A scholarly review of "oshikwanyama orthography 3" and the justification for the need for "oshikwanyama orthography 4"

Ekonakono lomoule "loshikwanyama omushangelo 3" neyelifo lediladilo "lomushangelo 4 woshikwanyama"

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ABSTRACT
The current study examines the evolution and current state of Oshikwanyama orthography, focusing on the development and standardisation efforts in Namibia and Angola. It critically evaluates the existing "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3" to inform the development of the proposed "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4". The evaluation encompasses linguistic, educational, sociolinguistic, and political factors influencing orthography design. The research follows a posteriori approach, focusing on the merits and demerits of the current orthography ("Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"), revised in 2004 by the Oshikwanyama Curriculum Committee of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in Okahandja, Namibia. Key considerations include the balance between linguistic soundness and sociopolitical acceptability, the selection of graphemes, word division, and the representation of phonological and suprasegmental features, such as tone. The study emphasises the importance of community involvement in establishing a strong orthography. The findings highlight the need for updates to address outdated lexical conventions, insufficient assimilation processes, and inconsistencies in representation. Recommendations propose the adoption of "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4" with immediate effect to unify standards across borders and enhance language preservation and development. The proposed "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4" will aim to standardise writing for academic, social, and cultural growth, facilitating improved communication and learning for native and non-native users. The paper also recommends that all linguistic varieties of Oshikwanyama be accommodated in the orthography, namely Oshimbadja, Oshikafima, Oshivale and Oshindombodola.

KEYWORDS
Orthography, Consonants, Vowels, Conjunctive Writing, Disjunctive Writing, Oshikwanyama.

ENGONGO LOMAPEKAPEKO
Oshinyolwa eshi osha konakona moule oukwatya womushangelo wOshikwanyama ou u li melongifo paife, wa shoneka unene kelunduluko nokeenghendabala da ungaungiwa nado di na sha nokuyukipalifa omushangelo wOshikwanyama moNamibia nomoAngola. Otashi konakona Oshikwanyama Omushangelo 3, nelalakano okweeta po Oshikwanyama: Omushangelo 4. Ekonakono eli ola kwatela mo oifimaninima ya pamba elaka, ehongo, onghalo yokushanga moshiwana nopolitika, oyo hai yambidida mokutota po nomokutalulula omushangelo, ngaashi shi li momishangwa. Omakonakono aa okwe likanghamekela komukalo hau ifanwa a posteriori, omukalo hau talulula omushangelo welaka u li po nale, nowa longifwa mokukonakona omipondo nomaunghundi Oshikwanyama Omushangelo 3, wa talululilwe momudo 2004 kokomitiye yomufindalandu wOshikwanyama, koNIED moNamibia. Omakonakono aa okwa tala oifimaninima

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ngaashi ekwatafano pokati kelongifo lelaka netambulo lelaka papolitika, elongifo leendada, etukulo loitya, nelongifo lomawi mwa kwatelwa omutono. Omakonakono aa okwa denga yo omufindo kefimano lekufombinga lovanhu vomomudingonoko mokweeta po omushangelo wa kola. Okwa monikwa kutya ope na okuningwa sha, opo ku endekululwe omushangelo wopaife, mokutala omaludi omanwefafano oo a kambela mo, nokuungaunga yo nomaunghundi mahapu e li momushangelo. Okwa fanekwa ku etwe Omushangelo wOshikwanyama 4, opo u kwafele melongifo lelaka pokati koilongo ei ivali, mokukwatela po elaka nexumokomesho, shaashi omishangelo ohadi endele pamwe nexumokomesho. Omushangelo ou wa diladilwa otau ka tula moilonga omishangwa dopauakademi, omishangwa domoshiwana nexumokomesho momufyuululwakalo, tau kwatele yo komesho omakwatafano nelihongo lovalongifi vawo. Omashitililokonakono aa okwa faneka yo kutya eenyapilaka dikwao dOshikwanyama nado nadi kwatelwe momushangelo ou wa diladilwa, ngaashi Oshimbadja, Oshikafima, Oshivale nOshindombodola, oshinima tashi ulike ekwatafano lovanhu aveshe.

OIFIMANITWA
Omushangelo, Ouwedwa, Oulitumbuli, Etulokumwe Loitya Noutungifi, Etukulo Loitya Noutungifi, Oshikwanyama.

1.   Introduction

Cahill and Karan (2008) argue that an effective orthography must be (a) linguistically sound, (b) acceptable to stakeholders, (c) teachable, and (d) easy to reproduce—criteria reflecting scientific, political, educational, and technical dimensions. This current study examines these dimensions with a specific focus on the development of a revised and improved "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4". The study evaluates the current "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3", identifying its merits and demerits as a basis for refining the proposed orthography. It emphasizes balancing linguistic accuracy with social and political acceptability. Linguistic concerns include grapheme selection, word division, phonological representation, and suprasegmental features such as tone. However, factors like dialect diversity, language policy, and public perception often shape orthographic decisions more than purely linguistic principles.

Using Agbo's (2013) *a posteriori* approach—which evaluates established writing systems—the study analyses the consistency, accuracy, and usability of the *"Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"*. This method is appropriate given Oshikwanyama's long-standing written tradition, shaped by both missionary efforts and local initiatives.

The analysis considers phonology, morphology, and syntax to address mismatches between spoken and written Oshikwanyama. Moreover, the study explores the sociolinguistic and educational implications of orthographic design and highlights the community's vital role in achieving broader acceptance. Ultimately, this research supports the adoption of "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4" in official communications, contributing to the language's development and standardisation.

