

Aspects of Culture and Meaning in Botswana English

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Abstract

Using samples from local newspapers, letters and public speeches, this article argues that English assimilates to and reflects the Botswana culture through borrowing and semantic modification. It discusses those terminologies and expressions that depict the cultural values of Botswana in the usage of English in Botswana. Two types of borrowed items are discussed: those depicting old traditional practices that cannot be translated into English (*kgosi* and *mophato*) and those reflecting recent socio-political experiences in Botswana including the HIV/AIDS threat (*tebelopele* and *omang*). The people's culture is also expressed by items such as *brigade* and *the lands* that have been semantically modified.

Keywords acculturation • borrowing • Botswana English • New English

Background

The earliest contact between English-speaking Europeans and Botswana is thought to have occurred during the middle of the 19th century when Europeans began visiting Botswana for trade, hunting, mineral concession and as religious ministers (Gabatshwane, 1957). The arrival of these early Europeans brought both linguistic and social changes to a community where, predominantly, Setswana was both a mother tongue and a lingua franca. The most influential of these immigrants were the missionaries who besides introducing English to the local community, established schools and gave advice on issues of education. Gabatshwane (1957) states that the first schools in Botswana were established by groups of missionaries in the 19th century. Education is the major way in which English continues to spread in the country.

Toward the end of the century, South African Boers threatened to incorporate Botswana, or Bechuanaland, as it was known then, into South Africa (Tlou and Campbell, 1997). Botswana paramount chiefs sought British protection and

thus in 1885, Bechuanaland became a British Protectorate. This relationship between Batswana and the British is significant not only historically, but also linguistically. For example, during the time that Botswana was a British protectorate from 1885–1966, the language of administration was English. All the official documents in the country were written in English and top civil servants were either Englishmen or had to be competent in English while Setswana was used for oral communication in traditional settings and in small administrative sectors. English became the official language of the country and British English served as the norm. Thus, English and Setswana co-exist in the country, with each having clearly delineated functions (Bagwasi, 2003).

In 1966, when the British left, and Botswana became independent, a decision was taken to retain colonial administrative practices, and as a consequence, British English officially retained its status as a norm-providing variety. Janson and Tsonope (1991) however, argue that the necessity for dependence on an externally provided linguistic norm gradually disappeared and as a result, the English in Botswana changed. For example, aspects of its pronunciation, syntax and lexicon altered. This article argues that such changes are a reflection of the English language in Botswana responding to the local culture, politics, economic and social life.

Kirkpatrick (2000), speaking on English in East and South East Asia, states that 'while a language must be linked to a culture, a language is not inextricably tied to one specific culture'. This is because when a language is introduced into a different culture, the language begins to gradually assimilate the culture of its new home, particularly in its use for aspects of the natural – physical and social institutional environment (Mencken, 1963, cited in Gramley, 2001: 86). This is the case with the new Englishes in India, Malaysia, Singapore, Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, Malawi and so on, where English has become institutionalized either as an official or international language. One distinguishing characteristic of these varieties is in their specific cultural identities such as norms and values, socio-economic and political changes, and the traditions that they represent. As Crowley (1992: 155) indicates, 'languages are more likely to copy words from other languages in the area of cultural vocabulary which express meanings that are culture specific'. In the same vein, Wierzbicka (1992: 374) argues that it is commonplace to find 'linguistic innovations and historical and cultural changes' going hand in hand.

Semantic modification and borrowing are some of such linguistic innovations that take place in a language contact situation. While semantic modification broadly describes the changes that may occur in the meanings of forms common to both the native and the non-native environment, borrowing involves the incorporation of foreign elements into a speaker's native language (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988: 21). Some of the changes involved in semantic modification may include semantic shift, semantic extension or broadening and coinage.

