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Summary of Fieldwork

PhD Project:

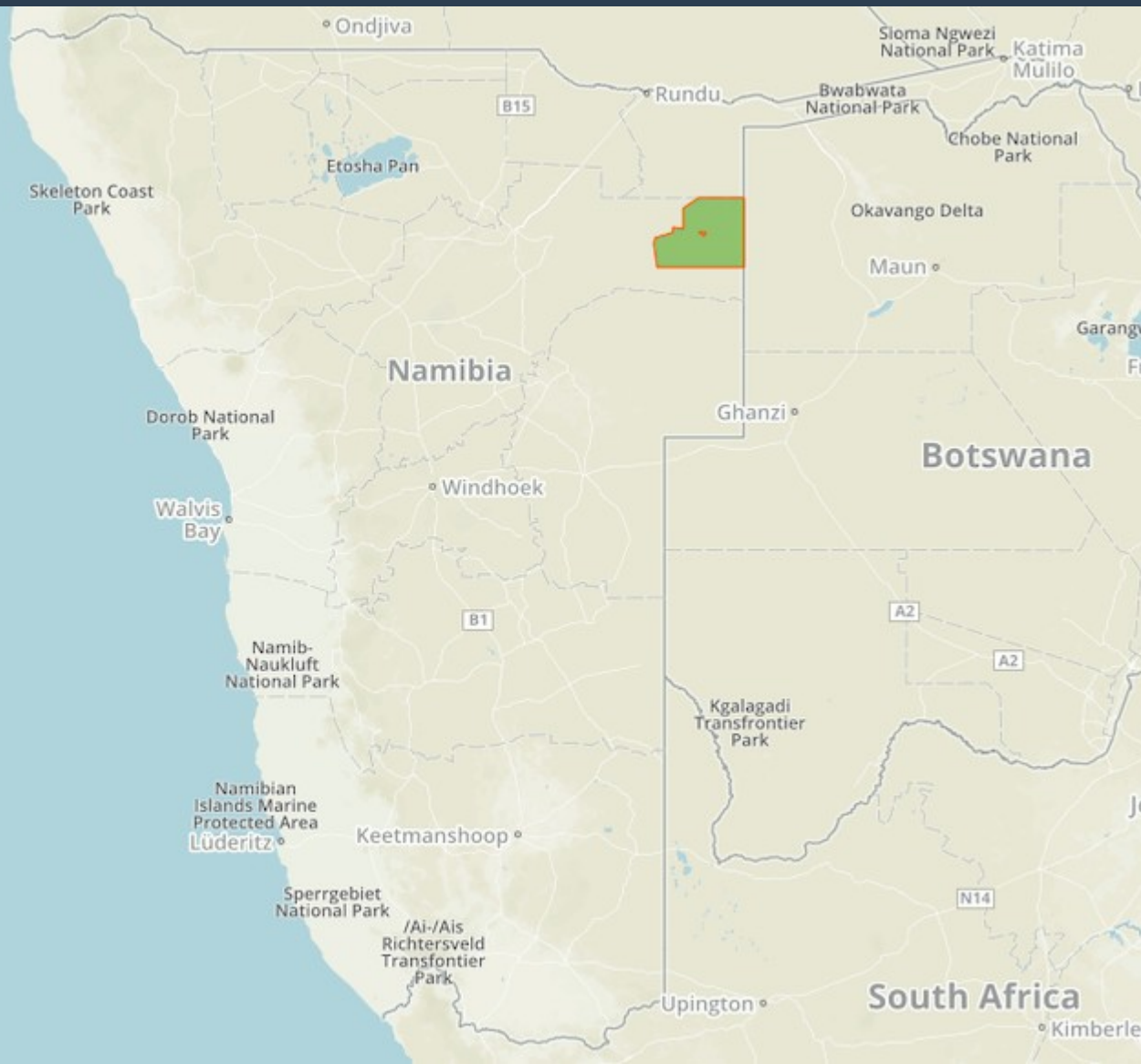
**Introducing Primary Education in
the Multidialectal Language
Complex Taa in Botswana**

Contents

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Fieldwork at Nyae Nyae Village Schools

- Jul'hoan: SE variety of !Xun dialect continuum
- Spoken in NE Namibia and NW Botswana
- Recent hunter-gatherers
 - Similar socio-economic circumstances to Taa speakers
- Nyae Nyae Conservancy, Northeastern Namibia, Otjozondjupa region.



