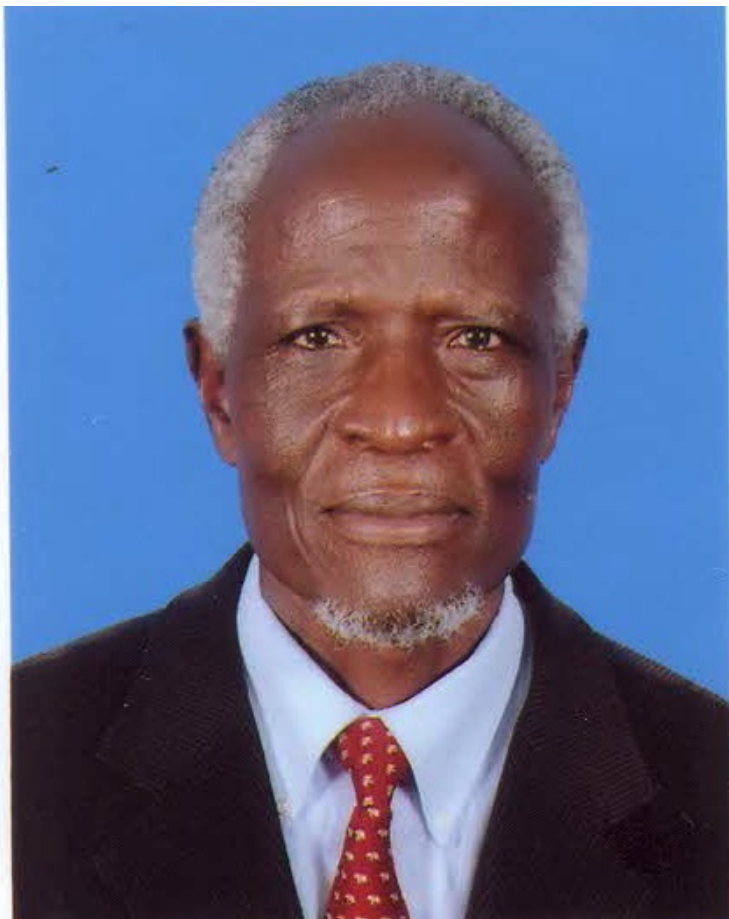# INAUGURAL LECTURE

Literacy, Language and Liberty:
The Cultural Politics of English as Official Language in Africa

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Edward Kembo–Sure

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

The debate on the value and appropriateness of English as the language of governance and education around the world has been going on for many decades and it is not going to end any time soon. The lecture tries to link **literacy (**primarily the ability to write and read), **liberty** (the fundamental individual and group rights) and the **language** in which literacy is taught and utilized, and the medium in which liberty is expressed and exercised. In situations of linguistic diversity as is the case in most of Africa, the choice of language for vital public functions entails competition among interest groups and hence the need to probe the link between language choice and the distribution of power (economic and political) over different sectors of the society.

The use of English as official language in countries where it is not native is associated with cultural, political and economic domination and has been dubbed as a perfect example of cultural imperialism, what Phillipson (1992) calls Linguistic Imperialism and Ngugi (1986) refers to as colonization of the mind.

The strong negative reactions to English in Africa and elsewhere sound very convincing and on moral grounds, wins a lot of hearts. However, the fact that English has continued to expand its territory in the former British colonies as well as other African countries colonized by other European countries, calls for a more critical examination of the complex issue of language choice. The other thinkers consider the anti-English crusaders as practicing 'inverse snobbery;' that is, now that they have succeeded because of the enabling power of English they would wish to keep the rest on the other side of the River Jordan, what Edwards (1985) terms 'ghettoizing' of those without proficiency in English. According to Bamgbose (2000) the 'linguistic rightists' are being 'idealistic' and as long as states do not commit themselves to enforcing international treaties, calling for these rights is useless.

The lecture discusses the Ethiopian and Tanzanian experiences with English and compares their cases with Kenya to try to find an alternative language policy for Kenya. The paper proposes a rational language policy that avoids extreme views but tries to harmonize the pragmatic (which may only provide short-term solution) and the ideal (which may sound unrealistic now but hold the only key to a lasting solution). According to Fishman (1985) this is possible when we allow ourselves to be 're-linguified and be 're ethnified' by embracing multilingualism and developing what he calls 'panhumanism', a state in which diversity is celebrated and the best in all languages and cultures are exploited for the good of all. Not any one language can do this.

Citation

Professor Kembo–Sure was born on October 1, 1947 to Mzee Samson Sure Ogalo and four mothers — Rosebela Okoth, Regina Omach, Mary Akinyi and Frida Odonde. He is the fifth child in a big family of over 50 children and grandchildren.