2.   Overview of Oshikwanyama as a dialect

According to Shikesho (2019; 2021) and Mbenzi (2021), Oshikwanyama, a dialect of Oshiwambo, is spoken by the Oshikwanyama-speaking people in northern Namibia and southern Angola. It is one of the standardised Oshiwambo dialects in Namibia and has received significant attention in the country's education system and various activities. There are approximately 400,000 Oshikwanyama speakers in Angola, including related dialects Oshimbadja and Oshivale, and around 260,000 speakers in Namibia. Guthrie's classification of Bantu languages places Oshikwanyama as R 21, closely related to Oshindonga (R 22). According to Zimmermann and Hasheela (1998), Shikesho (2019; 2021) and Mbenzi (2021), Oshikwanyama includes sub-dialects such as Oshimbadja,

Oshivale, Oshikafima, and Oshindombodhola, which are mainly spoken in the eastern part of the Kunene River.

3.   A brief history of the Oshikwanyama writing system and publications

he Rhenish Missionaries arrived in Oukwanyama on 3 September 1891, with Peter Heinrich Brincker playing a foundational role in the development of Oshikwanyama. He authored the first book in the language, translated biblical and educational texts such as *ABD*, and collaborated with native speakers who became skilled translators under his guidance (Tirronen, 1977). Following *World War I*, Finnish missionaries replaced the Rhenish mission on 20 August 1920. Prior efforts to unify Oshiwambo orthographies date back to meetings in 1911, 1937, and between 1948 and 1961. Despite challenges, the publication of *ABD* in 1935 was a milestone (Tirronen, 1977). A key local initiative emerged in 1936 with *Okambo kaatameki*, the first independent Oshikwanyama publication without Finnish missionary support. This was followed by *Okambo kotete* and *Okambo kounona* in 1937 by Finnish missionaries at Oniipa, contributing to a growing body of religious, educational, and literary texts that advanced Oshikwanyama writing.

German missionaries, beginning with Brincker and later Herman Tönjes—who compiled a German-Oshikwanyama dictionary in 1910—were instrumental in documenting Oshikwanyama grammar and orthography. Anglican missionaries also contributed by producing hymnals and religious books in various orthographies, some still in use in both Namibia and Angola (Mbenzi, 2024, personal communication, June 6). Limited publishing in Angola has meant that most active Oshikwanyama writers are based in Namibia (Shikesho, 2021). Gabriel S. Taapopi was central to the language's literary development in the 1970s. He authored *Ila tu leshe*, helped compile the *Oshikwanyama-English Dictionary* (1977), and contributed to the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Oshikwanyama (Ngodji, 2004; Shinana, personal communication with Ngodji, April 15, 2004).

Paavo Hasheela, another key figure, worked at the Bureau of Indigenous Languages until the 1990s, and later at NIED in Okahandja, succeeded by Mirjam Hamutenya (Katonyala). His influential works, such as *Oshikwanyamenena* (1986) and its revised edition *Oshikwanyamenena Shipe* (2007), are widely used in tertiary education. Despite critiques from Halme (2004) regarding certain linguistic gaps, Hasheela's contributions remain significant. Other scholars and writers have continued contributing to the growth of Oshikwanyama literature.

In Angola, Pedro Tongeni (Nafuka, personal communication, May 24, 2020) has played a vital role in aligning Oshikwanyama's disjunctive writing system with that of Namibia. Today, Oshikwanyama is increasingly visible in media and public life. Newspapers such as *Kundana*, *The Namibian*, *Omukwetu*, *The Namibian Sun*, and *New Era* publish Oshikwanyama content, as do online platforms like *Omutumwa*. Several radio stations—including Kati FM, Omulunga Radio, Shipi FM, Radio Energy, Channel 7, Shalom Radio, and Eagle FM—feature dedicated Oshikwanyama programming (Haulenga, personal communication, May 20, 2024). National broadcasters NBC and One Africa Television also incorporate Oshikwanyama in their coverage.

In Angola, although Portuguese dominates print media, national television broadcasts weekly in all six national languages, including Oshiwambo. Rádio Nacional de Angola, particularly through Rádio 'Ngola Yetu in Luanda and Rádio Cunene in Ondjiva, provides Oshikwanyama programming (Shikesho, 2019). Other stations, such as Rádio Huila and Rádio Mais, regularly feature Oshiwambo content. Oshikwanyama is widely used in public domains—such as church services and school meetings—in both Angola and Namibia. As Shikesho (2021) affirms, a substantial body of religious literature, including revised editions of the Oshikwanyama Bible (*Ombiibeli Iyapuki*), continues to enrich the language's literary heritage.

4.   A historical change of Oshikwanyama Orthography

Oshikwanyama underwent significant orthographical changes during the nineteenth century. Introduced by the German missionary Brincker in 1891 through his work "*Lehrbuch des Osikuanjama,*" the orthography evolved with unofficial variants like the Engela and Oniipa systems (Halme, 2004). Language policies in Namibia and Angola, shaped by political climates, delayed cooperation until the 1980s (Halme, 2004). Official Oshikwanyama orthographies were established in both countries in the mid-20th century under their respective educational systems.

In Namibia, the Bantu Education System standardised Orthography No. 1 in 1966 and No. 2 in 1973 (Hasheela, 1981), with revisions leading to the 2004 version by the Oshikwanyama Curriculum Committee (2004). Angola's *Instituto de Linguas Nacionais* developed an orthography in 1979, adopted after collaboration involving SWAPO and international support (Halme, 2004). Efforts to unify orthography between the two nations faced challenges, particularly in verb conjugation systems, which remain unresolved (Legere, 1998). The following table presents the changes that were made in the Oshikwanyama orthographies between 1910 and 1966.

1910	1927	1935	1963	1966
u	u	u	w	u
j	j	j	y	j
x	x	h	h	x
s	s	s	s	sh
m	m	mp	mh	mh
n	n	nt	nh	n
dj	dj	dj	dj	dj
nj	nj	nj	nj	ny
fi	fi	fj	fi	fy
ti	ti	tj	tj	ty
n	n	ng	n	ngh

Table 1: The orthographic changes in Oshikwanyama between 1910 and 1966. Source: Fourie, (1992).

