

:: The Taa language ::

Taa is an endangered language spoken by groups of San in Botswana and Namibia and the only vital language of the whole Tuu (formerly: 'Southern Khoisan') language family. According to the survey conducted as part of the DobeS Taa project, the number of speakers in Namibia currently amounts to about five to six hundred. However, only half of them are still fluent mother-tongue speakers. In Botswana, the number of people with some proficiency in Taa is estimated to be about 4.000.

Even though children still grow up with Taa as their mother tongue in some places, the language is highly endangered. This is due to the low socio-economic status of Taa-speakers in both countries, the multilingual settings in which they live, and the lack of teaching materials.

Dialectal variation within the language complex is considerably high. The most straightforward reason for this is that Taa speakers, although small in number, are distributed over a very large terrain extending from Khakhea/Botswana in the East to the Nossob River in Namibia in the West.

In Namibia, two varieties of Taa are spoken: West !Xoon and 'N|oha, with 'N|oha being closer related to the Taa varieties spoken in Botswana than to the West !Xoon variety spoken by their immediate neighbors in Namibia.