He joined God–Bura Primary School in 1956 and left in 1963 after doing his Kenya African Primary Education (KAPE). He then went to Mirogi Secondary School where he did the Cambridge 'O' School level Certificate in 1967 and passed with a second division.

In 1968 Prof. Kembo-Sure joined Railway Training School to train as a Station Master with the East Africa Railways and Harbours Corporation. He worked for the East African Railways Corporation until 1974 when he joined Kenyatta University College after passing his London GCE 'A' Levels – Economics, British History and Kiswahili.

Prof. Kembo-Sure graduated from Kenyatta University College in 1977 with a Bachelor of Education (English and Literature) Upper Second Class Honours. He was top in his English class and was awarded the Mobil Oil Merit Award for the best student.

In August 1977 he was posted to Kijabe High School where he taught English and Literature at both 'O' and 'A' levels until 1980 when he won a government scholarship to do a Masters in Education at Kenyatta University College.

In February 1978 he got married to Jane Atieno and they have two sons, Michael Kembo and Bill Kembo. Michael is a Planning Executive with Scan Group while Bill is a Network Administrator with Standard Group.

1n 1983 he graduated with a Masters degree in Education and was immediately promoted to Lecturer and posted to teach English at Kagumo Diploma Teachers' College in Nyeri.

In 1985 he was promoted to Senior Lecturer and posted to Kisii Diploma Teachers' College where he was Head of the English Department.

In 1986 Prof. Kembo Sure earned a British Council Scholarship under the British Technical Cooperation Awards to Kenya and was admitted to Leeds University in the UK for a Masters degree in Linguistics.

He returned to Kenya in 1987 and was immediately appointed Assistant Lecturer in the Department of English at Moi University, where he has been for the last twenty six years.

He was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (Linguistics) of Moi University in 1996 and promoted to the rank of Full Professor in 2007.

His area of specialization is Sociolinguistics but more specifically Language Policy and Planning where he has done extensive research and published.

He has written numerous conference and journal papers and contributed to and edited scholarly books, the best known are *African Voices: An Introduction to African Linguistics and Languages* (with Vic Webs) published by Oxford University Press 2000 and *Linguistic Human Rights and Language Policy in Kenya* (with Nathan Ogechi) published by OSSREA, 2009.

The major research projects undertaken include:

- **A Study of World Varieties of English.** He was a member of the International team compiling International Corpus of English (ICE) and in charge of the Kenya data. From the data Dr. Serah Waitiki eventually wrote her Ph.D at the University of Chemnitz under Professor Josef Shmied – Professor Kembo Sure's associate in the ICE project. This project led to an East African Corpus now available on the Web.

- **Linguistic Human Rights and Language Policy in Kenya** funded by the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA).

- **A Study of Discourse in the Provision of Medical Services** funded by Moi University.

- The Suba Ethnolinguistic Revival Efforts

Professor Kembo-Sure has won several Awards and Fellowships:

- **Mobil Oil Merit Award** for the best final year English Student 1976 – 77 at Kenyatta University College.

- **DAAD Visiting Research Fellow** at Bayreuth University, Germany, June-August, 1990.

- **Human Sciences Research Council Visiting Scholar** at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, February – April 1997.

- **DAAD Senior Scholars Fellowship** at the University of Chemnitz, Germany, 2003.

- **CODESRIA Textbook Writing Award** 2007.

• **University of South Africa Research Associate** 2010-2012.

He has been a member of many organisations, institutions and professional bodies including:

• English Panel – Kenya National Examinations Council

• English Panel – Kenya Institute of Education

• International Committee on International Corpus of English (ICE)

• Association of Third World Studies and Founder Chair of the Kenyan Chapter.

• African Council for Communication Education (ACCE)

• Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)

• Organisation for Development of Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA)

• Linguistic Society of India

• Multilingual Network East Africa

Professor Kembo–Sure has been on the Editorial Boards of a number of journals including:

• The Journal of Sociolinguistic Studies

• Dialogue

• Language Matters

• MAARIFA Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

He has been Head of Department for a number of years and served in various Senate Committees. He was also a member of the AfriqUnits Project on Academic Programmes Assessment in East African Higher Education Institutions.

Prof. Richard K. Mibey, FWIF, EBS

Vice Chancellor

Moi University

July 18, 2013

Chapter One

Introduction

Opening Remarks: An American thinker once wrote, "We are great Abbreviators, meaning that none of us has the wit to know the whole truth and the time to tell it, if we believe we did, or an audience so gullible as to accept it"(Postman 1985:6). And so, I do not believe I have the wit to know the whole truth and I believe that you- the audience before me this afternoon, are not gullible enough to be ready to accept what I am going to say as the whole truth. In fact, what I am going to present to you this afternoon is but a tiny part of the bigger truth about the topic under discussion.