Map 1: Nyae Nyae Conservancy

Source:
<https://news.mongabay.com/2019/02/it-pays-but-does-it-stay-hunting-in-namibias-community-conservation-system/>
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Jul'hoan language in Nyae Nyae

- Jul'hoan spoken by all ages and social groups (except in central town of Tsumkwe)
- low standing, declining
- language in transition from oracy to literacy
 - Jul'hoan Transcription Group: Transcription of oral stories
- 4 weeks of fieldwork in February 2024

Fieldwork at Nyae Nyae Village Schools

Methodology:

- **Participant Observation**

- Classes at different schools
- Activities during and after school
- mainly in the villages Denlui and IlAuru
- short visit to school in Duin Pos, failed attempts to visit school in IlXaloba

- **Interviews**

- mainly with Village School teachers
- with parents, with local community members

- **Assessment of teaching materials**

Fieldwork at Nyae Nyae Village Schools

Nyae Nyae Village Schools:

- 6 schools
- 3 years from grade 1 to grade 3
- Mother-tongue education in Jul'hoan, English as a foreign language, Afrikaans widely spoken, but not taught
- state schools, teaching according to Namibian state curriculum
 - dependent on external funding
- relatively familiar environment for children
- culturally sensitive teaching, teaching of traditional knowledge
- Additionally inclusion of local communities in decision-making

Available school materials in Jul'hoan

- text books for all school subjects
- small storybooks
- Colour printed booklets with short stories
- simple photocopied short textbooks
- a Children's Picture Dictionary
- printed and hand-written posters
- dictionary not available
 - wish to reissue and expand dictionary

Condition of schools

- some modern school complexes
- some old, too small complexes
- Duin Pos: school tent
- **lack of resources**
 - copying machine, playground equipment, toys
 - no funds for renovation
 - Denlui School: cattle enters school area
- **lack of rooms: classrooms used as hostels**
 - 1 of 2 classrooms unavailable for class

Use of materials

- **Text books:**
 - limited availability, no funds to reprint books
 - distributed to children, collected again at the end of class
- **Booklets:**
 - Read aloud to class, Jul'hoan and English
-

Teaching style, pedagogics

- **Less strict and more free than among dominating ethnic groups**
- **Learners-centred education**
 - Group work, stronger and weaker children learn together
 - More strict style in IlAuru
 - Poorer results in schooling
- **Tolerance towards temporary absence**
 - Enrolled pupils attend classes well

Parents' opinions

- **Diverting opinions**

- Dissatisfaction: Some teachers out of village too often
- Positive view: Teachers teach children well
 - Children learn well thanks to culturally sensitive approach

In Botswana:

- School in !Aoran
- No MTE yet
 - Parents wish for MTE for their children

Transition to state schools

- **Transition to state schools is very difficult**
 - Misunderstandings, discrimination
 - No readiness of teachers to treat Jul'hoan children in a different way
 - High dropout rates, children get thrown out of school
- **Tensions between teachers of VS and state schools**
 - Rigid mindsets of state school teachers
 - Paternalistic attitudes
 - Prejudice against Jul'hoan children and teachers
- **No provisions for needs of culturally different children**

Jul'hoan in Omaheke

- **Jul'hoan is less spoken than in Nyae Nyae**
 - code-switching with Afrikaans
- **No Jul'hoan mother-tongue education**
 - one pre-school with Jul'hoan lessons
 - one primary school with some Jul'hoan after school
 - From several teachers, one is left nowadays
 - Not a mother-tongue speaker

Gqaina Primary School

- large and fully equipped school
- ethnically mixed, children speaking different languages
- voluntary Jul'hoan lessons after school
 - continuation of currently taught topics in Jul'hoan
 - no mother-tongue speaking teachers
- Reading: children can read basic clicks well, but not clicks in combination with other consonant letters such as llk or nɛ
- photocopied draft Jul'hoan-English dictionary



Baqu ku kare n!om /xoa
dxuu. N!uu n!ae ku n!arih
g!u!ho ka mi se. Debe ku,
//koa /xoa waqrawa qra ko
farma. Mi ku !hai aia ko
~~ko~~ ~~ka~~ ka da'a kuni tsi g!a.
//li ko ha ti !ha dxuu
n!om /xoa.