Semantic shift or transfer is defined as the process of assigning new meanings to lexical items (Kamwangamalu, 1996: 303). Crowley (1992: 152) asserts that in semantic shift, the original meaning of the word is usually not retained. An example according to him is the German word *selig* (blessed) derived from *seele* (soul) but which transformed to the English *silly* and therefore retained none of the original meanings. Shift may however involve the transfer of culture or direct meaning translation from the new culture as will be demonstrated by the example of *the lands* later in this article.

Semantic extension or broadening requires that a word adds a new meaning to its original meaning (Sey, 1973: 71) but the original meaning is retained as part of the new meaning as in the example of *dogge*, an old English word for a particularly powerful breed of *dog* whose meaning has become more encompassing (Crowley, 1992: 152). With respect to borrowing, Van Coetsem (1988: 10) and Sebba (1997: 10) respectively identify its salient characteristics as 'importation of features from other languages into a native language' and 'naturalization or adoption' of foreign items into another language. A related concept is coinage, which Sey (1973: 71) explains as the creation of words that are suitable for expressing certain meanings by compounding, though the new item may not necessarily have cultural undertones, as in the example of *enstool* and *enstoolment* which are used in some parts of West Africa to denote to crown and coronation respectively (Bokamba, 1991 cited in Gramley, 2001: 138). Our analysis in this article demonstrates that borrowing and semantic modifications, as well as coinage are a significant means of the acculturation of English in Botswana.

Bagwasi (2002: 47) distinguishes between 'learners' interlanguages' and innovations that actually produce the localized forms in the non-native environment. Her argument is that essentially these localized forms should constitute the distinctive features of new Englishes. Citing Abdulaziz (1996), who cautions that English is conditioned by many factors including interference from different mother tongues and the cultural and educational background of the users, Bagwasi (2002: 26) postulates that the Botswana variety of English would correlate with the cultural characteristics of the different languages in Botswana. These cultural characteristics may be manifested in the syntax, lexicon, semantics and even the discourse patterns of the new English.

There is a dearth of research in English in Botswana. Earlier attempts at characterizing Botswana English include Merkestein (1998) and Arua and Magocha (2000). While the former describes Botswana English 'as a variety in development rather than a fixed phenomenon' (Merkestein, 1998: 171), the latter argued that Botswana English can be identified both at the formal written and the informal spoken levels (Arua and Magocha, 2000: 282). In a study of some of the syntactic and lexical features of Botswana English, Arua (2004) demonstrates that Botswana English is syntactically closely related to other

dialects of English in Southern Africa but clearly distinct in terms of its lexical characteristics. While these studies have gone some way toward establishing the existence of the Botswana variety, the description of its lexical and pragmatic/discourse features in relationship to the cultural characteristics of Botswana, which is the focus of this study, has not been addressed.

Description of Data

Data for this study reflect two distinct periods: the pre-colonial and colonial era (1899–1965), and the present day (1966 to date). For the pre-colonial and colonial era, data were obtained from letters and archival materials while, for the present day, data were essentially collected from newspapers published in the country, with supportive materials from public speeches, websites and letters. Samples of the newspaper materials were taken from the *Botswana Guardian* (published twice a week), *Mmegi* (weekly), the *Botswana Gazette* (weekly), the *Midweek Sun* (twice a week) and *Daily News* from April 2003 to April 2004, during a period of 12 months. This period coincided with the preparations for the national elections held in December 2004. In addition, government documents/publications on HIV/AIDS and Vision 2016 were also included. In all, 360 documents were examined and content analyzed by the authors for items considered innovative and culturally significant.

It is important to state that this study is qualitative as it is focused on identifying innovations that are peculiar to English in Botswana. The documents used were chosen for their potential influence and authoritative factor. Newspapers are widely read and are therefore responsible for the spread and changes in the English language in Botswana. Authoritative factor, according to Bamgbose (1998: 5), relates to the actual use or approval of use of an innovation or change by writers, teachers, media and influential opinion leaders. The force of an authoritative factor is that the more knowledgeable the people who are seen to use the innovation, the more likely that it will be accepted by the majority of the community. This suggests that the examples of linguistic innovations found in Botswana newspapers and official letters are likely indices of some linguistic changes in Botswana English that are taking place and are acceptable even in the media and at official level. It is also reasonable to think that the type of English found in these documents is representative of the variety that is used by the educated population.

