

THE EFFECTS OF SHONA LANGUAGE CHANGE ON MONOLINGUAL LEXICOGRAPHY: THE NEED FOR A REVISED ALPHABET.*

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Abstract: In this paper the writer discusses the phenomenon of Shona language change, its effects on lexicography and the need for a revised alphabet. Lexicographers at African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) encounter problems in handling some words that are potential headwords in dictionaries which they are working on, under the ALLEX project because of the defective Shona alphabet. The current Shona alphabet does not recognize quite a number of sounds, morphemes and lexical items that are in everyday use by the native Shona speakers because of alien sounds that make up these words. The paper was inspired by the challenges that the writer encounters during the compilation of Duramazwi reMimhanzi (Shona Musical Terms Dictionary) of which he is one of the Editors. This paper unveils how language change accounts for the problem of headword selection and how modifying the current alphabet can enhance monolingual Shona lexicography work vis-à-vis the development of the Shona language. This paper therefore shows the urgent need for a revised alphabet so as to ease orthography problems during dictionary making.

Muchinyorwa chino munyori anotarisa kushanduka kuri kuita mutauro weChiShona nokufamba kuri kuita nguva uye maonerwo anoitwa shanduko yacho takatarisana nokugadzirwa kwamaduramazwi ari mururimi rweChiShona chete. Nyanzvi dzinogadzira maduramazwi paAfrican Languages Research Institute (ALRI) dzinosangana namadambudziko esarudzo yamazwi pavanenge vachisarudza mazwi avanenge vachida kuisa mumaduramazwi avanogadzira pachirongwa chokugadzira maduramazwi chinonzi ALLEX. Dambudziko resarudzo yamazwi rinowanikwa nokuda kechimiro chebumbiro remanyorerwo eChiShona risingatenderi mamwe mavara ari mune imwe mitauro asiri muChiShona. Bumbiro iri parizvino haritenderi mamwe mavara, mibatandiswa yamavara namamwe mazwi anowanikwa mumutauro wezuva nezuva waVaShona nokuda kwamamwe mavara anowanikwa asiri mubumbiro reShona. Chinyorwa chino chakatokonywa namadambudziko anosanganiswa nawo nomunyori webepa rino paanenenge achigadzira Duramazwi reMimhanzi, iro ari mumwe wevapepeti. Chinyorwa chino chakanangana nokuburitsa kushanduka kuri kuita ChiShona, uye madambudziko anosanganwa nawo pakusarudza mazwi anopinda muduramazwi uye kuonesa zvakare kuti kugadzirisa bumbiro ramanyorerwo kunogona kurerutsa basa ravagadziri vamaduramazwi. Izvi zvinoita zvakare kuti mutauro weChiShona uvandutswe. Pamusoro pezvose izvi, chinyorwa chino chinoda kutaridza kuti sei zvakanosha kuita chimbi chimbi kugadzirisa chimiro chebumbiro ramanyorerwe pakuzama kurerusa madambudziko anosanganwa nawo navagadziri vamaduramazwi eChiShona.

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Introduction

Historical linguists have shown that language change is inevitable in any language, especially Ferdinand and Sausure as quoted by Atchison (1981:18), who says;

In a world where humans grow old, tadpoles change into frogs, and milk turns into cheese, it would be strange if language alone remains unaltered.

Languages always change over time and they never stay the same. They change through various ways but the commonest being adopting and assimilating segmental and supra-segmental features from languages that are in contact with them. This is necessitated by the premise that languages that are in contact constantly interact as they communicate objects within their linguistic environments. Speakers of such languages mingle and may exchange linguistic items, which ultimately interferes with their mother tongues, thereby altering them. They either drop some of their linguistic aspects and pick new ones and add them to their inventories. Some languages signify objects that are peculiar to themselves but because of constant interaction with other languages natural transfer occur as speakers mingle resulting in what Chimhundu (2002) refer to as adoption. This means that change is among other reasons, a result of borrowing linguistic features from a language into another to fill in communication gaps in the receiving language. Usually languages borrow segments from foreign languages that are in contact with them and or from other indigenous languages or other dialects. Contact with these other languages necessitates cross linguistic influence as a result of political, cultural, social and economic developments in the world. Byron (1977) describes language contact as the existence of more than one language in a particular locality. The Shona Language is in contact directly with the English as a foreign language, which came into Zimbabwe due to colonization but Shona also mingles with distant foreign languages via other indigenous languages. Shona is one of the two languages that are widely spoken in Zimbabwe, comprising Karanga, Manyika, Zezuru, Korekore and Ndaue dialects. The language is spoken by people who are mostly on the eastern half of Zimbabwe, adjacent to Mozambique. It is in contact with English, Ndebele and a wide range of community languages in Zimbabwe.