Fieldwork in Botswana

March 2024: Workshop with Taa speakers

April 2024: Fieldwork

- Taa-speaking community in Ngwatle
- Nama-speaking community in Lokgwabe

Introduction of Mother-tongue education

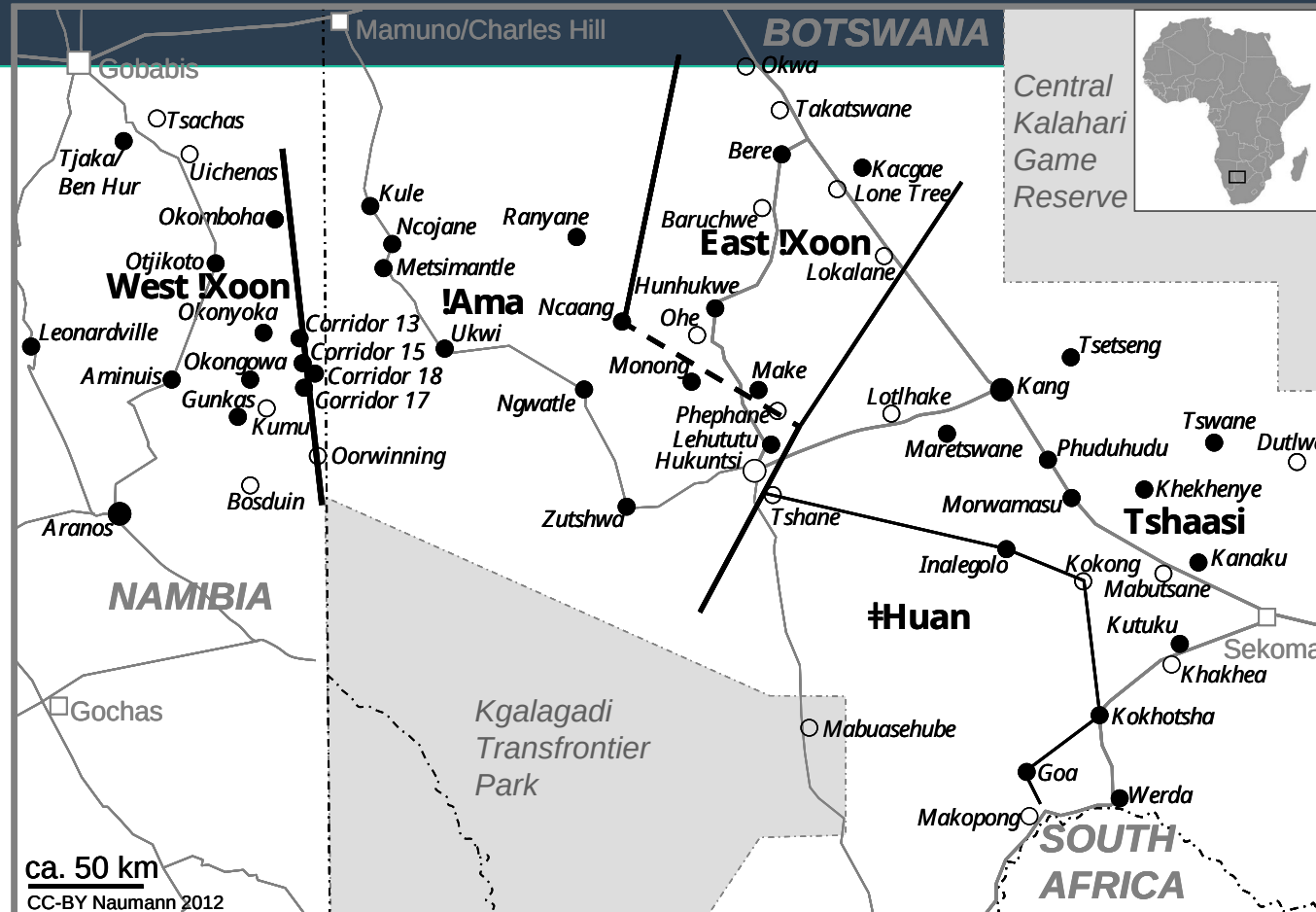
- **Languages to be introduced in two phases**
 - Phase 1 languages were introduced in 2023
 - Phase 2 languages are to be introduced in future
- **First in reception class, then gradual introduction into higher grades**
 - Up to grade 2
 - Wish by many to introduce mother-tongue education into higher grades
- **Teacher aides are responsible for translating teaching content**

