

**LANGUAGE HARMONIZATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: TOWARD A
STANDARD UNIFIED SHONA ORTHOGRAPHY (SUSO) FOR
BOTSWANA, MOZAMBIQUE AND ZIMBABWE**

By

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Abstract

*This article seeks to discuss the harmonization of the Shona language varieties namely ChiKaranga, ChiKalanga, ChiKorekore, ChiNambya, ChiNdau, ChiManyika, ChiBarwe, ChiHwesa, ChiTeve and ChiZezuru. The current Shona orthography uses a conjunctive system of word division that was recommended by Doke in 1931. Detailed word division and spelling rules are found in Fortune's (1972) *A Guide to Shona Spelling*. The writing system currently being used by the various Shona speakers and writers is deficient since it does not cater for the broader issues of Shona dialectal variations. The spelling system being used by the Shona is purely conventional and bears very little relation to what they speak. The paper argues that a unified standard Shona writing system is achievable by way of prescribing a common alphabet, common spelling, common punctuation and a common word division system. It would be naive to expect a uniform practice at the spoken level. The paper concludes by advising speakers of the different Shona dialects that the spirit of language unification and harmonization should always be that of cooperation and not that of hegemony or conquest.*

Introduction

ChiShona is classified by Guthrie (1948) in Zone S10 (South Eastern Bantu) and it is spoken in Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The language has ten distinct dialects namely ChiKaranga, ChiKorekore, ChiTeve, ChiHwesa, ChiBarwe, ChiNambya, ChiManyika, ChiNdau, ChiKalanga and ChiZezuru. The dialects are mutually intelligible thus they can be linguistically considered as dialects of the same language. Despite this high level of mutual intelligibility in its spoken form, the written form of this same language is very problematic in a number of ways. Since the beginning of the writing system by competing missionary societies, some regional dialects of Shona have been presented as different languages. This was the case with ChiKalanga and ChiNambya. Others such as ChiBarwe, ChiNambya, ChiTeve and ChiHwesa were left without so much a mention of whether they could be harmonized

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with Central Shona or left out to develop on their own (Doke, 1931). Efforts to standardize the language started as early as 1890, but the perspective remained narrowly focused on Central Shona. Speakers and writers of the different dialects continued to seek writing systems that created more differences and also were the source of difficulties in spelling, word division and punctuation due to the absence of a standard orthography.

The writing system currently being used by the various Shona speakers and writers is deficient since it does not cater for the broader issues of Shona dialectical variations and it also does not allow speakers to write the language the way they speak it. The orthographic emphasis is on the creation of peculiarities as opposed to resolving the linguistic issues of adequately accounting for the communicability and broad representativity of the writing system. Speakers and writers particularly from the ChiNdau, ChiBarwe, ChiHwesa, ChiTeve, ChiNambya, ChiKaranga, ChiKalanga, ChiManyika and ChiKorekore dialects are compelled by these circumstances to write, what in most cases they do not speak, resulting in numerous errors of spelling and word division. The spelling system being used by the Shona people is purely conventional and bears very little relation to what they speak (Chimhundu, 1992). For instance, in the current system, based on non-linguistic graphic presentation decisions, the Karanga are compelled to write <maheu> (sweet beer) instead of <maxeu>, <tswanda> (basket) instead of <xwanda> showing that the current orthography bears no relation to the actual utterances made by the people of the different dialects. The Ndau sub-group is under a conventional obligation to write <mutowo> (type) or <vanhu> (people) instead of <mhlobo> and <vantu> respectively. The Hwesa, who use words such as <nkuku> (hen) and <nkonto> (war) have to contend with the standard forms <huku> and <hondo> respectively. Each of the ten dialects has experienced similar writing problems, clearly showing that the Shona writing system is far from being standard, hence the need to design a new standard Shona orthography that caters for the linguistic needs of speakers of the different Shona varieties.