Items considered significant and discussed in this study are those that have a high frequency of occurrence, featuring no less than five times in the documents, but a word or item that fits into more than one category is considered once. The items were then classified into two broad categories: borrowing and semantic modification. These two broad categories were found adequate, relevant and appropriate for an understanding of the specific cultural identities represented

in the data. The items under borrowing were further sub-classified according to the following themes: expressions relating to traditional governance and social structure, expressions borrowed from the cattle culture in Botswana, Setswana proverbs and imagery, greetings and solidarity markers and borrowed words describing new social, economic and political issues such as HIV/AIDS and human rights. The items under semantic modification were classified as either instances of semantic shift, extension or coinage.

Findings

Our findings are presented under two broad headings: borrowing and semantic modification. Each major heading is further subdivided according to the themes highlighted in the previous section.

Borrowing

Expressions Relating to Traditional Governance and Social Structure

The lexical items relating to traditional governance and social structure to be discussed are: *kgosi*, *kgotla*, *mophato*, *bogwera* and *bojale*. A traditional or community leader is called a *kgosi* (chief). The *kgosi* rules his community with the help of an assembly of tribal elders and his uncles (see *royal uncles*) who hold meetings with the community in a place called the *kgotla* on a regular basis. Chieftaincy and the traditional Setswana governance are still very much upheld and respected, and local terms are preferred when dealing with issues relating to them, even when the medium of communication is English. Setswana terms are preferred because they cannot be adequately translated into English without losing their pragmatic force, especially their deferential meaning. Examples of their use in the present study are:

1. 'Kgosi Masunga was the guest of honor at the official opening of the Kgalagadi District Sports Festival held in Hunkuntsi on Saturday' (*Botswana Guardian*, 20 February 2004).
2. 'Kgosi Linchwe II of Bakgatla has called on churches in the world to speed up reformation of religion with the view of removing distortions in the Christian system. Kgosi was speaking at the Dutch Reformed 10th Anniversary Celebrations' (*Daily News*, 12 November 1980).
3. 'Kwelagobe has gone to the extent of taking politics to the Kgotla with no sign or very little resistance made by Kgosi Kgari Sechele. At the Kgotla, he publicly dishonored the two parliamentary hopefuls' (*Midweek Sun*, 1 October 2003).
4. 'The chief told a Kgotla meeting addressed by the President, Festus Mogae in Kanye that most government revenue is derived from the Jwaneng mine' (*Mmegi*, 20 February 2004).

Before modernization and education, boys and girls at the age of puberty were sent to initiation schools or regiments (called *mophato*) where they were taught about adult life and qualities such as good behavior, family and communal responsibility, making a living and sex and marriage. Boys were sent to a boys' regiment called *bogwera* and girls went to a girls' regiment called *bojale*. However, since the English term 'regiment' does not adequately express these Setswana practices, the Setswana terms (*mophato*, *bojale* and *bogwera*) are preferred when talking about these practices as illustrated in these examples:

5. 'My father stopped the boys' rite of circumcision called *bogwera* and the ceremony for the girls called *bojale* and ordered that all the boys and girls should go to school' (Letter from Sechele, Chief of the Bakwena to acting Resident Commissioner, 8 September 1911: S43/2).
6. 'The *bogwera* and *bojale* usually take place every four or five years in the months following the harvesting and reaping seasons. By tradition and custom the women's traditional regiment is formed just after a year after the corresponding men's *mophato* except under special circumstances when it could be impossible for the men's *mophato* to proceed (*sic*) those of women' (*Botswana Gazette*, 16 April 2003).