Introduction of Mother-tongue education

Job description of teacher aide:

- Translate between Setswana/English and mother tongue
 - Question: What about translation of concepts?
- Assist teacher
- Develop materials
- Supervise children
- Contact with community members in mother tongue

Fieldwork in Botswana



Map 2: Map of Taa dialects.
Source: Naumann 2014:
289.

Nama Community in Lokgwabe

- Language: Namagowab (same as Khoekhoegowab)

History:

- **1908: fled from German "Schutztruppen" into Botswana**
 - led by Kaptein Simon IGomxab Kooper
- **after battle 1909: settled in Lokgwabe**
 - in the middle of Shekgalagari-speaking area
- **Current Chief: Gaob Charles Gert Cooper**



Identity of Nama in Lokgwabe

Language: "Namagowab"

- Government adopted this name
- **"Khoekhoegowab" feels foreign**
 - Different orthography
 - Influence from Tswana, no influence from Afrikaans
 - Standard has "lowered", indicator of language 'fading away'
- **yet able to relate to Khoekhoegowab**
- **Simpler modern orthography of Khoekhoegowab may benefit children more**
- **ZA Nama: failures to create own separate teaching materials**

- Nama was a medium of education before independence
- **Decline after independence:**
 - first, language was passed on
 - language shift towards Shekgalagari
 - not because of disinterest; because of external pressure

- **Literacy: elders have continued reading: Bible, Nama hymn**
 - awareness of differences towards Khoekhoegowab version
- **Children do not know Namagowab anymore, some passive knowledge**
- **Language loss seems to be considered a kind of negligence**
 - elders: feel failure to pass language on:
have failed and continue to fail
 - overpowered by dominant languages

Introduction of Mother-Tongue Education in Nama

- **Namagowab was prominent in education before 1966**
 - Skilled teachers, Coetzee, speakers benefitted from his contributions
- **No mother-tongue education after independence**
 - Assimilationist policy
- **Introduced into mother-tongue education in 2023**
 - Was to be introduced at phase 2 (languages without materials)
 - after protests introduced at phase 1 (languages with developed materials)
 - Teacher aide at Lokgwabe school (and a Kgalagari teacher aide)
- **Wish for own language as a medium of education**

Introduction of Mother-Tongue Education in Nama

- Speakers welcome mother-tongue education initiative, excitement
- A future is coming to the community and their language
- **Reasons for mother-tongue education:**
 - makes children understand instructions
 - mutual interest in each others' languages, open-mindedness, enrichment of diversity
 - builds confidence in children
 - equ(al)ity
 - sense of pride of who they are; no shame of who they are: "I am like any other"

Introduction of Mother-Tongue Education in Nama

Expectations to Nama teachers:

- more than a job: inspiring others to use language
- need for dedication, teaching Nama at grassroots level

Teacher aide:

- From a Nama-speaking Herero community
- A different Nama variety from the one parents speak: children can not follow instructions well
 - cultural difference: "can't relate to Nama texts"
 - difference in dialect: "clicks are not pronounced right"
 - quality of MTE gets compromised
- Not familiar with teaching materials
- Community seems ready to support her