In June 1974, I reported at Kenyatta University College to register as an undergraduate for a degree in education. Like many young Kenyans, I id not know exactly what this entailed, but one thing I was sure of was that I did not want to be a teacher. My father, who was once a teacher, had wanted me to go to a Teachers' Training College but I firmly refused because I wanted a job in the city. So, at the registration desk I was asked what I wanted to study and I said, 'Philosophy'. I had read books by Jean Paul Satre and S. Kierkegaard when I lived with a cousin who had studied in France and I thought that was something worth my while.

The registration officers told me I could not do philosophy as a specialization at a College of Education and that the nearest I could go to philosophy was to register for Religious Studies. So, I registered for Religious Studies and because I needed a second

teaching subject I opted for History. I attended the lectures for two weeks but soon realized that I was in the wrong place and had to move on. After consultation with friends I decided I was going to do English and Literature. So, I picked courage and went to see the Head of Languages, Linguistics and Literature (LLL), which included Kiswahili and French studies. The Head of Department, Dr. Elderkin (a British Linguist) listened to my story, picked up his pen and wrote a list of words on a piece of paper and shoved it across the table and asked me to read them aloud.

Cat   [kæt]

Cut   [k^t]

Cart   [ka:t]

Curt   [k3:t]

I did, but mixed them all up. He was amused but nevertheless directed me to the secretary where I was given the registration forms to fill out. Perhaps you might think that I mixed up the pronunciations because Kenyans cannot distinguish pronunciations of these words, but you are wrong. When I was in Form Two my English teacher, Mr. Siro Onduru had just graduated from Makerere University and was enthusiastic to make a difference in the world of language teaching. He then started by teaching us the phonetic alphabet to enable us to get the correct pronunciation of English words from the dictionary. It was only a matter a week and we were at home with the phonetic symbols you see against each of the above words. If I had not been taught the strange alphabet I would have had no difficulty at all because the vowel sounds in those words would have been one. Thus,

Cat ——————
Cut ——————
Curt ——————
Cart ——————

[kat]
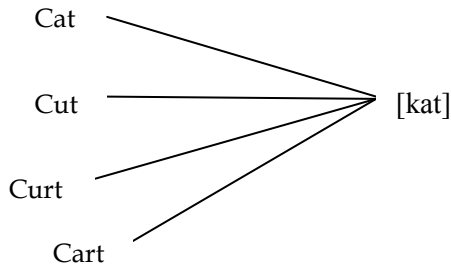
This is what my colleagues Serah Mwangi and Emmanuel Furaha call Kenyan English (Mwangi 2003, Furaha 2010). The truth is that untrained ears of Kenyans speaking English cannot perceive the differences in the pronunciation of the four words but for native speakers the differences are so obvious that they cannot just understand how we fail to notice them. Let us look at other examples to see if we need to bother about these 'little things'.

kendo   [kendo]   'again'

kendo   [kendo]   'fire place'

kendo   [kendò]   'to marry'

These three words are physically similar in Dholuo but they mean three entirely different things because of change of tone placement; that is, what kind of tone is placed on which vowel sound. This difference which is slight in other languages means a whole lot in Dholuo and Dholuo speakers do not confuse the words at all. Speakers of the Kalenjin group of languages exploit tone do appreciate this as a significant distinction, but speakers of European languages do not.

The third example involves length of vowel sounds which has no significance in English and many other languages but is considered as a major meaning-bearing unit in, for example, Ekegusii, Naandi and Kipsigis.

Kipsigis / Nandi

cham	[tʃam]	'love'	chaam	[tʃaːm]	'whisper'
sir	[sír]	'write'	siir	[síːr]	'pass'
lel	[lɛl]	'err'	leel	[lɛːl]	'white'
ker	[kɛr]	'close'	keer	[kɛːr]	'see'

Ekegusii

aka [aka] 'to paint'   aaka [aːka] 'to hit'

rema [rema] 'to dig'   reema [reːma] be insufficient (esp. of funds)

rika [rika] 'to get stuck' riika [riːka] 'to write'

kura[kura] 'to make'   kuura[kuːra] 'to scream'

In English it does not matter the length of a vowel, the meaning of a word will remain the same. For example, in American Standard English 'god' is pronounced as [gaːd] with a long vowel whereas in British English it is pronounced as [gɒd] with a much shorter vowel but the meaning remains one. These distinctions are at the sound level where we deal with physical properties of sounds (phonetics) and how the sounds function in words to provide semantic distinctions (phonology).