The table shows that Oshikwanyama changed from time to time. This can be ascribed to linguistic changes and the lack of linguistic expertise. The changes effected in 1966 are still maintained to date. Some of these changes are not informed by linguistic theories; thus, there is a need to revisit the existing orthography considering Noam Chomsky's theory of 1957 on the naturalness of a language.

5.   Statement of the problem

Oshikwanyama is a standardised, cross-border language spoken by communities in both Angola and Namibia, yet there has been no comprehensive study regarding its 3rd Orthography since 2004, over two decades ago. Recent studies (cf. Shikesho, 2020; Shikesho & Joseph, 2020) have not thoroughly examined the merits and demerits of the current Oshikwanyama orthography. Instead, they focused solely on the disjunctive and conjunctive writing systems and numerical representation in the Oshikwanyama language. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the current orthography, motivating the present study. Orthographies of languages worldwide undergo periodic revisions to accommodate linguistic evolution, especially the adoption of new words and concepts, often borrowed from other languages. Many scholars and language experts, for instance Williamson (1984), Cahill and Karen (2008), and Agbo (2013), argue for the revision of any orthography, suggesting the consideration of a new version (for example,

Oshikwanyama's official Orthography 3 could be revised for the adopting of "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4"). Since its endorsement in 2004, the orthography has not been updated, despite notable shortcomings, including outdated lexical conventions, insufficient assimilation processes, and inconsistencies in representation. Urgent attention is therefore warranted to address these issues and implement a new orthographic framework for Oshikwanyama.

6. Significance of the study

This study is vital to Oshiwambo linguistics generally and Oshikwanyama orthography specifically because it explicates how a revised, historically informed writing system can accommodate rapid lexical growth driven by technological change, thereby ensuring that new terms conform to the language's phonotactic constraints and enrich its lexicon. By clarifying standardised spelling conventions for words, phrases, numerals, and temporal expressions, the findings will equip translators, dictionary makers, examination setters, Bible translators, teachers, lecturers, students and other stakeholders in both Namibia and Angola with authoritative guidance, fostering accuracy across educational, religious, governmental, and media domains.

A unified orthography will also mitigate persistent classroom spelling problems, support the training of future language professionals, and promote consistency on traditional and social media platforms. Given Oshikwanyama's status as a cross-border language, the study's recommendations urge bodies such as NIED [The National Institute for Educational Development], various ministries from both Angola and Namibia, private institutions and parastatals, universities and colleges, and cultural agencies to treat orthographic revision as an urgent priority, thereby advancing linguistic development, pedagogical effectiveness, and cultural cohesion across national boundaries.

7. Research questions

The following key questions were used to generate possible answers for this salient study:

- What are the merits of the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"?
- What are the demerits of the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"?
- What can be done to improve the status of the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"?

8. Literature review

This study anchors its literature on widely accepted principles of orthography design as proposed by linguists such as Smalley (1964), Williamson (1984), and Winer (1990), focusing on three main categories: representational, pedagogical, and practical principles. Representational principles—such as Williamson's "Adequacy" and "Consistency," Winer's "Pronunciation-Based Spellings," and Smalley's "Representation of Speech"—emphasize phonological orientation by ensuring that each sound in the language has a consistent written symbol.

Pedagogical principles, particularly Smalley's "Ease of Learning," Williamson's "Learnability," and Winer's "Pedagogical Support" and "Readability," stress the need for orthographies to be intuitive and accessible to native speakers acquiring literacy, while also supporting learners transitioning between the target language and a second (often colonial) language. Additionally, principles like "Transfer" (Smalley, 1964) and "Harmony" (Williamson, 1984) underscore the importance of cross-linguistic literacy acquisition. Lastly, practical principles—including "Ease of Reproduction," "Simplicity," and "Practicality"—highlight the necessity for orthographies to be efficiently reproduced using available technologies. Collectively, these frameworks provide a comprehensive

foundation for evaluating and developing a user-friendly, consistent, and practical Oshikwanyama orthography.

9. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study draws on a range of established theories and principles related to orthography development and evaluation. Central among these is the principle of *Easy Acquisition*, which emphasizes that an orthography should feel natural and intuitive to native speakers (Wiseman, 1989), thereby facilitating literacy. Complementing this is the principle of *Easy Learning of Other Languages*, which underscores the role of orthographic familiarity—such as Oshikwanyama's use of adapted English letters—in supporting both multilingualism and second-language acquisition.

The *Spelling and Alternate Spelling Theory* advocates for phonetic accuracy in word representation while allowing flexibility for alternative, equally valid spellings, especially in contexts of dialectal variation, such as with Oshimbadja. The *Simplicity Theory* proposes that orthographies should be grounded in dialects with the most straightforward phonological and morphosyntactic systems, while the *Theory of Social Acceptability* insists on community involvement and public endorsement to ensure usability. Further, the *Minimal Ambiguity Theory* stresses the importance of clarity in sound-symbol relationships to avoid confusion in reading.

Linguistic factors—such as phonological analysis, which traditionally endorsed a one-to-one phoneme-symbol mapping (Pike, 1947; Gudschinsky, 1973), and word division decisions that balance phonological and syntactic considerations (Van Dyken & Lojenga, 1993)—remain foundational. Educational factors, including orthographic depth and learnability (Smalley, 1964), shape how efficiently literacy is acquired, while transferability to other languages enhances integration and educational mobility, albeit sometimes at the expense of local linguistic fidelity (Cahill, 2001). Finally, sociolinguistic factors highlight the role of identity, politics, and community preference in orthographic standardization. Collectively, these interrelated perspectives form the basis upon which this study's analysis and recommendations are structured.