Apart from English, Shona is also in contact with other fourteen indigenous languages that have different segments as those of Shona. Some of the popular ones are Shangani, Ndebele, Nambya, Tsonga or Tonga and Venda. It is from some of these languages that Shona gets some of its lexical items to add to its lexical inventory. In other words it is getting additional linguistic features from outside and within its traditional domain. In this process of borrowing, from outside its main domain, there are high chances that it will incorporate alien segments and supra-segments into its inventory. Cultural, intimacy and dialect borrowing for the past decades have resulted in new segments and supra-segments into the Shona language. Some of the dialects of Shona are on the border areas such as Ndaue, Manyika and Korekore. These border areas are points of ethno linguistic enclave and speakers of these dialects are living in contact with speakers of other

languages that are found in Mozambique and because of that the Manyika and Ndaou people (Shona dialects) become bilingual, speaking their neighbors' languages. Such interethnic interaction result in exchange of linguistic features, which result in Shona having other sounds out of its domain.

Invasion and subsequent colonization by the British in the 1890s was followed by periods of linguistic contact between English and Shona. This is a conducive platform for diffusion of lexical items between the two languages to the extent that most Shona speakers have become bilingual. The fact that English was then elevated to an official language, used in education and formal sectors gave it a prestigious status which became a conditional motivating factor to acquire English as a way of asserting affiliation to a prestigious language. This linguistic legacy, even into the present day, coerces Shona speakers to be associated with English, which entails speaking it or borrowing from it.

Education also as a social factor has actually prepares Shona Speakers to acquire English for it has been made the medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities. This means that all those who have gone through formal education even to any level have acquired English diction to some degree. Looking at this view as at 2005, it will take us to the understanding that three quarters of the youth, among Shona speakers, have gone through formal tutelage where English has been used.

Migration to other nations for economic, political and social reasons, which increased after independence, in 1980, to and from Zimbabwe by the Shona and speakers of other languages has created a complex linguistic contact between Shona and other languages that necessitates transfer of linguistic elements across the globe. The spread of international languages has also been greatly made possible and influenced by electronic media, in particular computer, video and audio technologies that have mushroomed. In this situation linguistic segments are being transferred from one language to the other and Shona is not an exception.

In this unforbidable process a languages gain or lose particular linguistic and extra-linguistic attributes and so is ChiShona. In situations where a language is in constant change, especially where new sounds, morphemes, lexical items and supra-segmental features are adopted from other languages which do not share similar orthography and supra-segmental features, lexicographers face serious problems in handling headwords that have such characteristics. A wide range of changes occur to the Shona language as established in this paper because of its contact with English and other Bantu Languages, which ultimately result in the language adopting some characteristics of these languages and then adapt or assimilate them into Shona.

Patterns of change

The Shona language is developing through borrowing of lexical items to fill in gaps realized in communication. This ultimately results in sound and phonological changes. Other changes are realized at the level of supra-segment. At the level of sound, change is mediated by phonetic processes so as to ease articulation. A language borrows because of lack or needy realized by lexical gaps in communication, which is referred to as lexical gap. The Shona language thrives by giving out (sounds and morphemes) and borrowing

(sounds and lexical items) from other languages, thereby losing some of its properties and also gaining others, which Chimhundu (2002) refers to as transfer of elements.