Another level of language study that gives us a glimpse of what happens in the human mind is language acquisition, where the conventional explanation is that children learn by listening to what adults say and repeating until they have the structures fixed in their 'brains'. True as this might be in learning some aspects of human language, research evidence shows that there is more to language acquisition than rote learning. For example, English children learning their mother tongue have been observed to make the following errors:

* He goed yesterday

* Daddy has many sheeps

* My car breaked

These deviations resemble the ones Kenyan children produce while learning English. The same principle which gives us the forms 'goed', 'sheeps' and 'breaked' will lead the non-Luos to provide correct forms in the following data which are also heard in the speech of Luo children beginning to acquire the language.

Singular	Plural	
Pala	[pelni]	'knife'
Kitanda	[kitendni]	'bed'
*Dhako	dhekni	'woman'
*Punda	pundni	'donkey'

Since English children do not hear their parents use the forms 'goed', 'sheeps' and 'breaked' we can only conclude that these are creations of the learners themselves after they have observed that there are rules in the language generating forms like 'dogs'

from the singular form 'dog' and 'kicked' from the present tense form 'kick'. Through the same inferencing process, learners of Dholuo will produce forms like 'dhekni' and 'pundni' which they have not heard from adult native speakers. This is a universal feature of language-learner speech observed in all languages in all language- learning situations.

The English verbs 'go' and 'break' and noun 'sheep' belong to the irregular classes and are treated as exceptions. Similarly Dholuo plural forms 'mon' from 'dhako' and 'punde' form 'punda' are generated by different rules.

The same creativity is seen in the treatment of words borrowed from other languages. When there is a lexical gap because a new concept has appeared in our cultural setting, we may not need to coin a new word from within our language; we can adopt the foreign word and adapt it to sound like the indigenous words.

Borrowed English words in Naandi

prambenit	'frying pan'
tepit	'tape'
toochit	'torch'
purekit	'brake'
sistaiyat	'sister'
sokisinik	'socks'
plapkot	'blackboard'
reparen	'reverend'

The new forms these English words have acquired is a result of grammatical processing of the words to harmonize their sounds with the existing Naandi sounds; this is called morpho–phonemic adaptation, a process of aligning the words by applying Naandi word-formation rules and sound-combination rules. For example, Naandi nouns end with – it, or nik, depending on which sounds are involved and so borrowed words must resemble Naandi words by being assigned the appropriate endings. Modifications are also done to make sure that sounds occur only where Naandi sound combination rules allow. For example, in Naandi sounds like 'd', 'b' and g' do not occur at the end of a word; so blackboard becomes 'plapkot' and not 'plapkod'.

The indigenization of the words has occurred to the extent that even native speakers of Naandi do not recognize them as foreign and neither would English native speakers recognize them as coming from their language.

These examples demonstrate the limitless power of human language; they show the hidden wonders of the grammars of languages of the world as they function to satisfy the desires, thoughts and fears of their users. 'Never at any time does language fail to gratify, enthral and amaze even its own native speakers' (Kembo–Sure 2002). This is because of the infinite versatility with which meanings, thoughts and intentions can be expressed in language symbolisms, something that the Creator distributed evenly to all languages in all cultures of the world. In a more forceful way, Lederer (1991) argues that language is what clearly separates us from other animals and it provides us with an incredible liberation of the mind:

> It is only through the gift of language that the child acquires reason, the complexity of thought then sets him or her apart from other creatures who share this planet. The birth of

> language is the dawn of humanity; in our beginning was the word. We have always been endowed with language because we had words, We were not human beings (p3).

Lederer echoes the words of the German philosopher ,Ludwig Wittgenstein that 'The limits of my language are the limits of my mind. All I know is what I have words for. *Without the word we are imprisoned; possessing the word, we are set free* (Lederer 1991:3) (emphasis added)

The liberating effect of language is also illustrated by the story of Hellen Keller who was born deaf, mute and blind and only learned her first word when she was seven years. She remembers this miraculous event in her life as follows:

> Somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew that 'w-a-t-e-r' meant that wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!… I left the well-house eager to learn. *Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought"* (Lederer, 1991: 5) (emphasis added)

There is no doubt about the exhilarating effect the dawn of language brings to anybody learning a first language and for such an individual it is a mystery that is accompanied by disbelief, joy and excitement. The description of one's experience with language borders on the spiritual and defies realistic description. For Herder (cited in Fishman 1985: 485) this occurs best in one's mother tongue:

> …neither individual nor collective creativity are possible if the authentic ethnic language is lost.