10. Methodology

This qualitative study employs the *a posteriori approach*, as defined by Agbo (2013), to evaluate *"Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"*, focusing on its merits and demerits in light of its established written tradition rooted in the missionary contributions of the Rhenish and Finnish churches. The research population consists of relevant documents on orthographic issues globally, within Africa, and specifically concerning Oshikwanyama. Additionally, textual samples from Oshikwanyama speakers on various social media platforms are purposively sampled to provide practical examples of spelling practices, particularly examining the use of disjunctive and conjunctive writing systems and their user-friendliness. Through analysis of these diverse data sources, the study seeks to assess consistency and accuracy in orthographic usage, aiming to inform improvements to the current orthography and contribute recommendations for future revisions, such as the proposed "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4". The analytical framework is grounded in the orthographic principles and theoretical insights outlined in the literature review.

11. Findings and analysis

The analysis addresses both the merits and demerits of "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3". Practical examples from the general public, as established in the previous section, are also included to illustrate these points.

11.1 The merits of the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"

The *"*Oshikwanyama Orthography 3*"* is widely commended for its comprehensive and systematic coverage of writing conventions, which significantly supports the development and international recognition of the language. This achievement reflects the diligent work of the Oshikwanyama Curriculum Committee (2004) in revising the previous orthography. The current orthography is extensively used by media practitioners, educators, and learners, effectively standardising essential components such as the alphabet, punctuation, days of the week, and months of the year.

A notable strength is its bilingual format, presenting English alongside Oshikwanyama throughout the text, thereby fostering bilingualism and facilitating mutual language acquisition. The introductory sections offer valuable historical context, acknowledge key contributors like Zimmermann and Taapopi, and clarify revisions made from *Oshikwanyama Orthography 2*, enhancing transparency and user understanding. Phonologically, the clear distinction between short and long vowels underlines a crucial aspect of Oshikwanyama's sound system, while the detailed guidance on punctuation and international terms improves usability. Furthermore, the orthography adeptly addresses *compensatory lengthening* phenomena, exemplified by word transformations such as *kuame* to *kwaame*, where the */u/* vowel shifts to a semi-vowel */w/* accompanied by vowel lengthening, demonstrating sensitivity to phonological nuances. These well-established features emphasize the orthography's strength, setting a high benchmark for any subsequent revisions or critiques.

11.2 The demerits of the *"*Oshikwanyama Orthography 3*"*

Several shortcomings have been identified in the analysis of the *"*Oshikwanyama Orthography 3*"*, as detailed below:

11.2.1 The political map

While pages viii and ix of *"Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"* commendably include a map of Namibia intended to illustrate the geographical distribution of Oshikwanyama, the map presents several shortcomings. It depicts the country's 13 political regions and neighboring states, highlighting Oshikwanyama's prevalence, particularly in Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati, Khomas, and Oshikoto. However, the absence of statistical data to substantiate the claimed distribution undermines its reliability. More critically, the map is outdated, as Namibia now consists of 14 political regions, not 13. Further, the use of a political map is conceptually misaligned with the orthographic purpose of the publication. Since orthography relates to the language use of specific linguistic communities, a linguistic map would be more appropriate and informative in illustrating language distribution accurately. Therefore, it is recommended that the proposed *Oshikwanyama Omushangelo 4* adopt a linguistically grounded map, such as the example provided in Shikesho (2019, p. 11), to enhance relevance, accuracy, and scholarly rigour.
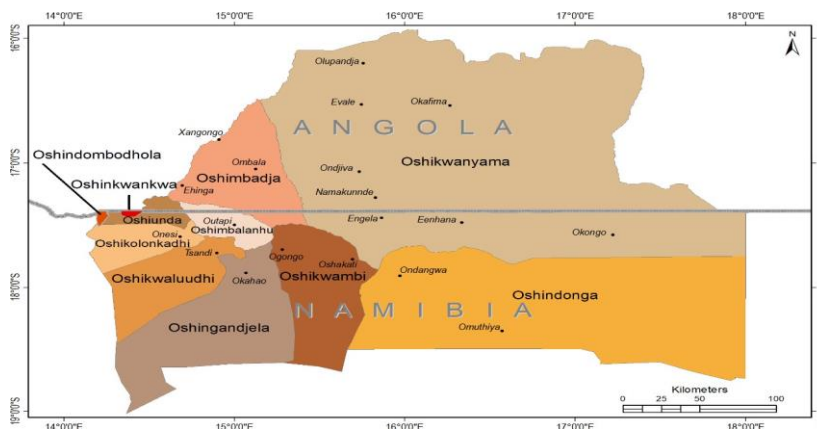
Map 1: Linguistic map showing the 12 dialects of Oshiwambo (Shikesho, 2019, p.11)

11.2.2 The Oshikwanyama description of the short vowel [a]

The English description of the short vowel [a] is accurately provided as "a low mid vowel." However, the Oshikwanyama description is not well translated, as it appears as "Okakoshivelolitumbuli kopedu inaka ngolongwa (unrounded low front vowel)." Students or readers who engage with this translation without practical application may inadvertently learn incorrect information, leading to erroneous results. The correct translation of the English description of the vowel [a] provided on page 2 should be "*okapedukatilitumbuli inaka ngolongwa* (unrounded low central vowel)."

11.2.3 The incorrect presentation of a phonetic transcription of the vowel /e/

The provided phonetic transcription of the vowel [e] as /e/ is incorrect. Readers who rely on "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3" will be misled and may end up using the wrong symbol. The correct IPA phonetic symbol for the vowel [e] in Oshikwanyama should be presented as /ɛ/.

11.2.4 The incorrect presentation of a phonetic transcription of the vowel [o]

On pages 2 and 3, the short vowel [o] phonetic transcription is incorrectly presented as /] /. Readers who rely on the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3" as their only source of information will be misguided and may end up using the wrong symbol. The correct IPA phonetic symbol for the short vowel [o] should be /ɔ/.

11.2.5 The incorrect presentation of a phonetic transcription of the vowel [i]

On pages 2 and 3, the short vowel [i] phonetic transcription is incorrectly presented as /i/. Readers who rely on the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3" as their only source of information will be misguided and may end up using the wrong symbol. The correct IPA phonetic symbol for the short vowel [i] should be /ɪ/.

