas, otherwise very close to /Haise)– this language was reported to be a Shua language;
- /Haise (mainly inhabiting the Nata and Mancotae areas) – this language was also reported to be belonging to Shua;
- Danisana ((or Danasani) inhabiting the northern plains towards the Mababe Depressions– this language was also reported to be belonging to Shua. However, other elderly people thought it belonged to the north, implying affinity with Ganadi);
- Cire-cire (inhabiting the southern bushy areas of the Makgadikgadi - this speech community was reported to be belonging to Cua (Tshwa) language);
- //Goro Khoe (reportedly from the Mopipi area, but most possibly a variant of Deti, a Shua language).
- Cara Khoe (inhabiting the area from the Boteti mouth into the Makgadikgadi--informants reported that this language was very close to /Hai Khoe, a Shua language)

This confirms what other studies (Vossen 1997, 1988) have suggested, and how one could approach the dialectology of Eastern Khoe. Some further socio-linguistic surveys by Hasselbring (2001) and some historical and linguistic studies by Andersson and Janson (Barnard 1992, 1997) and Vossen (1997) also corroborate the assumption made here that there are three main languages in the Eastern Khoe: Shua, Kua, and Tshoa (Tshwa or Cua), and also that most of the speech communities indicated in the region of the Makgadikgadi and the surroundings are essentially dialects of these main languages. The diagram below summarizes the discussion about the ethnic and linguistic classification of Eastern Khoe languages.



Deti, Cara, and /Haie are put in italics to conventionally represent them as immediate dialects of Shua, while Danisi (or Danisana) and Ts'ixa are in the normal type to indicate that in the dialectology they are rather considered as having evolved away from other Shua

speech communities presently, as they are believed to be rather peculiar in relation to the rest of the Shua. Actually, Danisi, as the most northern dialect of Shua has more features of Western Khoe (Ganadi) than any other Shua language. Ts'ixa has taken or continues taking many lexical and phonological features from Central Khoe (such as //Gana) because of its vicinity to these Khoe languages (Hasselbring 2001, Cashdan 1999). Kua is left without a dialectal label under it for the reason that this language needs further surveys to determine its situation. As the most southern Eastern Khoe speech community, and spoken on a wider area, from around Serule to beyond Shoshong, there may be important dialectal differences than are observed in the rest of the Eastern Khoe.

Because the Eastern Khoe languages are closely related, and indeed demonstrate high levels of mutual intelligibility as shown in the table below, there is generally acceptability of dialectal varieties. So that even though the grammatical models of these speech communities varied, with the grammatical structures presenting VOS, OVS, OSV and SOV, these variations of the basic word order may well be just the individual speech community preferences on focalization or topicalization (Chebanne, 2000). The lexical inputs are comparatively higher and allow for mutual intelligibility.

The lexicostatistics which was prepared using comparative Eastern Khoe vocabulary and grammatical structure indicates a very interesting situation as can be observed with the percentages in the table below (Chebanne, 2002)

Percentage of lexical cognates among Eastern Khoe speech communities

/Haise						
95	//Goro					
93	97					
		Caite				
90	93	90				
			Danisana			
89	91	89	87			
				Cire-cire [Cua]		
67	65	67	64			
				76	Kua	
53	56	57	59			
				55	60	Ts'ixa

The following observations can be made from the table above:

1. The high percentages ranging from 87 to 95 would mean that the five languages/dialects are variants of the same language and, therefore, that /Haise //Goro, Caite and Danisana belong together under Shua;
2. There is high mutual intelligibility among the variants, and therefore higher possibilities of linguistic and ethnic convergence. This further explains how there would be many ethnic names and only few dialectal variations;

3. The high percentage figures could also indicate recent dialectal variations or regular and close contacts between the communities in a closed geographical area
4. The vocabulary, justifiably, can be considered the basis for a Union Form, a super language that could represent them all in lexicographical and orthographic works;
5. In the cases where mutual intelligibility falls below the 75% threshold, there is evidence of recourse to Setswana which means that an extra-Khoe language is used to facilitate communication. This may also involve code-switching with Setswana being the facilitator.

Socio-linguistic situation of Eastern Khoe

The area inhabited by the Eastern Khoe presents a very complex socio-linguistic situation. For most of last century many Setswana and Ikalanga speakers encroached into this area and has created a language contact situation that has had far reaching consequences for the Eastern Khoe speakers. Before schools were built in the area, that is, before independence in 1966, the cattle-rich masters who were the Bangwato or the Bakalanga mainly determined language contacts. The Eastern Khoe people were used and are still used as cattle herders. During that time, changing masters meant also changing the language of work. However Setswana was a sort of a *lingua franca* in this linguistic relationship.