Origins of the Name Shona

The name Shona according to Magwa (1999), originated from the Ndebele group of people who referred to the western areas where non-Ndebele speakers had settled as 'Ntshonalanga' and the people who stayed there as 'aMaTshona.' Biehler's publications (1906a and 1906b) refer to the language spoken by the people of Mashonaland as 'ChiSwina' and the people who speak that language as 'MaSwina'. Another missionary, Rev. Pelly (1898) used the name 'Chino' to refer to the language of Mashonaland, whilst Rev. Etheridge (1903) used the term 'ChiZwina' when he translated St Mark's Gospel into ChiShona. The name 'ChiSwina' or 'ChiZwina' has some connection with *svina* or *tsvina* (dirt) and it has also been connected with *shona* or *chona*, which simply means despise or disappear (Doke, 1931; Gombe, 1998). Furthermore, Doke (ibid) states that the Zulu-speaking raiders from the East Coast used to describe their victims mainly people of the west, as *shona* (setting of the sun) and it has been stated that the Ndebele group on the west called a hill to the north-east of Gwelo (now Gweru) 'Tshona' and the people beyond it 'amaTshona'.

The idea that the name is a contemptuous nickname is widespread but is always based on nothing more certain than these very uncertain etymologies. Gombe (1998:24) says this about the origin of the name Shona:

Chokwadi chaicho hachina anonyatsoziva kuti zita iri rakabva nepi. Maduramazwi edu ose hapanawo rinopa tsananguro yenhoroondo yezwi iri, kana kutsanangura havo kuti rakabva nepi, uye kuti rakatanga kushandiswa riini.

Nobody seems to know where this name originated from. Our dictionaries also fail to give satisfactory explanations about the history of this name, the real meaning of the word and there is no explanation as to where it originated from or when it was first used

What we have according to Gombe (ibid), are mere hypotheses, which need further verifications. It is therefore true that the name Shona is not pleasing to the natives of Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique because it is a group name imposed on them from outside ignoring ethnic distinctions that exist. As a result, each ethnic group in the three neighboring countries that speak ChiShona prefers to be identified using the proper dialect name such as Karanga, Kalanga, Korekore, Nambya, Hwesa or Ndaou to mention just a few.

Doke (1931) on the other hand, argues that Shona was a name that unified in fullness of time the dialects of the area generally and officially known as Mashonaland which presently comprises different administrative provinces called Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Manicaland, Masvingo and Midlands. No name, Doke further argued, besides Shona, could unify the dialects in any way simpler.² ChiShona is therefore an artificial term used by linguists to refer to an agglomeration of mostly but not completely mutually intelligible dialects found within and outside Zimbabwe (Kahari, 1990). The advantage of using the name Shona to refer to the agglomeration of mutually intelligible dialects is that it is not a true name of any of the people whom Doke (1931) had proposed to group under the term 'Shona speaking people'. Shona, therefore was a foreign name that was very unlikely to be uncomplimentary like the other names used during the colonial era such as 'Kafir'(ibid).

Outside Zimbabwe, the language is spoken mainly in Botswana and Mozambique (Magwa, 2002). ChiKalanga dialect spoken in Hwange, Nyamandlovu and Bulima-Mangwe districts of Zimbabwe is also spoken in Botswana near and around Francistown and Tutume districts³. The ChiLilima, ChiPeri and ChiTalahundura sub-dialects are found in Botswana whereas ChiNyai, ChiNambya, ChiKalanga and ChiRozvi are peculiarities in Zimbabwe. Only 30% of the Ndaou speaking people reside in Zimbabwe and over two thirds are in Mozambique (Magwa, 1999). The ChiNdaou sub dialect is spoken in Chipinge, Chikore and Chimanimani districts of Zimbabwe and in Mozambique it is spoken in Moribane, Chimoio, Neves Ferreira and Buzi districts. ChiDanda variety is spoken in Mosurize and Sofala districts of Mozambique. The

² Doke's Recommendation Number 3 states that the name of the unified language be Shona and in the native Ciõona. This recommendation embodies the conclusion of the majority of the Language Committee at its last meeting and in support of it Doke quotes to some length from the report of the chairman of that Committee, presented at the end of 1929. For more details read Doke, C. M. (1931): *Report on The Unification of the Shona Dialects*. Hertford: Stephen Austin and Sons Limited. (pp 78-80).

³Read Magwa, W. (1999) *Manyorerwo eChiShona : Bhuku rinotsanangura mitemo yokunyora mutaura wedu*. Gweru: Mambo Press.(pp 1-7)

ChiShanga sub-dialect is found in Buzi, Beira, Sofala, Chiloane, Govuno and Neves Ferreira districts of Mozambique (Chimhundu, 2005). ChiTavara sub-dialect of ChiKorekore is found both in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. In Zimbabwe it is spoken in Makonde and Hurungwe districts whereas in Mozambique it is found in the Tete District (Doke, 1931). The ChiTeve sub-variety is spoken in Moribane and Chimoio districts of Mozambique.