11.2.6 The incorrect IPA phonetic presentation of long vowels

Apart from the discussion in the preceding paragraphs, an incorrect presentation of the phonetic transcription of long vowels is observed on pages 4 and 5 of the book under review. At the beginning of the descriptions, the author failed to provide the phonetic transcriptions of the long vowels 'ee' and 'oo'. This oversight should have been noticed by the editors or reviewers during the revision process of the book. Additionally, the long vowels are presented as follows:

aa = [a:]
ee = [e:]
ii = [i:]
oo = []:]
uu = [u:]

It is therefore suggested that the correct phonetic transcription of the five Oshikwanyama primary long vowel sounds be presented in the proposed "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4" as follows: /ɑː/, /ɜː/, /iː/, /ɔː/, and /uː/. These may also be represented by a horizontal line above the vowel to indicate a long sound: /ā/, /ē/, /ī/, /ō/, /ū/.

11.2.7 The use of semi-vowel sounds [w] and [y]

This study also suggests a reevaluation of certain Oshikwanyama words that continue to use archaic orthography, advocating for the adoption of semi-vowel sounds such as [w] and [y]. This information is detailed on pages 6 – 11 of the book under review. On pages 12 and 13, under discussion numbered 3, the book addresses the insertion of semi-vowel sounds in foreign words, exemplified by [oinailongotya]. It is explained that neither 'w' nor 'y' should be inserted between the vowels; however, this rule warrants a thorough review, particularly for the following words (cf. pp. 12-13):

- *oshiapela* / *oshiapula* (apple)
- *obiografi* (biography)

The current study suggests inserting the semi-vowel between 'i' and 'a' in the word oshiapula/oshiapela, and between 'i' and 'o' in obiografi, resulting in the following transcriptions:

- *oshiyapela / oshiyapula / eyapela / eyapula*
- *obiyografi*
- The insertion of a semivowel is in line with the principle of consistency as advocated by Williamson (1984) which emphasizes that there should be correspondence between the spoken word and written word.

11.2.8 The incorrect IPA phonetic presentation of the voiced glottal fricative [h]

On pages 18 and 19, the voiced glottal fricative [h] is inaccurately transcribed as [t]. This error poses a significant risk of misinformation for readers who depend solely on the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3", potentially leading to the incorrect use of phonetic symbols. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) correctly represents the voiced glottal fricative as /h/. Therefore, this serious error must be rectified in the forthcoming version of the Oshikwanyama orthography to ensure accuracy and clarity.

11.2.9 The incorrect IPA phonetic presentation of the alveolar voiceless rolled consonant [r]

On pages 20 and 21, the alveolar voiceless rolled consonant [r] is inaccurately transcribed as [**r~**ɾ]. This error poses a significant risk of misinformation for readers who depend solely on the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3", potentially leading to the incorrect use of phonetic symbols. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) correctly represents the alveolar voiceless rolled consonant [r] as **/ɹ/**. Therefore, this serious error must be rectified in the forthcoming version of the Oshikwanyama orthography to ensure accuracy and clarity.

11.2.10 The missing IPA phonetic presentation of the monography *n* in combination with *w* and *y*

The phonetic representation of the sound produced by combining /n/ and /w/ is not adequately treated. Specifically, it is presented incompletely as […w]. This error poses a significant risk of misinformation for readers who rely solely on the "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3", potentially leading to the incorrect use of phonetic symbols. The correct representation should be /nw/. Additionally, this issue extends to pages 26 and 27, where the /ny/ sound is discussed under the topic of monographs in combination with /y/. This persistent error requires immediate correction to ensure accuracy and prevent further confusion.

11.2.11 Incorrect presentation of the Oshikwanyama digraphs /ng/, /nh/, /sh/

Editors and reviewers of orthographic works must ensure that such materials are accurate and precise in their representation of words, letters, and numbers. On pages 28 and 29 of the orthography in question, three digraphs have been incorrectly transcribed phonetically. Specifically, the phonetic transcription of the /ng/ is provided as [ng], the /nh/ as [nh], and the [sh] as [●]. Given that the Oshikwanyama sound system adheres to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the correct transcriptions for these sounds should be as follows:

[ng] = /ŋ/
[nh] = /ɲ/
[sh] = /ʃ/

The inaccuracies persist on pages 30 and 31, where the digraphs [sh] and [ng] combined with [w] are incorrectly transcribed as [●w] and [ŋg], and the digraphs such as [mb], [mh] and [nhy] combined with [y] are inaccurately represented as [mby], [mhy] and

[nhy], respectively. These errors can mislead readers of the Oshikwanyama orthography book, as they convey incorrect information. According to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the correct transcriptions for these sounds should be as follows:

[ngw] = /ŋgw/

[shw] = /ʃw/

[mby] = /mbʲ/

[mhy] = /mʲ/

[nhy] = /nʲ/

The current Oshikwanyama orthography (pp. 32-33) contains incorrect transcriptions for the following trigraphs: /ndj/, /ngh/, /ndjw/, and /nghw/.

The correct transcriptions, according to the IPA, should be as follows:

[ndj] = /ndʒ/

- /nd/ represents a nasal-voiced alveolar stop, transcribed as /nd/.
- /j/ represents a palatal approximant, transcribed as /ʒ/, combining to form /ndʒ/.

[ngh] = /ŋg̊/

- /ng/ represents a nasal-voiced velar stop, transcribed as /ŋ/.
- /h/ modifies the stop to be voiceless, so it is transcribed as /g̊/.

[ndjw] = /ndʒw/

- /nd/ represents a nasal-voiced alveolar stop, transcribed as /nd/.
- /j/ represents a palatal approximant, transcribed as /ʒ/.
- /w/ represents a voiced labio-velar approximant, transcribed as /w/.
- Combining them, you get /ndʒw/.

