

The usage and appearance of Setswana in public domains Case study of urban and rural areas in Botswana and South Africa

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Abstract

Language policy, either in Botswana or in South Africa, sees Setswana as a privileged language compared to other indigenous languages in these societies, whereby both contexts differ significantly. In Botswana Setswana is the only indigenous language, which is legally recognized and used at schools or media, whereby in South Africa next to Setswana eight more indigenous languages are at the same level. This article focuses on parallels and differences regarding the usage of Setswana in public within two different linguistic settings. It will not only address the appearance of Setswana at school sign boards or other state domains, but rather also include private advertisement. The research area in Botswana is mainly Kgatleng, South-East and Southern Region and North West and Gauteng in South Africa. A variety of examples were captured in both countries during intensive field work in 2014 and 2015 lasting several months. A reterritorialisation of Setswana was partly visible in both countries. Next to a media usage at TV and radio in both countries, Setswana is gaining some kind of more momentum in public domains. Hence, some new sign boards or advertisement boards showed on the one side only Setswana and no longer English in Botswana. On the other side Afrikaans is excluded in the South African context and the boards are only bilingual in English and Setswana. Further research is necessary in other research areas as well as research about the reception of these sign boards and advertisement in indigenous languages like Setswana from the public audience.