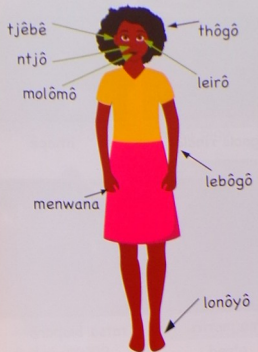
Ba loba lwame

Thalosa she o she bōna
mo shetshwantsong



3

Rikarolô jha mbele



4

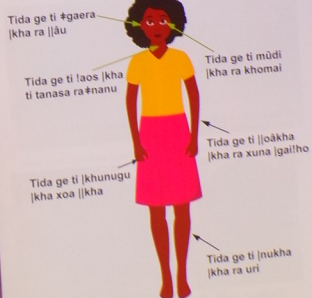
Ti Surib

Tari-na ne na



4

Soros lân



5

Sontaxtsēs

ogô Mandaxtsēs

i Dentaxtsēs

Wunstaxtsēs

Dondertaxtsēs

no Fraitaxtsēs

Satertaxtsēs

Challenges to Nama Mother-Tongue Education

- **Creating Textbooks in own variety of Namagowab**
- **Language loss in younger generation**
 - Language revitalisation
- **Sometimes tense relation with Kgalagari majority**
- **Teaching staff**
 - Lack of young mother-tongue speakers in community