[nghw] = /ŋgʷ/.

- [ng] represents a nasal-voiced velar stop, transcribed as /ŋ/.
- [h] modifies the stop to include a labialized aspect, transcribed as /gʷ/.

Combining them, you get /ŋgʷ/.

On pages 32 – 33 of the current orthography, syllabic nasals are given the wrong IPA transcriptions. They are: /m/ with an optional /u/ sound becomes /m̩/This phonetic transcription is incorrectly presented. the following is suggested:

Syllabic [m] should be transcribed as /m̩/

o This represents a syllabic bilabial nasal. It's used in languages where the nasal sound /m/ can act as the core of a syllable.

Syllabic [n] should be transcribed as /n̩/

o This represents a syllabic alveolar nasal. It functions as the nucleus of a syllable in some languages.

Syllabic [ŋ] should be transcribed as /ŋ̍/

o This represents a syllabic velar nasal. It is less common but can occur in specific languages or dialects.

In these transcriptions, the vertical line (or "syllabic" diacritic) following the nasal symbol indicates that the nasal is functioning as a syllabic nucleus.

11.2.12   The borrowed consonants in Oshikwanyama

The description on pages 34–35 of the current orthography states that certain consonants, such as [g], are borrowed into Oshikwanyama from other languages. The text further explains that these consonants appear only occasionally in the language. However, there is a lack of *distinction between the phoneme and its occurrence in the language. Specifically, the* consonant [g] is present in numerous Oshikwanyama words, although the description inaccurately suggests that the sound [g] is infrequent. In contrast, despite the

limited presence of [g] in Oshikwanyama, this study posits that it should be considered a native Oshikwanyama consonant due to its presence in several words, such as "*egege"* and "*ouge.*"

11.2.13   Typographical errors in the current orthography

The orthography under review contains several typographical errors. Notably, on page 28, the term "diagraphs" is erroneously used instead of the correct term "digraphs." This mistake poses a significant challenge to readers seeking to understand terms such as "*eenghwambali"* or "*eenghwambalindada*" in the source language, which is English. Other typographical errors appear on pages 54 and 55, such as "*ke shidjuu*" instead of "keshidjuu" (as an adjective), and "*U ha kendabala ku findi*" instead of "*Uha kendabala* ku *findi.*". It is recommended that the proposed orthography be meticulously examined to correct all existing typographical errors.

11.2.14   The presentation of proper nouns

Pages 36 and 37 of the orthography outline general rules for writing proper nouns. While the study concurs with most rules, it finds rule (b) unclear. Specifically, no proper noun should begin with a lowercase letter, consistent with English conventions that disallow lowercase initials for proper nouns, especially when possessive concords are involved. Thus, names listed under subsection (b) should be correctly capitalized, for example: *Wanailonga* and *Wanangula*.

Regarding titles and kinship terms preceding personal names (pp. 42–43), the orthography currently prescribes lowercase initial letters. This contrasts with English, where such terms are capitalized to indicate specificity. For instance:

- *Wa uhala po muhongi Hashipala?* (Good afternoon, Reverend Hashipala?)
- *Kwafe nge tatekulu Petrus.* (Help me, Grandfather Petrus.)
- *Iyaloo, meekulu Namutenya.* (Thank you, Grandmother Namutenya.)

This study recommends capitalizing the first letter of titles and kinship terms when they directly precede names, aligning with English usage and marking specificity. The title should only be lowercase when used generically. Suggested corrections include:

- *Wa uhala po, Muhongi Hashipala?*
- *Kwafe nge, Tatekulu Petrus.*
- *Otu li naTate Kandjengo.*
- *Iyaloo, Meekulu Namutenya.*

11.2.15   The writing of "Oshikwanyama" as a language in English

It is also worth noting that the name of the language, "Oshikwanyama," should be fully adopted instead of using "Kwanyama language," as seen on pages 42 and 43 of the book under review because the stem *kwanyama* refers to various items such as language, ethnic group, place name, custom and it only becomes clear when accompanied by an augment and prefix or prefix alone.

11.2.16   The writing of the 12 months of the year in Oshikwanyama

Additionally, on pages 46-47 of the book under review, the months of the year in Oshikwanyama are **only** written disjunctively. It should be optional, as the rule for writing proper names states that a proper name should be written as a single word, even when derived from a sentence. Therefore, this study recommends the following changes [cf. Table 2]:

The months of the year, borrowed in Oshikwanyama.	Suggested acceptable option 1 Eemwendi / eehani domudo mOshikwanyama	Suggested acceptable option 2 Eemwedi / eehani domudo mOshikwanyama	Suggested Oshimbadja months of the year (Mbenzi, 2021, p. 464).
Januali	Kwenyona	Kwenyona	Kwenyona
Februali	Kwenye kwakula	Kwenyekwakula	Kwenyekunene
Marsa	Taula	Taula	Taulanene
Aprili	Kayoo I (koilya ya yooka okudala)	Kayookoilyayayookokudala	Taulanhiki
Mei	Kayoo II (koilya ya yooka okupya)	Kayookoilyayayookokupya	Kayookoilyayadala
Juni	Kayoo III (koilya ya yooka poipale)	Kayookoilyayayookapoipale	Kuhuhu
Juli	Epemba linini	Epembalinini	Pembatutu
Auguste	Epemba lakula	Epembalakula	Pembanene
Septemba	Etalala linini	Etalalalinini	Etalalanhiki
Oktoba / "Kotoba"	Etalala lakula	Etalalalakula	Etalalanene
Novemba	Shikukutu	Shikukutu	Shikukutu
Desemba	Kuungumene	Kuungumene	Kuungumene

Table 2: The recommended writing of months of the year in *Oshikwanyamenena* and *Oshimbadja.* Source: own elaboration.

12.   General findings

The general findings of this study, beyond the scope of the reviewed book, include the following key issues: obsolete orthography, overrepresentation, underrepresentation, and evidence from social media platforms suggesting a trend toward a conjunctive writing system.

