

Thirteenth International Olympiad in Linguistics

Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), 20–24 July 2015

Team Contest Problem

While traveling in South Africa, one tourist was faced with a need to fill in a certain document in Northern Sotho. Even though he did not know a word of that language, he easily figured out what this meant:

Nomoro ya phaspoto: ('passport number')

Aterese ya emeile: ('email address')

But he did not know what this meant:

Leina, sefane:

Naga:

Letšatšikgvedi la matswalo:

Bong:

Batswadi:

Mma:

Tate:

Bana:

Mmala wa mahlo:

Unfortunately, no interpreter was available, just a monolingual dictionary of Northern Sotho. Here is what the tourist found there:

<i>mma</i>	<i>motswadi wa ka wa mosadi, yo a mpelegego</i>
<i>tate</i>	<i>monna yo a ntswetšego</i>
<i>bong</i>	<i>sepharologanyi seo se šupago gore motho goba phoofolo ke monna goba mosadi</i>
<i>matswalo</i>	<i>letšatši le kgvedi tšeo motho a belegilwego ka tšona</i>
<i>naga</i>	<i>lefase leo le arotšwego la go ba le batho ba bantši, leo le nago le mmušo wo o lego ka fase ga taolo ya presitente le bathuši ba gagwe; naga e šomiša tšhelete ya go fapana le ya dinaga tše dingwe</i>
<i>mmala</i>	<i>ponagalo ya selo yeo gantši e ka tšwelelago gabotse ge e le mosegare ka lebaka la mahlasedi a letšatši, selo seo se ka bonagala e le se se hubedu, tala, tšhweu bjalobjalo</i>
<i>mahlo</i>	<i>dikgokolwana tše pedi tša bošweu le boso tšeo di lego sefahlegong ka godimo ga nko, di šoma go lebelela le go bona</i>

At first, this did not help much. But, leafing through the dictionary for a while, the tourist read some more dictionary entries:

Basotho	<i>batho ba Afrika Borwa bao setlogong sa bona ba tšwago nageng ya Lesotho, bao ba bolelago Sesotho sa Borwa bjalo ka polelo yeo ba e antšego letsweleng</i>
beke	<i>lebaka la go bopša ke matšatši a šupago</i>
bona	<i>go diriša mahlo go lebelela</i>
iri	<i>lebaka la nako la go bopša ke metsotso ye masometshela</i>
kgwedi	<i>lebaka le go bopšago ke dibeke tše nne go iša go tše hlano</i>
leina	<i>lentšu goba sehlopha sa mantšu seo se fiwago le go relwa motho gomme a bitšwa ka lona</i>
lekgolo	<i>nomoro ye kgolo ya go bopša ke masome a lesome</i>
lesome	<i>nomoro ye nnyane ye e fetago senyane, ya go bopša ke ge go hlakanywa senyane le tee</i>
letšatši	<i>1. lebaka la nako la go bopša ke diiri tše masomepedinne 2. polanete ye kgolokgolo ya nkgokolo ya mahlasedi a phišo ye ntši selemo, yeo e rotogago bohlabela mesong ya phatša leratadima go ya bodikela, ge e se gona e ba leswiswi</i>
metsotso	<i>lebaka la nako la go bopša ke metsotswana ye masometshela</i>
monna	<i>motho wa bong bja botona</i>
monwana	<i>setho sa mmele seo se lego seatleng goba leotong, sa dinokonoko sa go otlologa, gantši se šoma go swara</i>
morwa	<i>ngwana wa mošemane</i>
morwedi	<i>ngwana wa mosetsana</i>
mosadi	<i>motho wa bong bja botshadi</i>
mošemane	<i>ngwana wa bong bja botona</i>
mosetsana	<i>ngwana wa bong bja botshadi</i>
motswadi	<i>mosadi goba monna yo a nago le ngwana goba bana</i>
ngwaga	<i>lebaka la dikgwedi tše lesomepedi</i>
ngwedi	<i>selo sa nkgokolo seo se bonagalago bošego leratadimeng seo se tlišago seedi se segolo lefaseng, se hlatha mabaka a kgwedi</i>
nkgokolo	<i>sebopego sa go raretša seo se swanago le kgwele ya maoto, kenywa ya tamati, namune, bjalobjalo</i>
nne	<i>nomoro ye nnyane ye e fetago tharo, ya go bopša ke ge go hlakanywa tharo le tee</i>
pedi	<i>nomoro ye nnyane ye e fetago tee, ya go bopša ke ge go hlakanywa tee le tee</i>
seatla	<i>setho sa mmele seo se lego mafelelong a letsogo sa mphaphathi sa menwana, se šoma go swara</i>
sefane	<i>leina le tee leo maloko ka moka a lapa a le šomišago</i>
šupa	<i>1. go emišetša letsogo pejana mola monwana o lebile pele ka nepo ya gore motho a bone seo se nepiwago goba seo go bolelwago ka sona 2. nomoro ye nnyane ye e fetago tshela, ya go bopša ke ge go hlakanywa tshela le tee</i>
tšhelete	<i>silibera le koporo tša nkgokolo goba pampiri yeo e ngwadilwego ya khutlonne, yeo e šomišwago go reka dilo, yeo e lego bohlokwa kudu ekonoming ya naga</i>

After that, he could fill in everything.

Then the tourist became interested in the Northern Sotho language and found out he could now understand more definitions:

koko	BONA <i>makgolo</i> , <i>rakgolo</i>
makgolo	<i>mmagotate goba mmagomma</i>
rakgolo	<i>tatagotate goba tatagomma</i>
setlogolo	<i>ngwana wa ngwanake</i>
kgaletšedi	<i>ngwana wa batswadi ba ka wa mosetsana goba wa mosadi</i>
moratho	<i>ngwana wa mmago, e ka ba wa mosetsana goba mošemane</i>

- (a) After the tourist filled in everything, the official who took his documents told him something like “*Šupa ka monwana šupa*”. At first the tourist did not know what he was supposed to do. But when they showed him, the tourist understood the connection between the two meanings of the word *šupa*. Explain what the connection is.
- (b) How is *tharo* defined in this dictionary?
- (c) What can you say about the origin of the word *lekgolo*?
- (d) Construct a bilingual Northern Sotho–English dictionary and a Northern Sotho grammar, as comprehensive as possible from the data of this team assignment.

⚠ The Northern Sotho language belongs to the Bantu sub-branch of the Niger-Congo family. It is one of 11 official languages of the Republic of South Africa, where approx. 4.6 million people use it as their first language. —*Boris Iomdin*

English text: Boris Iomdin.

Good luck!