The Linguistic Deficiencies of the Current Shona Orthography

The writing system currently being used by the various Shona speakers and writers is deficient since it does not cater for the broader issues of Shona dialectical variations and it also does not allow speakers to write the language the way they speak it. The orthographic emphasis is on the creation of peculiarities as opposed to resolving the linguistic issues of adequately accounting for the communicability and broad representativity of the writing system. Speakers and writers particularly from the ChiNdau, ChiBarwe, ChiHwesa, ChiTeve, ChiNambya, ChiKaranga, ChiKalanga, ChiManyika and ChiKorekore are compelled by these circumstances to write what in most cases they do not speak, resulting in numerous errors of spelling and word division. The spelling system being used by the Shona people is purely conventional and bears very little relation to what they speak (Chimhundu, 1992). For instance, in the current system, based on non-linguistic graphic presentation decisions, the Karanga are compelled to write <maheu> (sweet beer) instead of <maxeu>, <tswanda> (basket) instead of <xwanda> showing that the current orthography bears no relation to the actual utterances made by the people of the different dialects. The Ndau sub group is under conventional obligation to write <mutowo> (type) and <vanhu> (people) instead of <muhlobo> and <vantu> respectively. The Hwesa, who use words such as <nkuku> (hen) and <nkonto> (war) have to content with standard forms <huku> and <hondo> respectively. Each of the ten dialects has experienced similar writing problems, clearly showing that the Shona writing system is far from being standard, hence the need to design a new standard orthography that caters for the linguistic needs of speakers of the different Shona varieties.

However, there is reasonably a common vocabulary base among all the ten Shona dialects. Even a cursory study of publications in these dialects convinces one of their inherent affinities. Between eighty and ninety percent of the vocabulary is common to the areas resided by the Shona speaking people in Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The main points that bind into one language the Shona main dialects are the following:

- An underlying common vocabulary base with words such as *sadza* (thick porridge), *mukadzi* (woman), *nyama* (meat) and *baba* (father) being common in almost all the varieties of ChiShona.
- Common sharing of particular phonetic features and phonological processes such as:
 - Use of a five-vowel system <a, e, i, o, u> e.g. *Hechino chiram*u changu.
 - Use of significant tones as in *guru* (big) and *guru* (stripe)

⁴ Read Chimhundu 2005:156 and Magwa 2007:18-21.

- Employment of whistling fricatives <ʰ, ʒ> as in *svika* (arrive) and *zvakanaka* (they are good)]
 - Phenomenon of velarization <k, g> as in *khamba* (leopard) and *gomba* (pit)
 - Employment of implosives <b, d> as in *baba* (father) and *dada* (be proud)
- Common sharing of grammatical features like monosyllabic noun prefixes in words like: *mu* - + -*rume* (male) *chi* - + - *ngwa* (bread)
 - Significant super addition of prefixes to nouns as in: *ka*-+ *mu* - + - *komana* (slim boy)
 - Uniform tense indication system using tense and aspect formatives: *cha*, *ka* as in *ndichaenda* (I will go) *takadya* (we ate)
 - A common decimal enumeration as in *motsi/poshi* (1) *piri* (2) *tatu* (3) *china* (4) *shanu* (5) *tanhatu* (6) *chinomwe* (7) *rusere* (8) *pfumbamwe* (9), *gumi* (10)

(Doke, 1931; Magwa, 1999).

These are just but a few of the aspects that show that the dialects are mutually intelligible hence they are dialects of the same language. An English passage translated into all the ten dialects demonstrated that Shona dialects are mere variations of the same language.⁴ The translations showed that there is not much difference between these Shona varieties, hence it is possible to have one unified standard orthography for speaker – writers in Mozambique, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

The Morpho-syntactic Nature of the Writing System

The current Shona orthography uses a conjunctive system of word division that was recommended by Doke in 1931. Detailed word division and spelling rules are found in Fortune's (1972) *A Guide to Shona Spelling* (pp 21-50). As with spelling, the statement of the rules of word division in the current orthography is over-elaborate and ridden with inconsistencies of both principle and application. Chimhundu (2005: 63) states that some of the converse rules and qualifying rules are unnecessary. There are practical problems that speaker-writers are experiencing in internalizing and applying the current rules consistently hence the need to review these rules that were crafted in 1967.