Levels of Linguistic Study

Linguistics is loosely called the science of language and this hides in it plenty of important detail. For a long time linguistics was studied as a sub-discipline of philosophy, anthropology or sociology. However, from the beginning of the 20th Century and most particularly, with the insistence of Saussure to delimit the study of language to make it an autonomous discipline, linguistics became a respectable well defined field of study by the end of the first half of the 20th Century. However, since the 1970s the field has grown and has broken its seams and the boundaries have become once again fuzzy.
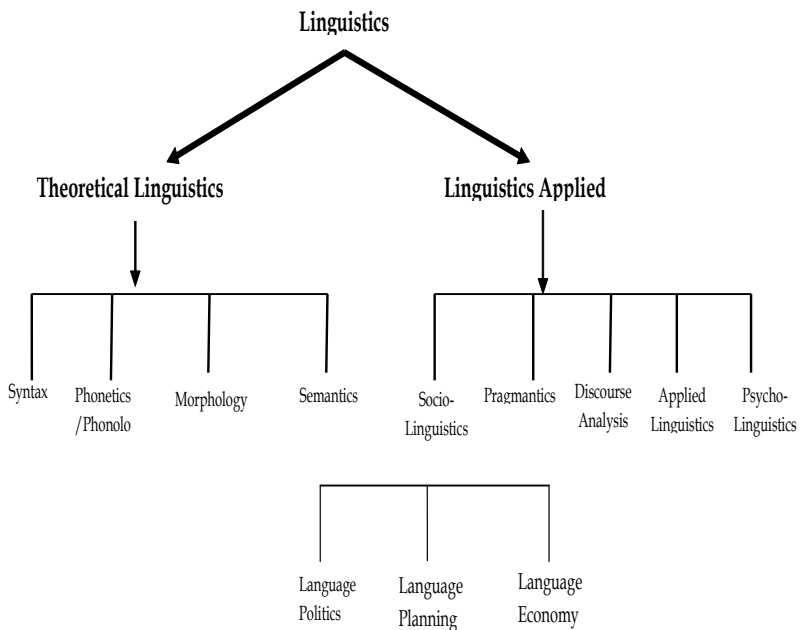
Figure1: Branches of Linguistics

In this muddle, I find myself in the sociolinguistic branch of linguistics where we deal with language use and language varieties in the society; what some people prefer to call 'secular linguistics' as opposed to theoretical, abstract linguistics. Under sociolinguistics there are also a number of new sub-disciplines such as language policy and planning, language politics, language economics or economics of language etc. I happen to be in Language Policy and Planning, which deals with questions like: How many languages are in the country? Who speaks which language? What is the population of speakers of each language? Which language(s) is/are official? Which language(s) is/are used in education as media of instruction and/or taught as subjects? At what level is each language introduced and for how long is it taught or used as medium of instruction?

Since we are dealing with apportioning functions to languages, we are dealing with competition since functions bestow relative social prestige to languages. Knowing a language and being able to read and write a language (literacy) is not only a skill but also a defining symbol; it tells the world who you are and/or who you would like to be. For example, if that language is not your mother tongue, is it adding to your repertoire of literacy skills or leading to loss of your capacity to develop other literacy skills? Does it lead to increased cultural confidence or to culture shock and self-doubt? All these questions are the concern of those who live in multilingual societies and linguists are from time to time called upon to give expert opinion about them.

This lecture is about the acquisition of literacy, the maximal utilization of it to the benefit of the individual and community, and the attendant fundamental liberties that must be negotiated when a non-native language has to be used as medium of education and governance. The lecture is about language

management in an ecological system that supports multiple linguistic codes and speakers of many languages. Without any doubt the linguistic diversity in Africa can partly be attributed to the colonial history of the continent and partly to the globalization processes causing people to seek proficiency in a variety of languages. The discussion will therefore include a commentary on the effect of colonialism on the choice, acquisition and use of the many languages in our environment.

The ideological stance taken in this lecture is that multilingualism is a value in itself because each language has a special, unique and valuable contribution to the fund of knowledge needed to advance the cause of human civilization. As stated by UNESCO (cited in Makoni and Truddel 2009:34):

> The world's languages represent an extraordinary wealth of human creativity. They contain and express the total 'pool of ideas' nurtured over time through heritage, local traditions and customs communicated through local languages. So a loss of any language is a loss to humanity and a loss to linguistics.

This approach is in no way treating languages as mere cultural artifacts nor does it consider languages as pure biological entities like plants and animals. Language is regarded as a complex amalgam of both cultural creation and innate endowment with a dynamic existence. That is, no language is totally independent of the others as plants and animals are and no language is complete in its present state of existence.