This situation meant that the Eastern Khoe speakers were and are still involved in a trilingual situation. Most of them have now settled for Setswana or Ikalanga as their first languages. However, the coming of schools to the area further reduced the role of Ikalanga (see a similar process in Westphal 1962: 205), as educational and administrative matters came to be conducted in Setswana. Though the country has at present no explicit language policy (Tsonope, 1989: 12; Tsonope et al., 1991: 75), the administration from colonial days until the present has sought through the language use practice to strengthen Setswana in all areas of social life.

The Boteti-Makgadikgadi area is a multilingual territory now inhabited mainly by Bantu speakers. Though the area was historically a habitat for Eastern Khoe communities, information from interviewing teachers and pupils in primary schools suggests that now the main language is Setswana, and that there are very few Ikalanga speakers (Chebanne and Nthapelelang, 2000). However, the information gathered from the interviews of the elderly and the Tribal Administration indicates that the Eastern Khoe are ethnically a majority in Dzoroxa (Dzoroga) [except Gweta], Mmatshumo, Nata, Mokubilo, Matsitama, Moseitse, Mia, Mosu, Khoe, Tshwagong, Thabatshukudu [except Orapa-Letlhakane (Zoa)], Mabesekwa, [except Serule], and Mokubilo, [except Mmashoro]. In the excepted areas the ethnic balance now favours other groups. However, in most of the areas adults speak the language, and elderly women tend to be more fluent than men (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). The reason for this gender difference is that men are highly mobile and often leave their communities for long periods in search of jobs and other social opportunities. Far from their communities, men lose competence in their languages.

Only younger children at the cattle posts may speak Eastern Khoe languages because at that age, they are still being raised by grandparents. After they acquire fluency in Setswana, children who go to school do not speak Khoe languages, but may understand them. By the time children finish school, however, they completely reject Khoe languages (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). It is at this stage that there is the beginning of glossophagia (instance of a language swallowed up by another), and indeed the onset of alienation and deculturation takes place. All speakers of Eastern Khoe have a communicating knowledge of Setswana except children who are below the school going age. The result is that very often adults speak Eastern Khoe to adolescents who invariably respond in Setswana, even in very close family gatherings (Chebanne, 1998).

Code-switching to Setswana as on-set of language abandonment in Eastern Khoe

The ease with which Setswana is readily used in communication among adults demonstrates the precariousness of Eastern Khoe languages. In many instances there is a lot of code-switching. Code-switching as used here should not be misconstrued to cover "interference", which I view as the use of formal elements of one code or language in the context of another. It should also be distinguished from borrowing of terms from one language into the other. Code-switching is defined here in the context of languages in contact where the spatial and social existence of languages is such that some members of the community of one speech community use both languages. Eastern Khoe is in contact with Setswana and some other languages, but Setswana or any other language would not be considered to be in contact with Eastern Khoe, at least from the viewpoint of Setswana speakers and their attitude towards Eastern Khoe. Other speech communities (Setswana; Ikalanga) are never or are rarely bilingual with Eastern Khoe.

In view of the foregoing, code-switching may be viewed as a socio-linguistic phenomenon that occurs in instances of multilingualism. Its occurrence is indicative of social communication fortunes or fates of the languages in contact. One of the authorities in this area, Weinreich (1974), defines code-switching as a situation of communication where the ideal bilingual switches from one language to another according to appropriate changes in speech situation (inter-locutors, topics, domains), but not in a single unchanged speech situation and certainly not within a single sentence. According to Weinreich, if a bilingual speaker does include expressions from another language, the speaker may mark them off explicitly as "quotations" using quotations mark in writing and special voice modifications in speech.

Weinreich's definition assumes a situation of bilingualism by speakers who are socially and intellectually conscious of their language because he also calls linguistic aberrations the rapid alternations in a single, unchanged speech situation. And he says that avoidance of such aberrations would be done to protect one's mother tongue. The study of the phenomenon has taken many directions since the hypothesis of Weinreich and Labov (1968) whose socio-linguistic research demonstrated that the individual's use of language, that is, communication, depended very much on his or her social experience and the social relations that this individual has in the community.

In Eastern Khoe these language experiences and social relations result in a certain differentiation that can be shown at geographical; historical; social and situational levels. Also the age, social class, and context become dominant factors. According to Donato (1980: 285), this variation can be defined according to the typology of uses and that of the speaker. These factors interfere with the individual's communication strategies and may even imply permanent change to another language. This is the situation with Eastern Khoe speakers. Communication in Eastern Khoe is becoming less competent, and the natural control of inter-language structures therefore difficult. The end result could be complete abandonment of Eastern Khoe language out of a false impression that it is deficient.