Since the last revisions made in 1967 up to the present day, speakers of the different Shona dialects are experiencing a number of difficulties that come as a result of a defective alphabet, spelling, word division and punctuation system. The current orthography is linguistically

⁴Read Chimhundu 2005:156 and Magwa 2007:18-21.

constraining in a number of ways since the standard alphabet does not have symbols to represent all the sounds that are found in the various Shona dialects.

The Phonological Base of the Alphabet

The Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe approved the orthography being used to write ChiShona in Zimbabwe in 1967 and the alphabet had the following letters:

<a, b, bh, ch, d, dh, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, m, mh, n, nh, ny, n', o, p, r, s, sh, sv, t, u, v, vh, w, y, z, zh, zv> (Fortune, 1972; Magwa, 1999).

In this alphabet, all the distinctive speech sounds or phonemes have letters or digraphs provided for without the addition of any new or special symbols. As for sound combinations the approved digraphs and trigraphs are as follows:

<bh, bv, bw, ch, chw, dh, dw, dz dy, dzw, dyw, dzv, fw, gw, hw, jw, kw, mh, mw, mbw, mhw, mb, nd, ng,nh, nhw, nw, ngw, nzw, nz, nzv, ny,nyw, pw, sh, shw, sv, svw, sw, tw, tsw, tyw, ty, tsv, vh, zh, zhw, zv, zvw, zw>

The consonant clusters represented in the current Shona orthography are the nasal combinations, affricates and <w> combinations. There is a wide range of <w> combinations because nearly all consonants and consonant combinations may be followed by <w> before vowels in syllables.

The absence of letters <l> and <x> on the standard alphabet compels speakers of ChiKalanga, ChiKaranga, ChiNdau and ChiKorekore dialects to write what they do not speak. The deficiencies in the current orthography further obligate writers and speakers from the above-mentioned dialect speakers to write as follows:

<mutowo> not <muhlobo> (Ndau)
 <tumbudzi> not <xumbudzi> (Korekore)
 <rudo> not <ludo> (Kalanga)
 <tswanda> not <xwanda> (Karanga)

Another challenge is the use of breathy voice sounds representation. Breathy voice, as a phonetic feature, is so common in most Shona dialects. However, it is not fully represented in the standard spelling. The voiced glottal <h> has been readily used in making it possible for the current orthography to represent all the distinctive speech sounds that were recognized by Doke (1931) as breathy voice. Apart from <bh, dh, nh, vh, zh, hw> the letter <h> is not allowed to accompany certain consonant sounds found in some Shona words such as:

<nghanunu> (canon)
 <rhori> (lorry)
 <mbhaura> (blazier)
 <ndhari> (beer for selling)

The present alphabet fails to distinguish between:

- <r> in <roro> (fruit) and
- <rh> in <rhori> (lorry)
- <r> in <rumba> (run) and
- <rh> in <rhumba> (type of music)
- <nd> in <ndiro> (plate) and
- <ndh> in <ndhari> (beer for selling)
- <mb> in <mbada> (leopard) and
- <mbh> in <mbhaura> (blazier)

Although most Shona people perceive breathy <h> in the words <rhori, nghanunu, ndhari mbhaura> they cannot represent this breathy voice in writing if they are to apply rules of the current Shona orthography. The acceptable spellings are <nganunu; rori, ndari and mbaura>. Officially, the combinations <rh, mbh, ndh, ngh> are not permitted.

ChiKalanga, ChiBarwe, ChiKaranga, ChiNdau, ChiHwesa and ChiKorekore have several other sound realizations and combinations that are not found on the current spelling system;

- e.g. ChiNdau: <kudhla> (to eat)
<ntunzi> (fly)
<kuthwa> (pound)
<khamba> (leopard)
- ChiKalanga: <ntene> (insect)
<madleyo> (pastures)
<mpheni> (lightning)
<ludo> (love)
- ChiKorekore: <xumbudzi> (goats)
<mpeni> (knife)
<khamba> (leopard)
- ChiKaranga: <xwanda> (reed basket)
<maxeu> (sweet beer)
- ChiHwesa: <muphare> (boy)
<nkuni> (firehood)
<khunguwo> (crow)
- ChiBarwe: <zentsse> (all)
<-psvaira> (sweep)
<mpfuti> (gun)