12.1   Obsolete orthography

Following a comprehensive investigation, it has been found that certain congregations and churches continue to use the outdated orthography. A notable example is *Hymn 165* in the *Anglican Hymn Book* (Anglican Church of Southern Africa, 1975, p. 154), which illustrates this

165 Bread of heaven, on thee we feed
E.H. 304. BREAD OF HEAVEN (E.H. 43 Appendix). 77. 77

I   O MUNGOME ueulu,
       Ove ohatu Ku li ;
    Ou 'mbelela sili
       Emienjo detu dii lie ;
    Opo tu tadi kolo
       Komuenjo ua 'u a fia.

2. Omuvinju ueulu,
       Ohonde joje tila,
    Meholo lexuikilo,
       Ove u tu velule ;
    Ohonde joje, Omuene,
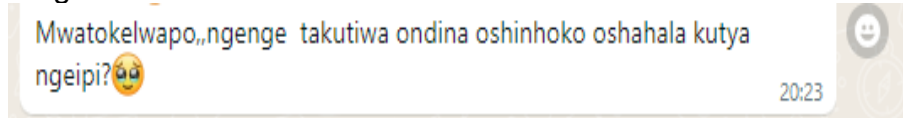   Na i tu hafife ne.

Example 1: An example of an outdated orthography. Source: ACSA, 1975. P 154

The orthography used in this song dates to 1966. This suggests a lack of communication between the language committee of that time and the congregations or a possible misunderstanding of the significance of orthographic standards. This outdated orthography poses challenges for younger readers who are unfamiliar with it. According to Hamadila (personal communication, July 28, 2024), recent revisions have been made to this Anglican hymnbook, accommodating the rules of the existing orthography.
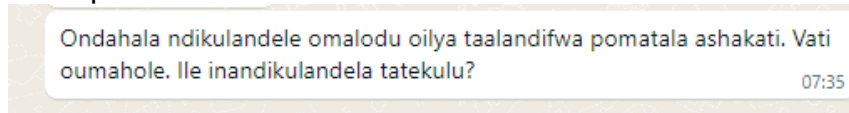
This study recommends that all church leaders in Namibia and Angola be involved in the proposed *"Oshikwanyama Orthography 4"* to ensure that their religious texts, such as Bibles, hymn books, and other communications, are updated accordingly. Such collaborative efforts will contribute to the development of Oshikwanyama as a language.

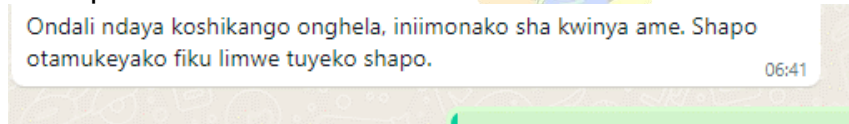### 12.2 Conjunctive writing – evidence from the public

Cole (1975) advocates for the conjunctive writing system over the disjunctive writing system. He argues that for African languages, the conjunctive system is more appropriate as it is easier and poses fewer challenges for both writers and readers. The following examples show how social media users predominantly write conjunctively, particularly concerning verbs.

Mwatokelwapo,,ngenge takutiwa ondina oshinhoko oshahala kutya ngeipi? 20:23

Example 2

Ondahala ndikulandele omalodu oilya taalandifwa pomatala ashakati. Vati oumahole. Ile inandikulandela tatekulu? 07:35

Example 3

Ondali ndaya koshikango onghela, iniimonako sha kwinya ame. Shapo otamukeyako fiku limwe tuyeko shapo. 06:41

Example 4

Based on the three samples provided, the conjunctive writing system appears preferable to the disjunctive writing system, particularly in the treatment of verbs. The findings indicate that the general public demonstrates a preference for conjunctive writing over disjunctive writing. This preference is attributed to the perception that disjunctive writing presents challenges for both readers and writers, particularly regarding the division of words and morphemes. This study therefore recommends a comprehensive discussion on the conjunctive versus disjunctive writing systems, as advocated by Cole (1975) and Shikesho (2020; 2021) and Shikesho and Josef (2020). In this context, it is essential to consider sociopolitical factors, practicality, and ease of acquisition.

12.3 The issue of overrepresentation and underrepresentation

Cahill and Karan (2008) explain that overrepresentation in orthography occurs when more graphemes are used than there are phonemes, either by employing multiple graphemes for a single phoneme or assigning distinct symbols to allophones of the same phoneme. In *"Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"*, the word *omunhu* exemplifies this issue, as it includes a mute letter, resulting in more graphemes than phonemes.

To preserve one-to-one phoneme-grapheme correspondence, the word should be rendered as *omnhu*. This suggests that nouns in classes 1 and 4 of the Oshikwanyama

noun class system are overrepresented, with the correct class prefix being *-m-* rather than *-mu-*. Such overrepresentation may stem from dialectal variation, where some dialects perceive and articulate distinctions that others do not, or from influences of trade or official languages that differentiate sounds, prompting the use of distinct symbols. For instance, Oshikwanyama contrasts the sound /di/ with Oshimbadja's /dji/, demonstrating how dialectal differences can challenge orthographic consistency and representation. Compare the following example.

Oshikwanyama sound		*Oshimbadja sound*		*Translation equivalent[s]*
Otava	di	Otava	**dji**	They are coming from
kOshakati.		kOshakati		Oshakati.
Onaidi**mba**		Onai**dji**mba		Onai**di**mba/Onai**dji**mba
				Village

Incorporating phonemic distinctions into the proposed orthography has significant implications for linguistic inclusivity and accuracy. Given the phonetic similarities between the Oshimbadja dialect and Oshikwanyama, it is reasonable to justify limited overrepresentation to capture relevant phonemic variations. As such, this study advocates for the integration of distinct sounds from Oshimbadja, and potentially from other closely related dialects such as Oshivale, Oshikafima, and Oshindombodola, into the development of "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4". This approach ensures that the orthography reflects the broader phonological diversity of the speech community while promoting a more representative and inclusive writing system.