Chapter Two

Literacy and Human Progress

Introduction

> The invention of writing was the greatest movement by which mankind rose from barbarism to civilization. How vast its effect was, may be best measured by looking at the low condition of tribes still living without it; dependent on memory for their traditions and rules of life, and unable to amass knowledge as we do by keeping record of events, and storing up new observations for the use of future generations. Thus it is no doubt right to draw a line between barbarian and civilized where the art of writing comes in, for this gives permanence to history and science. Such knowledge so goes with writing, that when a man is spoken of as leaned we at once take it to mean that he has read many books which are the main source men learn from (Taylor, 1898 cited in Collins and Blot 2003:9).

The nineteenth century notion of literacy as a defining attribute of a civilized man and the lack of it as a mark of barbarism may sound unpalatable and archaic, but the sweeping characterization of a person or group as backward, uncultured, and even ignorant, because they cannot read and write, is still alive in the 21st century. The tone of Taylor's argument smacks of racial bigotry, typical of anthropological field research reports of his time. Europe had just got into cultural contact with the rest of the world

with 'inferior' technological innovation and unfamiliar social formations. Literacy was certainly a distinguishing feature, but obviously not the only one and not the most important.

However, the present development discourse is awash with plans to provide more literacy with a view to improving health, education, agriculture, industrialization etc. Governments, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO and the major NGOs are all talking about literacy as a primary infrastructure if economic, socio–cultural and scientific development is to be realized in the shortest time possible. The recent announcement by the Jubilee government that all Kenyan children joining Standard One in 2014 will start with a lap top is an example of that desire to build a literate society and to drive out 'barbarism' from our midst (*Jubilee Manifesto* 2013).

In history literacy has been associated with the establishment of economic, legal, religious and political systems. In the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments were delivered to Moses on a tablet with inscriptions on it to signify the importance of the message and the permanence of the medium. There is also sufficient evidence that the church kept its financial records in written form and the Egyptian rulers are known to have kept records of food production and took population census to be able to maintain territorial control and authority. Trade and business transactions were carried out between states and cities and accounts kept to guide present and future dealings. Old cities had justice systems with magistrates keeping rules and edicts in forms that could be referred to later. In a way, writing facilitated the establishment and sustenance of these institutions. However, these historical examples are different from the kind of literacy referred to by Taylor in one fundamental way: They are examples of literacy restricted to an elite class and keeping literacy as an

esoteric possession giving the possessor overwhelming power over the rest. We shall come to this point later.

Goody and Watt (1963) echo the same thing that Taylor said nearly a century earlier: that '…historical advent of literacy brings about fundamental changes in the make-up of culture, society and the person'. Like Taylor, Goody and Watt see the Western European cultural perspectives as the benchmark against which socio–cultural evaluation must be done; they therefore, discuss the attributes of a literate society in dichotomies to extol the great achievements of Europe and demean the no-European cultures. I outline these below:

1. Writing is superior to oral words because it comes from reliable sources and becomes 'permanent repositories of meaning whereas spoken words are inherently ephemeral'.

2. Literacy makes a distinction between myth and history. Oral cultures are controlled by mysticism and superstition whereas literate societies rely on history which '…emerges from critical synthesis of different written accounts'.

3. Oral accounts are tied to the present and even the past is adjusted to current realities whereas writing is detachable from the immediate present in a way that speakers and their texts are not (Collins & Blot 2003:15).

4. The alphabet system used in the West is superior to other scripts, which might have existed, e.g. syllabary used by Japanese and logography used by Chinese or the Ethiopic script used by the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia.

5. Processing a written text leads to the ability to think abstractly – context-free thinking, whereas spoken texts encourage context-bound thinking, thinking confined to the here and now.

6. Literacy affects memory significantly by making possible rigorous recall of lengthy texts whereas preliterate individuals have imprecise, pattern–driven memory (Besmnier1995:2).

This approach to literacy has been interchangeably called the Autonomous Model or the Universalist Approach and 'the central role that the model accords literacy as a causal (or later, enabling) factor thus helps to explain the differences between preliterate and literate individuals, societies and cultures …' (Goody 1977 paraphrased' in Besnier 1995:3). The autonomous approach views literacy as having independent existence from the other cultural activities like politics and religion. This positivistic stance sees literacy as standing outside the individual and society and determining the cause of individual thinking and actions; and also determining the social-formation processes and political organization. As Collins and Blot (2003:4) sum it up, universalists see literacy as '… a set of techniques and uses of language, *with identifiable stages of development and clear, predictable consequences for culture and cognition…'*.(emphasis added)

Two things are clear: first, the dichotomies suggest a universal applicability of literacy and its indelible consequences whereas it is obvious to all that the comparison is between European and no-European cultures; the former being superior to the latter because of the differing stages of literacy. Second, they claim a non-ideological and neutral position of literacy in world affairs so that it is a true independent and reliable variable in evaluating individual's and society's performance.