Those new sounds that do not agree with the current orthography then pose problems to lexicography work, in particular on handling them as entries in dictionaries. It is within the framework of this paper to look at Shona language change at the level of sound and above. In most cases when words are borrowed from another language which do not share similar sounds with the receiving one, then assimilation is done to accommodate those words with alien sounds into the new phonological environment. In most of the sounds complete assimilation is achieved, especially where there is direct correspondence between sounds of the loaner language and Shona, usually the phonological conventions available in Shona will accommodate them for instance the following correspondences;

English	Shona	Word in Shona with English gloss in English	Pattern of change In Shona
m	m	mita (meter)	m>m
t	t	mita (meter)	t>t
s	s	sofa (sofa)	s>s
c	k	kapu (cup)	k>k
p	p	kapu (cup)	p>p

Such circumstances do not instigate any graphological changes, the concept (signified) is adopted but the sounds are nativised or lexicalized through phonological assimilation as shown above. The ultimate result of this rephonological process is what is termed complete assimilation and such loans as **mita** (meter), **sofa** (sofa) and **kapu** (cup) are recognized by the Shona orthography and they do not register any graphological changes.

There are situations where there are no direct equivalents as in the above situations or where there are no sounds that are nearer to the Shona ones. In complex situations where there are no direct correspondences, alien sounds from the loaner language are taken as they are into the Shona language as shown below;

a)	<i>English</i>	<i>Shona</i>
	<i>Theory</i>	<i>thiyori</i>
	<i>Thermometer</i>	<i>themomita or themometa</i>
	<i>Thousand</i>	<i>thausendi</i>

The postulated changes in the above given loans from English are that the /Q/ sound has been incorporate into the Shona language in the process of borrowing the above-mentioned lexicons. This is what may be referred to as partial assimilation. What this implies is that there is blend of sounds found in the loaner language and receiving language for instance in the word **thiyori** (theory), the /Q/ is English whilst

yori is Shona as a result of, hence loan blend. There are also other sounds that are of African origin but have sounds that are alien to the Shona language. During assimilation of consonants and vowels of words borrowed from such languages as Nguni sometimes it also result in loan blends in the same manner as is the case with English loans, for example **muhlovo** (way of doing), **hlamba** (jocular) and other similar words. What has been explained so far is consonant assimilation in the process of nativisation or what Chimhundu (2002) refer to as adaptation. The discussion so far shows that assimilation of consonants may be partial resulting in the incorporation of new sounds and that is a segmental change. Vowels are then inserted in between consonants, because these are a compulsory element of syllables in Shona but there are situations where in some instances they are compromised for instance;

b) *Nguni* *Shona*
 umkondo *mkondo*

Other Examples of such instances are the names of people such as **Mtetwa** (class 1 a). In these examples given the word **mkondo** is supposed to be **mukondo**, with vowel ‘u’ in between ‘m’ and ‘k’. This is a change and the cause of the change is postulated to be in pronunciation. If a vowel is inserted as in **mukondo** then pronunciation is compromised, so the battle here is to harmonize between rules of grammar and pronunciation. In instances where the orthography is compromised vowels are left out, thus violating phonemic plausibility in Shona. This is another very common change in the past twenty years.

Whilst still on phonemes, there are certain consonant combinations that are not acceptable in Shona which are now pronounced due to borrowing. This includes the following;

<hl> as in muhlovo (way of doing)
<nq> nquzu (type of music)

These combinations are not acceptable because of the existence of unacceptable sound, the click **<q>**. Other sound and sound combination that exists but not acceptable in Shona language are the **<x>** combinations such as;

<x> as in ximbudzi (lean goat)
<xw> xwana (lean child)

The sound /x/ came into the Shona language from Afrikaans and nguni. The following are the postulated new recognisable changes;

h>x (muhoro>muxoro)
‘pay’
t>hl (mutovo>muhlovo)
‘way of doing’

th (thiyeta)

‘theatre’

hl (Muhlahlo)

‘name of person’

rh (rhura)

‘rule’

nq (manququ)

‘cooked maize seed mixed with pumpkins’

This discussion so far has taken us to the realization that Shona has new sounds and sound combinations that are not recognized by the Shona orthography for Shona has only the following sounds, from which various acceptable combinations are derived.