Code-switching to Setswana is very common among all ages of Eastern Khoe speakers. Among adults it may involve a word in Setswana, a whole Setswana sentence, or even an elaborate speech in Setswana. However, adolescents, who prefer speaking Setswana, never code-switch to Eastern Khoe. Two examples of the many situations of social life that prompt code-switching include a) cattle husbandry, where Setswana is used to describe things (eg the colors of livestock) and b) business activities where buying and selling are conducted predominantly in Setswana. Citing a speaker who spoke Setswana could also result in code-switching.

Very often code-switching may occur in the family between parents and their children. This is often caused by what parents feel is the stubbornness of children to learn their parents language. A parent would then use Setswana to explain to the child. This situation sometimes creates misunderstanding because parents feel that their children are being disrespectful by speaking Setswana. The code-switching situation discussed above clearly indicates that Eastern Khoe is assailed by different negative factors in its existence (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2002). These factors include the cultural status of Khoe languages, socio-economic relations and the language policy in the educational system. (see also Batibo 1997, and Gadibolae 1993):

The very low or insignificant status of the Khoe communities in general means that their culture is also lowly regarded. This low cultural status results in Khoe people surrendering all cultural peculiarities in order to be integrated in the mainstream society thus leading to language and cultural extinction (Chebanne 1998). Even though in some cases the Khoe languages have encroached Bantu languages and cultures (e.g. the cases of Shiyeyi and Nguni Languages) (Vossen 1997), language maintenance has been the most difficult for many Khoe communities. The socio-economic status of the Khoe speaking people further contributes to their being dominated culturally by other groups (Gadibolae 1993; Cashdan 1979; Cassidy et al 2001). Even in modern times, the Eastern Khoe are in a condition of near-slavery, where they are made to herd cattle without any formal or regular payment (Gadibolae 1993). They are thus reduced to a situation of total dependence and cannot fend off the assimilation and hegemony of the other groups.

In Botswana's educational system no Khoe language has ever been used in the school. The school system does not in any way promote the use of any other language besides Setswana and English (Tshireletso 1995, Cassidy et al 2001, Le Roux 1999). In some areas teachers insist that pupils should use the official languages even during recreational times. This has therefore encouraged the abandonment of Khoe languages in favor of the languages of the dominators.

Language shift: definition and re-definition of mother-tongue

Language shift has very unfortunate consequences for Khoe communities because it causes a tendency towards language abandonment. In almost all situations, there is no language maintenance, even when the majority community presents a positive attitude towards an Eastern Khoe community. The type of biligualism where children prefer to use the national language, Setswana, and the parents maintain the Eastern Khoe language is symptomatic of negative developments in language maintenance by the youth. (Chebanne 1998, 2002). It is in this context of language shift that a brief discussion of the re-definition of the notion of mother tongue is made. The notion of "mother tongue" in many socio-linguistic studies seems to be non-problematical. For many socio-linguists, it would simply refer to the language of the parents, or the language taught by or learnt from the mother. However, in the context of the minoritization of the usage of languages such as those belonging to Eastern Khoe, certain traditional definitions and concepts need to be reviewed .

The language that is readily learnt as a first language at a very early stage (mainly from the age of five) by children is Setswana. In Matsitama, Moseitse and Mabesekwa, these children will also learn Ikalanga as their first language. The survey by Batibo (1997) also indicates that north eastern Khoe speakers readily abandon their language to take up Setswana. In fact most of the Setswana speaking communities in these areas are of Khoe extraction. Consequently, the language that young people use as their first language is not their mother tongue, but a language of adoption or assimilation.

Some language use situations are problematic. For instance, a husband and his wife may speak two Khoe dialects throughout the whole day, without one switching to the dialect of

the other. The reason is that they very often understand each other, and there is very little effort to speak another dialect. However, for the children, the situation is confusing, and this may be one other reason for the development of their negative attitude towards the language (Chebanne (1998). Clearly, the notion of the ethnic language of the mother as the first language that is learnt by the child is not always applicable in Eastern Khoe areas. In this regard, it is preferable use the term “first language” or L1 as commonly used for this peculiar situation. However, these children, with their social disadvantages, never acquire the competence of a native Setswana or Ikalanga, only near-competence that permits them to communicate in the community (Chebanne 1998).

This could be probably why most of the Khoe children become social misfits and perform badly in school (Ditshwanelo 1998, Chebanne 2001, Nyati-Ramahobo 1998, Saugestad 2001). They speak Setswana, and desire greatly to be Batswana, but are considered lowly. Consequently, even when these children make tremendous progress in acquiring Setswana, very few of them proceed to do secondary education (Le Roux WIMSA 2001). There is also a serious gender bias of those who succeed in Tswana assimilation. Most of these few secondary school-going children are boys, and most of the girls drop out at primary school level due to social and sexual abuse and pregnancy (Le Roux 1999, Cassidy et al 2001). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that their primary school starting age is slightly higher than the national average of seven (Le Roux 1999). The reasons for bad school retention rate and performance arise from many factors, some which are poverty, distance from school, child labor, and fear of being thought “strange” (that is, being Khoe) by children from the main language groups (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000).