This approach has attracted many criticisms from scholars of different ideological persuasions and we will look at some of them below:

1. Literacy may seem to be essential in the contemporary society, especially among the middle classes but it may be of secondary importance when you consider the fuller life of a person her/his potentials. There are millions of 'illiterate' populations who live happily outside the culture of reading and writing.

2. Literacy refers to a 'highly diverse' phenomenon which defies a simple and coherent definition as a scientific variable. It is not a single mental or physical attribute.

3. There is no clear cumulative distinction between literacy and orality; the differences may be of genre and not mode. In actual practice people do not divide their life into writing and speaking. Spoken and written domains overlap quite often.

4. There is no inherent superiority of alphabetic script over the syllabary used by Japanese, Ethiopic script used in Amharic or The Arabic script in the Middle East and North Africa. Each script meets the religious, communication or political needs of the community using it, (Collins and Blot 2003, Street 1993, Besnier 1995).

The reaction to universalists gave rise to a new school of theorists referred to as the *Ideological Model* or *Relativist Model* or *Particularist Approach*. The main tenets of this alternative theory are:

1. There are multiple literacies and hence it is fallacious to argue for a single type as representing all the others.

2. There is no causal relationship between literacy, cognition and social development.

3. There is no dichotomy between orality and literacy as seen by ethnographic theorists. That is, field studies of real conduct

of communication in communities have demonstrated that there is no dichotomy between written and spoken domains.

4. Literacy cannot be studied independently of the social, political and historical forces that shape it (Besnier 1995:3).

5. Literacy is found in many societies of the world that do not display the social and cognitive attributes proposed by the universalist model (Collins & Blot 2003).

The relationists pose some questions to guide research in literacy and the human condition.

• Under what conditions should a group be considered to be literate?

• At what point in history can a society be considered to have made the transition from pre-literacy to literacy?

• Does the category 'literate' include those handful of writers who act as 'literacy brokers'?

• How do you characterize communities where women are considered illiterate because their type of literacy remains invisible? For example, bead work by Turkana women may pass as no form of literacy because it does not involve men.

• How do members of the community targeted by literacy campaign react to outsiders purporting to be bringing transformation and progress?

The relationists consider literacy as a social construct which can only be best understood and defined by asking who has access to what type of literacy and what is the socio-cultural context and social values of the target community? That is, without

unpacking the social values highlighted by a community where acts of reading and writing are taking place there is a great danger of misrepresenting the community's ways of doing things as individuals or members of a group.

The challenge to the autonomous theorists is to account for the many and various forms of practices and values which impact human life and contribute to individual and societal transformation and yet have very little or nothing to do with written texts. For example, the missionaries who first came to Africa taught 'moral literacy' which included: 'cleanliness is next to godliness', monogamy, love, honesty and monotheism. These had tremendous effect on individuals' ways of thinking and doing things and on social organization. There is also the recent emphasis on proficiency in foreign languages as a response to increasing global contact; this is a special kind of literacy that enhances life of an individual and performance of nations through intercultural communication. This is what relationists would call secondary use of literacy as opposed to primary use of literacy which is found in family conversations or neighbourhood chit-chats (Gee 1987).

If we compare Taylor's position in the opening quote with the relationists' stance, we must then consider a new definition of literacy. The views of autonomous theorists cannot be dismissed altogether since we are all aware of the enormous benefits to individual cognitive development and social transformation that result from mere access to literacy skills. At the same time the critical approach that introduces socio-cultural context and historical and social practices that define people and their dialectical relations with institutions provide excellent insights into the complex phenomenon we are dealing with. In the next section we shall discuss the new way of conceptualizing literacy.

The New Literacy

In his address to the nation on December 31, 1969 Julius Nyerere the President of the Republic of Tanzania reminded Tanzanians of one of the 'promises' of members of TANU (His political Party) which read 'I shall educate myself to the best of my ability and use my education for the benefit of all' (Nyerere 1973:137). He went on to say:

> We can build on the education we already have – using the tools of literacy or a foreign language, or an understanding of scientific principles. Or, if we never went to school, we can start by learning about the things of most immediate importance to us –better farming methods, better childcare, better feeding. We *do not even have to start by learning to read and write*! (emphasis added)

'For literacy is just a tool; it is a means by which we can learn more, more easily'. Since Nyerere was addressing the people of Tanzania on the importance of adult education, his emphasis was on the instrumentality of literacy; its function and the benefits derived from it. The second strand of this definition is that it does not include reading and writing as essential components of literacy, but, literacy as a facility for learning more easily. This agrees with the notion of literacy as a 'technology for the intellect', a critical mover of cognitive development. As the pledge by party members declare, education is not only for self-improvement but also for a greater good; it is for the betterment of the society.

