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FUNDAMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN LANGUAGE REVITALISATION: A CASE OF CHITONGA LANGUAGE IN THE ZAMBEZI VALLEY IN ZIMBABWE.

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THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF BACHELOR OF LANGUAGES HONOURS IN APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES.

JUNE 2013
ABSTRACT

This research is an investigation into the Tonga language revitalisation in Binga with the main objective of identifying factors that affect language revitalisation, their interrelatedness as well as assessing the importance of observing the potential problems and benefits such factors may bring. The rationale of this study is based on the contention that linguistic rights and language activism and revitalisation have become global phenomena and there is a need to understand these phenomena at a local level. The integrative framework- a combination of Fishman’s Reversing Language Shift Theory and Ghil’ad’s Revival linguistics Theory, of language revitalisation have been used in this study. The study gives a conceptual overview of the marginalisation of minority languages in Zimbabwe and language activism in light of language rights on a global scale. The study identifies standardisation, government support, finance, teacher training and the communication, as the factors that have been working against language revitalisation, while the active and strategic involvement of traditional leadership, government’s political motives, multi-sectorial approach and high presence of community based grassroots organisation have been identified as the key drivers of the programme. The research concludes that the lack of teacher training and standardisation are the biggest drawbacks in language revitalisation. This research recommends that language programme co-ordinators should see language programmes as a community initiative and harness resources from the communities.