Shifting identity and fate of Eastern Khoe ethnic and linguistic communities

The Eastern Khoe language situation is evolving very quickly and indications are that within the coming ten years there may not be found any Deti speaker. Also many peripheral speech communities of Cua (Tshwa or Tshoa), Kua, and Shua) will disappear because of Setswana (Chebanne et al, 2000). Eastern Khoe is a highly dialectalized area with distinction among the Shua, Tshoa, and Kua presenting a dialectal continuum with a very remarkable common vocabulary input more than with any other Khoe and San area (Chebanne 2001, CASAS). While this may be viewed by some linguists as an opportune situation for language convergence and harmonization, in the case of the Khoe it is indicative of serious language loss (CASAS 2001 declaration, In Speaking in Unison (Kwesi Prah (Ed) 2002, Le Roux 2001 -Penduka Declaration 2001, WIMSA report).

The quest for cultural and language identity of a people may be said to be very essential and fundamental in the existence of any human community. But among the Eastern Khoe communities this principle seems to be negated due to certain historical processes (Barnard 1992). One such is the impact of colonialism which denied the cultural and language identity of many African communities. African languages were considered poor, abject, and lacking the capacity of abstractions of the European languages (Ditshwanelo 1998). The anti-colonial struggles, and the gaining of independence, did very little to reverse this attitude for minority languages. On the contrary, minority languages suffered even more set-backs when they were sacrificed in the name of democracy and national unity (Okoth-Obombo 1999).

Even where governments subscribe to the right to language and cultural expression, difficulties and failures are often experienced due to developmental costs of ensuring socio-political equity (Cassidy et al 2001). Globalization is set to exacerbate the situation when competition by languages of mass communication and technological expression intensify (Botha 200). But the means and ways to achieve language democratization are known (Okoth-Obombo 1999, Cassidy et al 2001) and Botswana has already a national Vision

2016 which provides a framework within which an agenda of preserving the language and cultural identities of the ethnic groups such as the Khoe could be engaged. The development of an equitable and democratic language policy is a first step in that direction. Other steps include (a) research in ethnology and in linguistics of the minority language communities; (b) teaching or education as an instrument of empowering minority communities to preserve their cultures and languages; and c) Effective community participation in the management of cultural affairs and linguistic resources.

In the linguistic and ethnic dynamics that we have discussed, the Eastern Khoe languages may be said to be endangered or to be experiencing an intense situation in which they are swallowed up by the main language groups of Botswana. Most of them have disappeared during the past century due to effects of modernization and the implementation of language policies without due regard to the existence of minority languages (Vossen 1988, Cashdan 1979). The reason for the minoritization of Khoe languages can be explained by the nature of their social organization or social structures. Eastern Khoe communities consist of small groups of people living in insignificant settlements (Chebanne and Nthapelelang (2000). This situation contributes to the difficulties the people have in organizing themselves into communities that can negotiate effectively with the policy makers.

Conclusion

The socio-linguistic situation outlined here, though not exhaustive, reveals a very precarious situation for Eastern Khoe. Negative attitudes of the Khoe youth against their parents' languages develop as a means to gain acceptance among dominant Setswana groups. However, this attitude of the youth may be deemed detrimental as it contributes to language loss and ethnic alienation. There is therefore nothing that guarantees that there will be continuity of speaking this language beyond the present generation. There are moral and linguistic and anthropological questions that may be asked. Moral questions arise because, when a language dies in the modern age where all means are possible to record it and re-value it, and teach it at school, it is a great pity. We cannot content ourselves with the belief that since the essence of any language is communication, and that as long as human beings are capable of learning another language to communicate with, there is no harm done to their quality of humanity. While there is still time there is need to intensify linguistic and anthropological research so as to ensure the re-vitalization of languages such as those of Eastern Khoe.

Since the definition of a language contributes intrinsically to the definition of an ethnic entity, it can be concluded that in view of the above observations it is difficult to see a bright prospect for Eastern Khoe communities as distinct ethnic and linguistic communities. There are in a minority, and they speak languages that are generally despised by other ethnic groups (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). The languages are also spoken in a country that has not developed a comprehensive language policy to cater for the development or promotion of minority languages. This is a serious risk factor, and linguistic research will need to be intensified to record the language for any future undertaking (Chebanne 2002).

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