It is interesting to note that the current orthography has so many deficiencies to the extent that people with certain ChiNdau names find it almost impractical to write them using the standard orthography since certain combinations are not part of the standard alphabet (Magwa, 1999:35).

e.g. *Dhliwayo* (dhl)*
Mhlanga (mhl)*

* denotes that the letter combination is not acceptable

Lexical and Phonological Considerations in Standardization of the Orthography

Vocabulary forms that were adopted by the Shona Language Committee to be the standard were selected using the principle of “what was deemed to be pronunciation of the majority of the dialects” (Fortune, 1972:32). Unfortunately, the principle was inconsistently applied because it:

- Did not allow the use of <w> by Manyika and Korekore speakers in class 2 affixes and opted for the <v> used in ChiKaranga and ChiZezuru to be written as the standard form, e.g. <vanhu> not <wanhu>.
- Opted for affricates used in all other dialects but did not allow the fricatives used in ChiKaranga as alternative forms.

e.g. <pfuma> not <fuma>
<tsine> not <sine>
<nzeve> not <zheve>
<tsvina> not <svina>

- Refused to accept or recognize alternative spelling forms

e.g. <uchi> not <vuchi>
<upenyu> not <vupenyu>

The foregoing discussions demonstrate the issues that the current orthography has. Most of the rules at the phonological, syntactical and lexical levels are or were still inconsistent. For speakers in various Shona variants, these conventional and linguistic issues pose a problem. Linguistically speaking, the simple statistical advantage of phonological lexical or syntactic rules is not enough to resolve the issues. It is on this basis that a revision of the orthography was necessary, and it had to be comprehensive, dialectally to ensure that orthography rules

⁵ The first harmonization workshop was held on 23-24 February 2006. The second was on 28-29 June 2006. The sole objective of the two workshops was to harmonize the orthographies of the following Shona varieties: ChiKaranga, ChiBarwe, ChiHwesa, ChiKorekore, ChiZezuru, ChiNdau, ChiNambya, ChiKalanga, ChiManyika, and ChiTeve.

were objective and linguistically broad based. The orthographic research of the past years has therefore moved towards an establishment of a unified standard orthography whose aim has been to integrate Shona variants, phonologically systematize the alphabet symbols, and morpho-syntactically specify presentation of words and structures in the writing system.

A New Standard Unified Shona Orthography: Asset or Liability?

Although ChiShona is on its way towards full standardization as a written and literary language, there is need to carry out another comprehensive revision of the alphabet, spelling, word division and punctuation system so as to create a standard acceptable to all dialects. The orthography, particularly the alphabet, must be expanded so as to cater for the needs of the different Shona people who should write their language the way they speak it. In response to this, the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS), in association with the African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) and the Shona Language and Culture Association (SLCA) held workshops in Harare at the University of Zimbabwe in February and June 2006 to harmonize and standardize the ten Shona dialects.⁵

The New Alphabet

The Standard Unified Shona Orthography Committee (SUSOC) proposed a new standard unified system of writing ChiShona that would permit speakers of the different dialects to write in the same way, while still allowing for variations in choice of vocabulary. The committee discussed and made resolutions on the alphabet, spelling, word division, borrowing and punctuation. The 1967 Shona alphabet, which is the source of many orthography problems, had some of its restrictions removed. The new unified standard Shona alphabet preferred letters rather than symbols and the following letters are to be used to represent the single sounds or phones that are used in all the dialects or varieties of ChiShona spoken in Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe:

<a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, n', o, p, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z> (Magwa, 2007:48).

In addition to these letters of the alphabet, a set of recommended digraphs and trigraphs has been provided to guide speakers and writers to spell Shona words correctly and consistently. These digraphs and trigraphs should be used as the basis for building syllables, morphemes and words in the different Shona dialects.