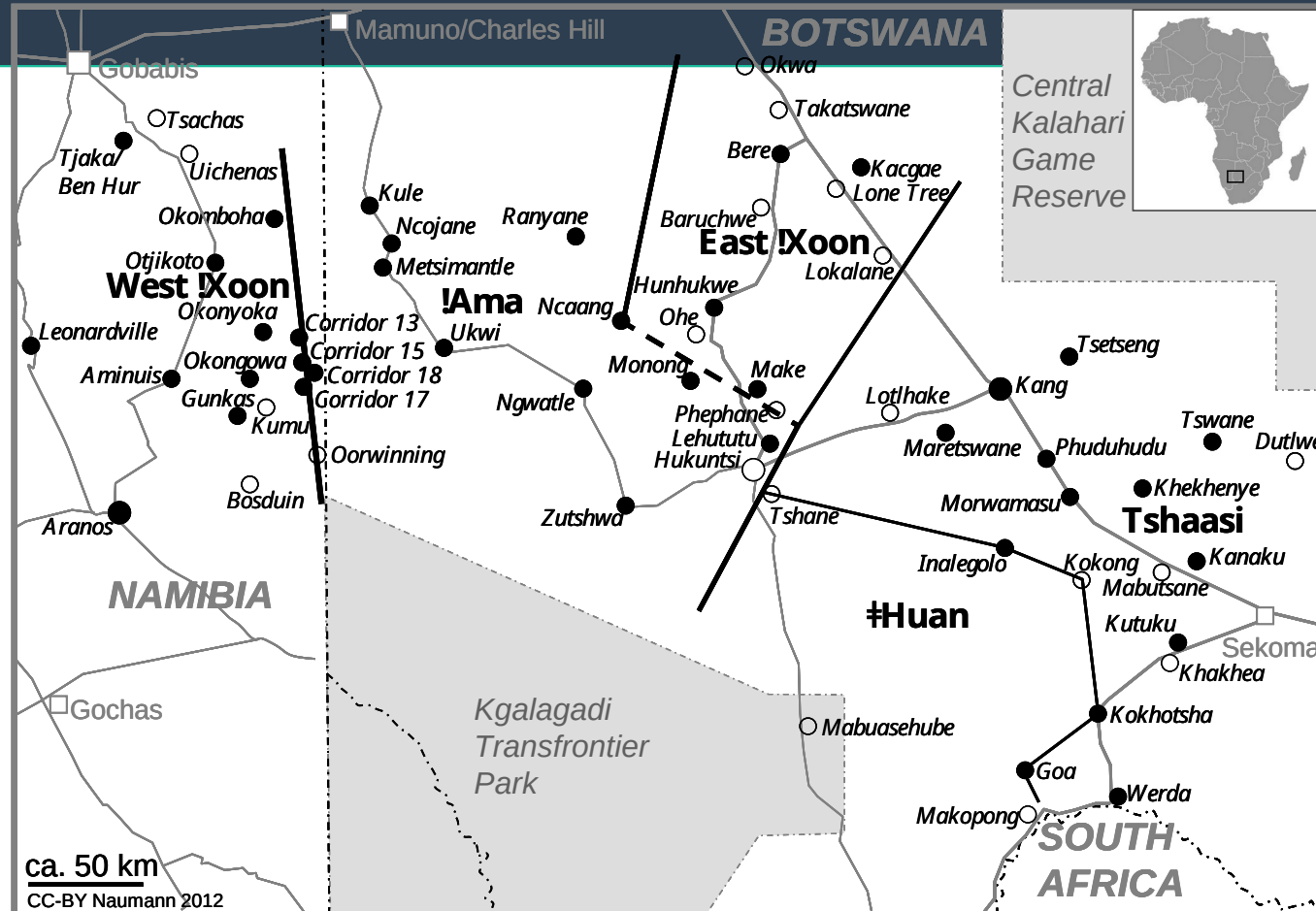
Wishes of Nama speakers

- **Wish to sustain language**
- **Wish for a teacher who teaches how to read and write Nama**
 - Wish for outside help
 - perhaps also from Namibian government
- **Projects that reach youngsters as a target group**
 - Luring interest into mother tongue
 - e.g. a project for one year with a prize to win
- **Teachings, trainings, workshops**
 - adult literacy education
- **Tailor-made approaches for communities**
- **Need for translations of Afrikaans and German documentation into Nama and English**

Fieldwork among Taa speakers

- Fieldwork in April 2024
- Original plan: visiting several settlements
- short visits with interviews in Inalegolo and Ukwil
- Longer visit only in Ngwatle
- Visiting Ngwatle School
 - Primary School, up to grade 8
- Interviews with Taa and Bakgalagari
- Starting recording and transcription of stories

Fieldwork among Taa speakers



Map 2: Map of Taa dialects.
Source: Naumann 2014:
289.

Taa in Inalegolo: Tshaasi and †Huan

- Two varieties next to each other: Tshaasi and †Huan
- Curriculum is good
- Wish for Taa mother-tongue education to be introduced
- Children should learn local variety
 - Children have knowledge of Tshaasi and †Huan
 - should learn Taa, Shekgalagari, Setswana and English
- Government should employ 1 teacher and 1 teacher aide each for Tshaasi and †Huan

Taa speakers in Ngwatle

- **Taa-speaking community in Ngwatle**
 - About 300 Taa speakers (Gachette Njagi 2005: 11)
- **Speakers of the !Ama variety**
- **Languages in Ngwatle:**
Shekgalagari, Taa ʃaan, few Nama speakers

Taa language in Ngwatle

Decline of Taa language:

- knowledge of Taa ʃaan is dramatically declining in youngest generations, most spoken language is Shekgalagari
- Children are often of mixed-ethnic descent
- Wish to keep Taa language alive
- Closely intertwined with cultural/indigenous knowledge

Bakgalagari

Interviews with Bakgalagari:

- Generally support introduction of Taa ʃaan
- Relation Taa–Kgalagari: good on the surface. "are cousins and brothers"
- Mother-tongue education as an opportunity to learn each other's languages

Mother-tongue education in Taa

When asking about challenges in MTE:

- interviewees do not come up with challenges
- expectation that groups support each other

- **General opinion: teach MT up to the level of full mastery**
 - then switching to education in other languages is easier
 - matches with scientific findings



Mother-tongue education in Taa

Impressions in Ngwatle Primary School:

- **Kgalagari and Taa pupils**
 - Mother-tongue education needs to cater for both languages
- **So far: English and Setswana only**
- **1 teacher aide**
 - Translates into Shekgalagari, but can also translate into Taa #aan
- **Attitude of teacher supportive to Taa language education:**
 - When class speaks Taa #aan: "wow, beautiful, that sound"
 - "Even children don't know how to speak Sesarwa, frustrating"

- **Lessons in different languages:**
 - mutual recognition, understanding
 - when not knowing each others' languages: mistrust, fear of gossiping, ethnic tensions
- **Government concerns about tribalism:**
 - MTE helps against tribalism
 - learning MT and discrimination are more important issues than tribalism

Opinions on Primer Options

- **Diverting opinions**
 - Speakers of peripheral varieties prefer multidialectal primers
 - Speakers of central varieties have diverting opinions
 - If introduced to the idea of primers with several standards, general support of this idea

Options for a Primer

- 1. One primer, one standard
- 2. Several standards, several primers
- - One primer with several standards
 - 3. One main variety
 - 4. Two main varieties on opposite pages
 - 5. Separate chapters for varieties

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