Expressions Relating to the Cattle Culture in Botswana English

The following items – *matimela*, *kgamelo*, *Bulela Ditswe* and *royal kraal* – which relate to the cattle-rearing culture found in the data, are discussed. Botswana is a cattle-rearing society. Cattle define the cultural, traditional, social and economic lives of Botswana. They are a major source of income, they provide milk and meat and are used as payments for bride price and customary court fines. This role that cattle play in Botswana society is evident in language use because proverbs, advertisements and political slogans are loaded with images and themes about cattle as illustrated by examples 7–11.

Setswana expressions that use cattle imagery and proverbs are common in English conversations in Botswana because cattle form a major part of the everyday life and immediate environment of the Botswana. Some of the expressions such as *kgamelo* are unique to Setswana cattle-rearing practices and are therefore not translatable to English. The *kgamelo* practice refers to arrangements in the Setswana culture in which a cattle owner puts his cattle in the custody of another and, in return, the custodian is entitled to milk. However, the use of such cattle terms is not restricted to expressing old and traditional culture. *Matimela* refers to stray cattle and the Setswana term is maintained because it is a term that most people use or are familiar with:

7. 'We spoke about the draft cabinet memorandum at F.36 concerning *matimela* and you kindly undertook to provide comments' (Memorandum from Minister E.A., 18 June 1975).

8. 'I am complaining about my cattle which have been taken by Mathiba. They were headed by Madikwe being *kgamelo* cattle but now I hear that Mathiba has taken them' (Undated letter from Motshabi Letsholathebe to Resident Magistrate).

Bulela Ditswe is a Botswana Democratic Party slogan that came into use in the early stages of the 2004 national election campaigns and it literally means 'open the kraal and let them all out to graze'. This expression is based upon the life of a pastoral farmer who opens his kraal in the morning, and lets out all his cattle to graze during the day and come back to the kraal in the evening. In the 2004 elections, the Botswana Democratic Party sought to open up its candidature to all its eligible members, hence the use of the term *Bulela Ditswe* (let them all out to graze), meaning 'give everybody an opportunity to stand for elections'. By using such a slogan which is based on the pastoral lives of the people as in examples 9–10, the political party appealed to the philosophy and way of life of many pastoral farmers who constitute the majority of the population in Botswana.

9. 'It showed that some of our leaders have still not embraced the most basic democratic tenets like one man, one vote or *Bulela Ditswe*' (*Botswana Gazette*, 18 June 2003).
10. 'The announcement by President Festus Mogae that he supports and encourages Deputy President Lt General Seretse Khama Ian Khama to stand against the Botswana Democratic Party chairman, Ponatshego Kedikilwe, at the elections to be held during the party's national congress next month has elicited mixed reaction within and outside the party. Some people see the open contest heralding strife ... They say it will encourage the divisions that are being hacked by the newly introduced "*Bulela Ditswe*" (one party member, one vote for the primary elections)' (*Botswana Gazette*, 4 June 2003).

The expression *royal kraal* also came into existence in the wake of a decision made by a Batawana chief, Kgosi, Tawana who had wanted to leave the chieftaincy to join politics in 2004. *Royal kraal* is used to mean the chief's territory and worth. A kraal is a place where a man keeps his cows, his wealth. As already stated, cattle define one's social and economic position in the Setswana society. To defend his kraal in example 11 implies that the chief would consult his advisors, those men closest to him and who also know his integrity and worth as a *kgosi*.

11. 'We have also met *basimane ba kgosi*. The royal uncles in Maun have already received the letter of approval and have been meeting other stakeholders in the Batawana Chieftaincy ... He added that the uncles have already met as the *royal kraal's* first line of defence' (*Mmegi*, 22 October 2003).