12.4   Unilectal and multilectal approach

Cahill (2008) defines unilectal approach as an approach in which one dialect serves as the basis for the written form; the others make a mental adjustment while Jones and Mooney (2020) define a multilectal approach as one that incorporates linguistic features from several dialects to create a more inclusive standard.

It has been established that a unilectal approach was adopted in selecting Oshikwanyama as the representative dialect for the orthography, while Oshimbadja, Oshivale, Oshikafima, and Oshindombodola make a mental adjustment. This approach implies that Oshikwanyama was chosen to reflect the orthographic standards of a single dialect. For discussions on the unilectal approach, Cahill (2014) and Jones and Mooney (2020) provide foundational insights. However, the current study advocates for the adoption of a multilectal approach, particularly in the revision of "Oshikwanyama Orthography 3". This approach suggests that other closely related dialects of Oshikwanyama should be integrated into the orthography, thereby promoting the revitalisation and further development of previously neglected orthographies.

13.   Recommendations based on the findings

- Since Oshikwanyama is a cross-border language, this study recommends the creation of a unified orthography—*Oshikwanyama Orthography 4*—to promote the development of the language in both Namibia and Angola. After nearly a century of unresolved orthographic issues, a bilateral agreement is urgently needed. The new orthography should serve as a standard reference for educational use and literary expression without reigniting past controversies, instead fostering inclusivity and functionality.

- It is further recommended that workshops and formal consultations between Namibia and Angola be reconvened to address and resolve the issue of adopting a common orthography.

- To strengthen and develop Oshikwanyama, both countries should collaborate closely. Echoing Cole's (1975) proposal, this study supports the adoption of a conjunctive writing system—**with necessary modifications**—as it aligns with Bantu linguistic norms and is user-friendly.

- The current map of Namibia showing 13 political regions is outdated and politically oriented, failing to accurately reflect where Oshikwanyama is predominantly spoken. It is advised that the proposed *Oshikwanyama Omushangelo 4* adopt a linguistic map, such as the one recommended by Shikesho (2019, p.11), to better represent language distribution.

- Community involvement is vital for orthographic acceptance. Although communities with limited education may initially participate less, their inclusion in decision-making significantly improves adoption. A good orthography alone does not guarantee literacy success; it must be supported by effective teaching methods, relevant materials, and motivated instruction.

- For the orthography to be truly effective, collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders is essential. These include university lecturers in Namibia, Angola, and abroad; media professionals; church leaders; policymakers; education officials; teachers; parents; the general public; and private-sector representatives.

- The establishment of an independent organisation dedicated to Oshikwanyama and its dialects is crucial. The current "Oshikwanyama Curriculum Committee" mainly addresses educational issues, overlooking broader language development. A more inclusive body, with representatives from diverse sectors—such as education, churches, media, and businesses—should be formed to guide and advance the language holistically.

- It is suggested that the proposed "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4" contain both vowel chart and consonant charts as follows:

Oshikwanyama and other variants [Oshimbadja, Oshikafima, Oshindobodola] short and long vowels [*Oulitumbuli vaxupi naava vale*] and their phonetic transcription.

a	aa	e	ee	i	ii	o	oo	u	uu
/a/	/aː/	/ɛ/	/ɛː/	/i/	/iː/	/ɔ/	/ɔː/	/u/	/uː/

Table 3: The presentation of Oshikwanyama vowels. Source: own elaboration

The following table represents some of the Oshikwanyama sounds [including monographs, digraphs, and trigraphs] and their phonetic transcriptions.

b	bw	d	dj	dw	f	fy	fw	g	gw	h
/b/	/bʷ/	/d/	/dʒ/	/dʷ/	/f/	/fi/	/fʷ/	/g/	/gʷ/	/h/
j	k	kw	l	ly	lw	m	mb	mby	mbw	Mhy
/j/	/k/	/kw/	/l/	/li/	/lʷ/	/m/	/mb/	/mbi/	/mbʷ/	/mɟ/
my	mw	n	nd	ndj	ndjw	ndw	ng	nh	ngh	ngw
/mi /	/mw/	/n/	/nd/	/ndʒ/	/ndʒʷ/	/ndʷ/	/ŋ/	/ŋh/	/ŋgʰ/	/ŋgʷ/
nghw	ny	nyw	nw	p	py	pw	s	sh	shw	t
/ŋgʷ/	/ɲ/	/ɲw/	/nw/	/p/	/pi/	/pʷ/	/s/	/ʃ/	/ʃʷ/	/t/

ty	tw	v	vy	vw	w	x	xw	y	mh	
/tʲ/	/tw/	/v/	/vʲ/	/vʷ/	/w/	/χ/	/χw/	/j/	/mh/	

Table 4: The presentation of Oshikwanyama consonants. Source: Own elaboration.

14.   Conclusion

The present study evaluated the current *"Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"* [*Oshikwanyama Omushangelo 3*], focusing specifically on its merits and demerits. Attention was also given to the way the members of the public write, especially in terms of verbs, and it is revealed that most people write conjunctively over disjunctively. *A posteriori* approach was used to evaluate the Oshikwanyama existing orthography. The theory adopted is that of Williamson of 1984 on the principles that should be adopted in the compilation of a good orthography.

The *"Oshikwanyama Orthography 3"* needs serious consideration in terms of its revision as it contains a lot of demerits, such as typographical errors, presentation of nouns, incorrect vowel transcriptions, and consonant transcriptions, among other things. The results and discussion of this current study suggest that there is an urgent need for "Oshikwanyama Orthography 4". This will aid in the development of the Oshikwanyama language, not only in Namibia but also in other countries, such as Angola, where more than 400,000 people use Oshikwanyama.

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