<**a, b, bh, c, ch, d, dh, e, f, g, h, l, j, k, m, mh, n, nh, ng, ny, n', o, p,**

r, s, sh, sv, t, u, v, vh, w, y, z, zh, zv>

The monolingual lexicographer's postulated challenges

A monolingual Shona lexicographer is perceived to face a major challenge of headword selection in so far as orthographic plausibility is concerned. Selection of some headwords that have new sounds adopted from other languages was problematic to Duramazwi Guru ReChiShona (DGC), already published and Duramazwi ReMimhanzi (SMTD) that is currently under publication. These are words like;

thiyori (theory)

thiyeta (thiyeta)

loni (loni)

rhor (lorry)

themometa (thermometer)

rheza (razor)

lita (liter)

All these words exist in the Shona corpus and are widely used by the Shona speakers. They were borrowed from English and their spellings are not recognized in the Shona language. The challenge is on whether to include or exclude them from the dictionary. Excluding them would imply that they are not commonly used, which is untrue as evidenced by their existence in the corpus. Including them bring with it the problem of presentation, that is whether to represent their spoken form with the letters and letter combinations that are permissible in the Shona alphabet or to follow the orthography but misrepresent the spoken form. The dilemma of the lexicographer is on whether or not to treat them as headwords in monolingual Shona lexicography, with the purist users of both

DGC and SMTD strongly feeling that their language can be corrupted by entering English-spelt words that are not fully recognized by the Shona orthography.

There are also other words from different dialects of shona that presents a similar problem to the monolingual Shona lexicographers. Magwa (2002) says,

From 1967 onwards, speakers of different dialects were experiencing certain difficulties arising from the defective alphabet and the spelling and word division system. The current orthography is linguistically constricting in a number of ways. For example, the standard alphabet does not have symbols representing the sounds <ɻ> and <x>, which are found in ChiKaranga, ChiNdau and ChiKorekore dialects.

What we can deduce from this discussion is that the Shona alphabet does not recognize some words borrowed from English, Nguni and Xhosa. Examples of such words are,

<u>Word</u>	<u>dialect where it is used</u>	<u>English gloss</u>	<u>problem letter/ combinations</u>
Muhlobo	Karanga/Ndau	way of doing	-hl-, -b-
Pxere	Karanga	kids	-x-, -px-
Xumbudzi	Karanga/Ndau	lean goat	-hx-
Muhlaba	Ndau	jocular/naughty	-l-, -hl-
Maxeu	Karanga	maheu	-x-
Xarani	Karanga	thread	x-
Muxoro	Karanga	wage/salary	-x-
Kudla	Karanga	eat	-dl-
Ntunzvi	Ndau	fly	nt-
Khamba	Ndau	leopard	kh-
Nquzu	all	type of dance	-q-, nq-

These words above exist in the Shona corpus and some of them appear so frequently but were not treated as headwords in DGC, due to the fact that the current orthography does not recognize them. However, some of these words (both from English and other Bantu languages) were treated as headwords but have changed spellings as shown below;

- Pxere>pwere (kids)**
- Uxwa>uswa (thatching grass)**
- Muhlobo>mutovo (way of doing)**
- Muxoro>muhero (salary)**
- Lita>*lita (liter drink)**
- Themometa>*themometa**

The asterisk (*) shows that there is violation of orthography, whilst all the other examples without asterisk are a misrepresentation of the spoken forms. Language change has brought with it challenges to monolingual lexicographers at African languages research Institute (ALRI) of the University of Zimbabwe (UZ).

The challenges that lexicographers are facing need an urgent revision of the Shona alphabet so that it becomes flexible to accommodate all patterns of language change. Accommodating change is feasible only when the alphabet allows a diversity of sounds and sound combinations. No language can develop if change is resisted or if it is not recognized.

Conclusion

The discussion has taken us so far as understanding how the Shona language is developing by adopting lexical items from other languages that it is in contact with. This results in the incorporation of some sounds that are alien to ChiShona. These are basically those sounds that are not recognized by the current Shona alphabet. The paper has looked at the problems of headword selection that arises as a result of the inadequacies of the current orthography. The paper concentrates only on problems emanating from English loans and those borrowed from other Bantu languages. The emphasis of this paper had been to analyze how headword selection has been made problematic by different word categories as a result of Shona language change. This is a striking aspect to consider for monolingual lexicography because technical evolution of the twenty-first century, with the advent of globalization, is bringing on board both linguistic and orthographic evolution, a shift that is evidenced by the inadequacies of the Shona orthography. What is important, however, is that monolingual lexicographers, together with both speakers and planners of the language, should constantly revise and broaden the alphabet and orthography of their language, to cater for language development. This helps to overcome the problem of the inadequacies of the orthography.

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