Setswana Proverbs and Imagery Used in English

English in Botswana is characterized by local constructions, imagery and proverbs that come from the local environment and the way of life of the people. Akporobaro and Emovon (1994) indicate that proverbs are determined by the socio-geographical experience of an area. The nature of the imagery, how it is expressed and the situations and experiences which its truths convey reflect the natural environment in which the people live. Among communities where farming is the dominant occupation, proverbs will reflect this occupation. Thus, proverbs in Botswana reflect images of cattle, agriculture and Botswana's arid climate as illustrated in the following examples:

12. 'After hearing the director of education speak, to discuss the matter now would be like *milking a cow before the calf has suckled, when it would not yield enough milk (performing a task in an inverted order)*. I therefore ask that in the mean time we leave this matter until we receive the report' (Note by Mr Mpotokwane to Education Advisory Council on Education, undated government circular).
13. 'Over a century ago one observer (Elbert Hubbard) concluded that – "The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone who is doing it." Our own forbears showed similar insight when they affirmed the value of urgency and preparedness through such sayings as "*Mosele wa pula o epswa go sale gale*" (*Dig your trench while there is time before the rains start*)' (State of the Nation Address, by His Excellency, Mr Festus Mogae, 10 November 2003).
14. 'For those who care to remember, Kedikilwe is not an ordinary BDP member. He is credited for what came to be known as *kgola disana* (*to remove stumps*) or removal of conflict at the 1989 Kanye congress at the height of the factional fighting in the BDP' (*Mmegi*, 19 February 2004).

The first proverb is based on Botswana cattle culture that we have already argued is at the core of the lives of the people. The second proverb reflects Botswana's arid climate where water and rain are very scarce. Because of the unpredictable rainfall, it is the practice of many Botswana farmers to prepare their plots, dig their trenches and prepare their seeds while waiting for the rains. These examples show that contemporary proverb users in Botswana are both dynamic and conservative. They are conservative in the sense that they still employ the proverb to make their speeches witty and emphatic. But the users are also dynamic because proverbial use has been modified to suit rapid social and economic changes that are a result of increasing literacy, urbanization and Englishization that Botswana is currently experiencing. Similarly, the expression *kgola disana* (remove stumps) is another illustration of the local environment and fauna used to express meaning in the Botswana context. The

rural population in Botswana depends on arable farming, which involves such activities as removing stumps and leveling the ground. Such examples indicate that local imagery and proverbs have now found expression in English and modern-day political talk in the country.

Lexical Items Relating to New Social, Economic and Political Issues

The items discussed in this category, *Masa*, *Tebelopele*, *Omang*, *Botho* and *Ditshwanelo*, are relatively new and are creeping into the lexicon in response to certain socio-political events and experiences in the country, including the threat of HIV/AIDS, the political climate as well as the economic advancement in the country.

A close examination of the use of these new items shows that the philosophy behind their creation is no longer the non-availability of English equivalents for borrowed words. The findings, in fact, show that these items that name programs or projects and issues or events, sometimes co-occur with their English translation, as in *Bulela Ditswe* (explained earlier), *Ditshwanelo*, *Masa* and *Botho*.

The birth of these new items is attributable to a number of reasons. First, the socio-political experiences of the country and its people have changed significantly and Botswana English is responding to these changes. One of those significant changes is the spread of the HIV scourge, which requires of the Government to inform and educate every citizen, whether they are literate in English or not. One way of making information available and accessible to the people is to blend English expressions with local names and terms that the people can identify with, like in *Masa* (dawn) which heralds a new day or the dawn of hope for HIV/AIDS patients through the availability of the antiretroviral therapy and *Tebelopele*, which literally means foresight (see examples 15–18).

15. 'People can get drugs from *Masa* when their CD4 drops below 200 ... Accordingly, *Masa's* architects expected a flood of people at the testing centers, and a huge demand for the drugs in their first few months' (*Botswana Guardian*, 20 February 2004).
16. 'Darkoh's program, called *Masa*, or "new dawn," is a lynchpin in that effort. *Masa* has enrolled more than 10,000 people since January 2001, and 8,000 are receiving anti-retroviral drugs made by such firms as Merck' (http://www.forbes.com/2003/09/30/cx_mh_0930hiv.html).
17. 'Crowds gathered for the official opening of the *Tebelopele* VCT centre in Mochudi on Wednesday morning 28, May' (*Mmegi*, 6–12 June 2003).
18. 'VCT is being implemented in all districts while the stand-alone VCT "*Tebelopele*" centres are now operating in 16 of the 24 districts' (Status of the 2002 National response to the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 2003: 15).

