in Setswana because stress is manifested in it (University of Botswana 1999). This paper postulates a change in the length of the penultimate syllable in the speech of these children due to influence from English because English stress does not require the lengthening of the penultimate syllable. An investigation of this matter will not only enrich L1 attrition literature but will also provide insightful information of the L2 learning experiences on L1.

2. Status of English in Botswana

Botswana is a landlocked country situated in Southern Africa. She shares the border with Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Botswana, formerly known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate is a former British colony. Upon the country's attainment of independence in 1966, English became the official language and Setswana the national language. It is worth noting that there are different Setswana varieties/dialects spoken in Botswana. As the official language, English permeates the social, economic and cultural lives of Botswana (Nyati-Ramahobo 2004). English is the medium of communication in all government correspondence and records. It is the language which is used in most official and formal transactions in government, business and the religious sector. For example, even though both Setswana and English are used in the media, the use of English outweighs that of Setswana. All the newspapers are in English, except the government *Daily News* and *Mmegi*, which have a small section in Setswana. The same applies to radio stations. Of all the five radio stations in the country, only one uses Setswana as its main medium of communication. The high prestige of English has resulted in negative attitudes towards Setswana and other local languages as people favour it over their native languages. One who speaks English well is regarded as intelligent and belonging to a high social class (Mathangwane 2008).

Since English plays a major role in almost all aspects of

In light of this literature

interpersonal and intrapersonal variations were also reported, as not all the participants showed L1 attrition.

It is remarkable that most of the prominent research on L1 attrition in phonetics is on adult immigrants. Could this imply that L1 attrition on non-immigrant children is impossible? It will be interesting to investigate L1 attrition by children in the native environment as this will not only broaden the scope of L1 attrition research but will also provide a platform for more vigorous research in this area. On this note this paper argues for an investigation on the possible extent of attrition in the Setswana penultimate syllable length in the speech of children who attend private English-medium schools in Botswana. In order to put this into perspective an elaborate discussion of the Setswana penultimate syllable length is given in the following section.

5. Penultimate syllable length in Setswana

To provide a full context for the syllabic focus of the research design, it is useful to summarise here current assumptions on syllable structure. A syllable comprises of a peak/nucleus which has little or no airflow obstruction and is the place in the syllable where sonority is greatest (Roach 2009). It is the core or central part of the syllable (Katamba 1989; Roach 2009). The peak/nucleus may be a vowel sound, such as (!, e, æ, ", #, $, i%, &%, '%, (%, u%) in RP English or (!, i ,), *, (, $, u) in Setswana. A sonorous consonant – e.g. nasal sounds (n, m, +) and liquid sounds (l, r) – can also be the peak/nucleus; sonorous sounds are evaluated as such in terms of their loudness (Roach 2009). Vowels have the greatest sonority, while plosive consonants having the least (Katamba 1989). It is for this reason that vowels are often the peak/nucleus of the syllable. Since nasal and liquid sounds are close to the vowel in the sonority hierarchy, they can take the position of a vowel and become the peak/nucleus of the syllable in the absence of a vowel. Consonants that have this ability are referred t

indicated by two V's (VV) meaning two of the same vowel. The same applies to syllabic consonants in the event that they take up the position of a vowel where there is no vowel.

It is worth noting that the penultimate syllable length rule discourages monosyllabic words (University of Botswana 1999). However, this account fails to explain the existence of monosyllabic words such as:

Ja	/ , a/	[=eat]
fa	/fa/	[=here]

It could be argued that the use of the word 'discourages' acknowledges the existence of monosyllabic words. Nonetheless, an elaborate discussion of their presence in a language where disyllabic (or more) words are central to the phonology is essential.

6. Conclusion

This paper investigated L1 attrition in the strittriaper

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