*Inventory of Letter Combinations**A. Consonants*

The letter combinations to accompany the ‘new alphabet’ are as follows:

Letter	Combination	Examples
b	bh, bhw, bv, bzv, bw	<i>bhora, bhwaira, bveni, bzvinya, bwiro</i> <i>NB <bw> is written as <bg> in some areas as a mere orthographic habit but there is no phonetic justification.</i>
c	ch, chw	<i>chikoro, - gochwa</i>
d	dh, dhw, dl, dw, dy, dyw, dz, dzv, dzw	<i>dhora, dhwa! mdleyo, - budwa, - dyara, dywaga, - dzidza, dzvinyu, - dzwanya</i>
f	fw	<i>- gofwa</i>
g	gw	<i>gwatarra</i>
h	hw	<i>hwahwa</i>
j	jw	<i>-jwanya</i>
k	kh, kw	<i>khamba, kwete</i>
m	mb, mbh, mbw, mh; mhl, mhwl, ml, mp, mph, mv, my	<i>mbuya, mbhaura, mbwende, mhuru, mhlanga, - fumhwa, Mlambo mpeni, mpheni, mvura, Myambo</i>
n	nd, ndh, ndhl, ndw, ndy, ng, ngh, ngw, nh, nhw, nk, nj, njw, nt, nts, nw, ny, nyw, nz, nzw, nzv, nzvw	<i>ndege, ndhari, ndhlandhlamo, ndwise, ndyaringo, ngoma, ngombe, nghanunu, ngwena, nhorro, -denhwa, nkuku njiva -kanjwa, ntene, zentse, - nwiwa, nyama, -menywa, nzira, nzwisi so, nzvimbo, - tunzvwa</i>
p	ph, pf, psv, pw	<i>muphonga, pfuti, - psvaira, - pwatika</i> <i><u>NB</u> -<pw> is written as <pk> or <px> in some areas</i>
r	rh, rw	<i>rhorri, rwizi</i>
s	sh, shw, sw, sv, svw,	<i>shumba, shwarara, - swedera, svikiro, -tesvwa</i>
t	th, ts, tsh, tsw, tsv, tsvw, ty, tw, tyw	<i>-thuka, tsamba, tshamba, tswanda, tsvimbo, - tsvetsvwa, tyava, -twara, -tywaka tika</i>
v	vh	<i>vhiri</i>
x	xw	<i>xwanda</i>
z	zh, zhw, zv, zvw, zw	<i>zhezha, zhwerere, zvichemo, -rozvwa</i>

B. Vowels

Only 5 contrastive vowels <a, e, i, o, u> should be used and long vowels may appear in demonstratives, ideophones or interjectives as follows:

Ideophones: *dhuu* (finish)
 mhuu (sound of a cow)

Demonstratives: *ichoo* (there it is)
 uyoo (that one)

Interjectives: *yowee!* (alas)
 Ee! (yes)

NB: Only a maximum of two vowels is allowed at the end of the above grammatical terms.

The Treatment of Tone

Although tone has grammatical implications, as it makes semantic differences, it is not necessary to mark it as the meaning of words is in most cases discernible from sentential and discourse context (Doke, 1931). The other reason for not marking tone is that it will burden the writing system unnecessarily. It is likely to complicate graphic presentation of vowels and consonant symbols. Without tone markings, an utterance would appear as follows:

Ndichaenda kumusha (I shall go home)

NB *The above sentence is meaningful even though tone markings have not been indicated.*

Criteria for Word Division

- (i) The conjunctive word division system should be used to write ChiShona thus all affixes should be written together with their stems (nouns, verbs and adjectives) as single units.⁶

e.g. *Achaenda*
 Ndibaba
 Ihombe

- (ii) Adjectives demonstratives, pronouns, selectors, quantitatives and enumeratives should be free standing.

e.g. Adjective: <*hembe chena*>

⁶Read, "Report on the Shona Harmonization Workshop" held on 23rd-24th February 2006', pp 6-8: The Report was compiled by Professor W. Magwa (MidlandsStateUniversity) and Professor H. Chimhundu (University of Zimbabwe).

Demonstrative: <*vana ava*>
 Selector <*musha uye*>
 Quantitative <*mabhazi ose*>
 Enumerative <*imwe mhuka*>
 Pronouns <*ini handidi*>