Second, the quest for and the consolidation of a national identity, which are usually ongoing processes, constitute another reason for the occurrence of these items. There is evidence from our data (examples 19–24) to show that some of the new lexical items are a means of establishing the identity of the people as represented in the name of the national identity card, *Omang* (who are you?). Similarly *Botho*, to be humane, is one of the pivots of Vision 2016,² and is representative of the caring and considerate qualities entrenched in the culture of the people, which the Government expects to see even in modern-day Botswana society. *Bulela Ditswe* (to open up the kraal) speaks of the new system in the primary elections that entitles every party member to stand for elections and be voted while *Ditshwanelo* (rights) relates to the yearnings for protection of individuals against injustice.

19. 'Some people were not allowed to vote because their *Omang* numbers in the voters roll had errors' (*Mmegi*, 20 February 2004).
20. 'In this context we have prioritised the computerization of Civil & National Registration in order to improve such functions as our *Omang* and births and deaths registrations' (State of the Nation Address by the President, His Excellency, Mr Festus Mogae, 10 November 2003).
21. 'We must also revive our culture of humanness, "*Botho*". Those who are living with HIV and AIDS require compassion and care from the rest of society and not rejection' (*Towards an AIDS Free Generation*, Botswana Human Development Report, 2000: vi).
22. 'Masitara told the gathering that the future of Botswana lies in the citizen's ability to work together in building a better and brighter future. *Botho* (*humane, kind*) as a national principle is an important heritage of our African traditions and culture. *Botho* is premised on a society that adheres to good values. Society must inculcate *Botho* in each and every Motswana' (*Mmegi*, 3 October 2003)
23. 'Botswana Centre for Human Rights, *Ditshwanelo* commemorated Africa Day on May 25th. *Ditshwanelo* noted that Foreign ministers of more than 50 African States met on Africa day to consider implementing the common defence and security policy that would deal with unabating conflicts rocking the continent' (*Botswana Gazette*, 28 May 2003).
24. 'While the death penalty continues to be in force in Botswana, *Ditshwanelo* – Botswana Centre for Human Rights remains committed to working with people who are in danger of being executed by the State' (*Mmegi*, 3 October 2003).

Our findings in this section therefore support Wierzbicka's (1992: 374) assertion that 'linguistic innovations which go hand in hand with historical and cultural changes will have a good claim to being a reflection and an expression of socio-cultural phenomena'.

Discourse Features: Greetings and Solidarity Markers

Discourse, formal or informal, reveals, to a large extent some salient characteristics of a society. It is a mirror through which the values and beliefs of a people may be viewed and appreciated. Local expressions including greetings, proverbs and wise sayings, which may or may not be translated, were found to be significant, particularly in the written-to-be-spoken discourse types.

In the best traditions of Batswana hospitality, the speaker has to greet at the beginning of a conversation. Greetings do not only act as conversation openers in Setswana speech interaction, but they are also an important strategy by which a speaker attempts to please and win the social approval of others. This is done by the use of in-group markers and other local expressions that express solidarity and identity as illustrated in these examples:

25. 'Our Excellency the President and Chancellor and Mrs Mogae, Your Excellency Sir Ketumile and Lady Masire, My Lord the Chief justice and Mrs Nganunu ... Vice Chancellors from sister universities ... Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. *Dumelang Bagaetsho (I greet you my compatriots)*' (Inauguration Speech by the Vice Chancellor, University of Botswana, Prof. Bojosi Otlhogile, 12 September 2003).
26. '*Bagaetsho*, I am forced by circumstances and problems which affect us all to address you today on the drought situation in Botswana. May the All Mighty bring us *pula (pula means rain, it is also a national slogan)*' (Drought declaration by His Excellency the President, Sir Seretse Khama, 25 May 1979, OP 1/4/1).
27. 'Director of Ceremonies, it is now my singular privilege to congratulate the honorable graduates for work well done, and to welcome a galaxy of professionals in the global, competitive, practical and productive job market!! *Bagaetsho nelwang ke Pula! Pula!! (May you have rain)*' (Speech at a graduation party by the Minister of Home Affairs, Major General Moeng Pheto, 25 August 2004).

The use of the Setswana term *bagaetsho* in an English speech invokes a sense of closeness, compatriotism and ethnic relationship and de-emphasizes the formality and distance between the interlocutors. The features function as markers of national and ethnic identity among Batswana. The choices made by interlocutors are guided and determined by the perceived social relationship between them. The use of the English expression, my compatriots, instead of the Setswana one, *bagaetsho*, would probably have reflected distance and little attachment between the speakers on one hand and fellow Batswana on the other who are expecting a greeting at the beginning of the speech. *Bagaetsho* is therefore a Setswana in-group marker with which the speakers put themselves in the same camera angle as their Batswana audience and thereby invoke solidarity and identity with them.

In extracts 26 and 27, the term *pula* (rain) is used as a greeting and peace slogan. Botswana is a semi-arid country with unreliable seasonal rainfalls. The Kgalagadi³ desert, in Southern Africa, constitutes about one-third of the country. Water and rain in Botswana are scarce and considered valuable commodities. Rain is also associated with prosperity and peace and as such Botswana constantly wish and pray for rain, hence the slogan *pula*, which means 'let there be rain'. This slogan is often used during formal speeches as a public greeting or expression of best wishes.

Semantic Modifications

Semantic shift, semantic extension and coinage are some of the means by which English lexical items are adopted and adapted to express desired meaning and four of the items belonging to this category – *the lands*, *Brigades*, *food basket* and *royal uncles* – are illustrated by following excerpts.

28. 'There are numerous reports by some politicians complaining that their party colleagues had invaded their backyards as if they were referring to the certificated *lands*' (*Mmegi*, 23–9 May 2003).
29. 'Traditionally Botswana have three abodes: the village dwelling or homestead (often the principal home), the cattle post for cattle farming, and *the lands* area for arable farming' (Botswana HIV and AIDS Second and Medium Term Plan, 1997–2002: 4).
30. 'The role of *Brigades* and the concept and practice of education and training with production, are currently being discussed in dikgotla as the Ministry of Education decides to eliminate production as it was in the hey days of *Brigades*' (*Mmegi*, 6–12 June 2003).
31. 'It was then that initiatives were taken to breathe new life into the ailing Serowe *Brigades* and to recall some of the abler people who had served these *Brigades* in their heyday in mid- and late seventies' (*Mmegi*, 3 October 2003).
32. 'In fact the Government of Botswana already runs a shared responsibility orphan care programme that provides food supplements to families that register orphans under their care. A *food basket* worth BWP216 per month, about US \$50, is availed for every registered orphan' (Botswana Human Development Report, 2000: 18).
33. 'One of the motions called on the council not to buy *food baskets* for orphans but instead save the money and hand it over to the children when they reached the age of 18' (*Daily News*, 16 March 2004).
34. 'The *royal uncles* in Maun have already received the letter of approval and have been meeting other stakeholders in the Botswana Chieftaincy ... He

added that the uncles have already met as the royal *kraal's* first line of defence' (*Mmegi*, 22 October 2003).