- (iii) Adverbial phrases should be written separately from the preceding verb.
 e.g. Adverb of time – *waenda masikati*
 Adverb of manner – *vaita zvakanaka*
 Adverb of place – *gara kuchikoro*
 Adverb of degree – *chema zvikuru*
- (iv) Ideophones are perceived as one word and should therefore be written as separate words.
 e.g. *do kuwa*
tande nenzira
 The maximum acceptable length of an ideophone is three syllables
 e.g. *dhururu*
ngiriri
- (v) Compound nouns should be written conjunctively as in the following examples:
Chivhindikiti
Dapurahunanzva
- (vi) Reduplicated noun verb and ideophonic forms should be written as one word because they represent single lexical items. In other words reduplicated forms should be written without a space or hyphen in between.
 e.g. Nouns: *usikusiku* not *usiku siku*
rungwanangwana not *rungwana ngwana*
 Verbs: *fambafamba* not *famba-famba* or *famba famba*
Chemachema not *chema-chema* or *chema chema*
 Ideophones: *garegare* not *gare gare*
mhanyemhanye not *mhanye mhanye*
- (vii) Interjectives should be written separate from the main word forms.
 e.g. *Yowee! Ha! Hezvo!*
- (viii) Enclitics should be written together with the main word.
 eg. *Ndipewozve ?*
Handeka

Handling of Borrowed Words and Established Names

Borrowed words should be written as they are pronounced in the local languages. The borrowed word should follow a clearly defined pattern of adoption and phonologization as indicated below. The borrowed item should be nativized and standardized.

e.g. *bhotoro* (bottle)
dhokotera (doctor)

Writing Place Names

Names of places such as villages and towns as well as names of languages will be written as pronounced.

e.g. *Rashiya* (Russia)
Hingirandi (England)
Tirango (Triangle)

Place names that have not been phonologized will be written as they are spelt in the source language.

eg. Athens, Paris, Greece.

Finally, personal names should be written as they are spelt in the source language.

eg. George, Johnson, Tafara, Moyo, Samukeliso or Hadebe.

Linguistically speaking, the foregoing criteria for writing are solid and should apply to all Shona variants without much problem. However, orthography as a convention requires that all elements that feed the convention must be managed to satisfy the requirements of a unified standard form. With the diversity in phonology and lexical variations this exercise becomes a permanent liability. Language planners and teachers must find innovative means to keep these divergences managed within a constructive linguistic context which emphasizes mutual intelligibility and sharing of linguistic and literary resources in the development of language varieties.

Challenges

The main problem with the majority rule principle that was used to select standard vocabulary items is that the selected norm shifts from dialect to dialect with each feature that is being looked at. Therefore it becomes very difficult for any of the speakers and writers to internalize the rules and apply them consistently. The majority rule principle also has the short coming of being selective in that other varieties like Hwesa, Barwe and Nambya are peripherised and at times left to die after being labeled minority languages. Other dialectical features that are distinctive but have not been accommodated by the standard orthography are ejective voiceless

stops <p, t, k > in ChiManyika, with consequent ambiguity in such spellings as <kamba> (tortoise) and <khamba> (leopard).

There are also demands for the accommodation of the ChiNdau, ChiNambya, ChiKalanga and ChiBarwe breathy voice nasal stops such as those found in words like <mphuka> (animal) and <munthu> (person) since they are not recognized by the current writing system. Another big area of inconsistency is when and where not to insert the glides <v, w, y> between vowels to represent various pronunciations in dialect. Up until now, there is no common understanding of what standard Shona orthography is with reference to possible variations in spelling across the dialects. Even though a unified grammar was standardized on the basis of ChiKaranga and ChiZezuru, in practice we find that none, not even Karanga nor do Zezuru speakers themselves apply grammatical rules consistently. In view of these practical problems, the argument that this paper advances is that a review of the whole orthography be started.

Conclusion

Writing the Shona language in a dialectally harmonized system is important for the future development of the language since it will ensure sharing of common linguistic resources and encourage orthographic convergence. A new unified standard Shona writing system if developed will help Shona speakers to write what they speak and the problem of Shona speaker-writers failing to write what they speak could be resolved before the end of this decade. The paper has clearly demonstrated that a standard writing system is achievable by way of prescribing a common alphabet, common spelling and common word division system. But, it would be naïve to expect a uniform practice at the spoken level. This would be an unrealistic and undesirable expectation which “has never been and never will be realized anywhere in the world in respect of any natural language” (Chimhundu 1992:87). It is however important to realize that the spirit of establishing a standard writing system for the Shona varieties as enshrined in the Standard Unified Shona Orthography (SUSO) documents, should be that of cooperation and not that of conquest. This simply means that the harmonization and standardization of the dialects should develop naturally without coercion. Finally, Shona language experts should always bear in mind that the development of a genuine standard language is work that needs careful planning, guidance and patience.

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