The lands is an instance of semantic shift, because its meaning has been modified or changed in order to fulfill certain social needs in the community. In Botswana, distinctions are made among the following: the cattle post, *the lands* and the village. The village is the place of birth or origin of members of the community while the cattle post is the place for rearing cattle. *The lands* on the other hand, is descriptive of an open and wide expanse of land where mainly grains are grown for domestic consumption as opposed to farms which describe cultivation of either crops or livestock for commercial purposes. The concept of *the lands* seems to be significantly tied to the natural vegetation of the country that has about 30 percent covered by the Kgalagadi desert. *The lands*, as distinct from the ordinary meaning, is introduced by the definite article and it therefore vividly captures for the people the vast expanse of sparsely populated, plain topography and sometimes shrub vegetative environment.

The word *Brigades* is an item whose meanings has been extended or broadened in order to fulfill certain communicative needs. The term *Brigades*, 'named after a movement similar to *The Works Brigades of Ghana*' (van Rensburg, 1978: 6) refers to vocational institutions where youths who would 'otherwise have become idle, disaffected and alienated' are trained in certain vocational skills (*Mmegi*, 6–12 June 2003: 16). The *Brigades* have never had any involvement with military or paramilitary activities as suggested by the ordinary sense of the term. Hence, the use of the term is not so much connected with the activities of vocational training but with the size of the group or the number of youths in each brigade, conceived of as a regiment. Although their activities have no bearing on the activities of a military or paramilitary group, 'a "Brigade Centre" refers to a cluster of Brigades (e.g. Builders, Carpenters, Auto mechanics, Farmers, etc) organized under a single locality' (van Rensburg, 1978: 6). *Brigades* is used, therefore, to mirror the structure of an army, that is the units into which an army is divided.

Food basket and *royal uncles* are examples of coinage. *Food basket* is a term that describes the Government's monthly provision for orphans and it has its root in the tradition of presenting food items in a traditional basket referred to as '*tlatlana*' or '*mmanki*'. In practice, each registered orphan is presented with a basket containing food items worth a fixed amount. *Royal uncles* on the other hand, are the relations of the chief or *kgosi*, who may in fact, not be 'uncles' in the strict English sense. They are, however, members of the extended family of the *kgosi* and are key players as his advisors or counselors in his routine duties.

Conclusion

Current data suggest that in a new environment, a language tends to assimilate to the culture of its new home to reflect local practices, values, concerns and experiences. In Botswana, where cattle have social and economic value, where HIV/AIDS is a major concern and chieftaincy is upheld, some expressions from the English language have been modified and some words have been borrowed from the local language in order to express these local issues. These findings reflect Gumperz's and Hernandez-Chavez's (1972: 99) observation that 'words are more than just names for things. They carry a host of culturally specific associations, attitudes and values'. The article argues that data from such sources are used by the educated members of the community and therefore are representative of a cultural variety that is used by most people and that can be called the Botswana variety of English.

The article also argues for the development and dynamism of non-native varieties of English that are a result of changes in the geographical, political and economic environment of the people who speak the variety. For example, the article illustrates the use of such terms as *mophato* and *kgotla*, which mainly reflect traditional practices in the pre-independence era. In addition it illustrates the use of terms that reflect modern-day issues, such as *omang*, and *Bulela Ditswe*, that have been created to refer to current issues involving national identity and political party slogans. In terms of semantic modification, the English language has extended or narrowed the meanings of some words, such as *the lands* and *Brigades* to denote new meanings in the local environment.

The argument of this article does not suggest that Botswana or African English will at some point in the near future fully Africanize. That is impossible considering the forces of globalization and Africa's dependence on western markets, educational systems and ideologies. Africans can modify the English language to suit their local needs and cultures but there are certain core grammatical and lexical features used by English speakers internationally that cannot be changed without compromising intelligibility and acceptability by other speakers of English. The degree of 'Africanization' of English driven by the need and desire to express African culture and identity will continue to be kept in check by the need to communicate with the rest of the world, the result of which is still English but with an African tint.

Notes

1. Batswana is the name of the natives of Botswana.
2. Vision 2016 articulates and documents the long-term goals, educational, social, moral, political and cultural, of the Batswana in view of the changing global social attitudes and values.
3. Kgalagadi desert is the indigenous name for the Kalahari desert.

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