The 2005 UNESCO Report (UNESCO, 2004) entitled *The Quality Imperative* emphasized that education quality should go beyond achievement and sustenance of expanded education by ensuring that schooling benefits individuals and societies (Barrett 2013:1). This position and that of Nyerere's might sound like supporting the autonomous approach that reifies literacy and allows it to

operate from outside the individual and society by acting on them to bring about transformation in cognition and effective social formations respectively. However, this approach to literacy is much broader than what the proponents of autonomy envisaged; this is a view that situates literacy or more accurately, *literacies* in social context .We want to regard literacy here as *discourse* and in this sense discourse, '…refers to the complex of conceptions, classifications and language use that characterize a specific sub–set of an ideological formation' (Street 1993:15). Discourse is regarded here as the centre piece that holds together language, culture and society. It is through literacy, seen in this sense, that people '*create, recreate*', '*modify*' and '*fine-tune*' their language and their culture. **That is, culture, literacy and language do not exist in isolation; they are for ever interacting with and on each other to generate new forms, tendencies, needs and technologies all of which demand that our minds are constantly renewed to handle and cope with new demands in life.**

The ideological view of literacy is what Nyerere espouses when he advises, '… if we never went to school, we can start by learning about the things of most immediate importance to us – better farming methods, better childcare, better feeding'. In ideological terms, Nyerere was talking about 'self-reliance' as a key plank in the *Ujamaa* philosophy that the TANU government was pursuing. Literacy was seen as a way of moving Tanzania away from the colonial dispensation of dependence and state coercion to a devolved system of local economic self-sufficiency and political autonomy, where means of production were controlled by the citizens at the village level.

This approach also highlights 'domains' of literacy which are critical to the people, what is referred to as 'dominant' literacy (Street 1998, Gee 1998)). Dominant literacy is mastery

of a particular skill or social practice that allows one to operate happily and effectively as a member of a community. Nyerere gave a list which included 'better farming' and 'better childcare', two of the domains where Tanzanians required competencies in order to become respectable citizens of a modern country. Literacy as an aspect of a community's communicative repertoire is best learnt from indigenous competent sources. As Paul Gee (1998) argues:

> Thus, literacy is mastered through acquisition not learning, that is, it requires exposure to models in natural, meaningful, and functional settings, and teaching is not liable to be very successful … it may even initially be on the way. Time spent on learning and not acquisition is time not well spent if the goal is mastery in performance (p. 57).

We said earlier that discourse is the nexus in the language – culture – society relationship. We are now faced with the question of how literacy is imparted. If true acquisition of literacy must take place in a natural setting then the school may not be the place to teach literacy and a new language would be the last medium to choose for the purpose. Gee sees the school as a foreign setting for most children from low–class families but a familiar ground for middle-class children. That means that middle-class children succeed in acquiring literacies in school because the language and education skills are similar to what they know from home.

This is now the critical link between literacy and language. Can children learn literacies effectively in a language that is not familiar to them? According to Barret (1994:13) (cited in Qorro,2009):

The retention of English as a medium of instruction benefits the elite because their children are, generally speaking, those who will better be able to manage with it. The current expansion of secondary schools (both government and private) and the consequent potential expansion of numbers seeking to join bureaucratic bourgeoisie, i.e. in competition for the same jobs, retention of English becomes all the more important, ensuring as it does, that large numbers of the students fail each year. English thus functions as a gatekeeping device essential to the maintenance of the position of the ruling elite.

This reminds us of the old Deficit Theory with 'elaborated' and 'restricted' codes, where children speaking the elaborated code perform well in school because the school and the teachers speak the same middle-class code whereas children from the working-class families do poorly because they have to learn a new school variety first before they can learn the educational skills. In schools using a foreign language like English in Tanzania and Kenya, the problem is monumental. The problem of using a foreign language to teach in African schools has been studied extensively and all reports seem to suggest that it does not work and that it obliquely, if not directly, accounts for the poor political and economic performance of the continent. So, why do we, maintain the practice, even in the 'most unlikely' place like Tanzania? In the ideological approach adopted here, the answer is in the distribution of power and the control of the key institutions. That is the critical approach to the study of literacy.

In other words we are talking about the rights of children to receive education in a language they know best if they are to benefit from school education. Literacy is directly connected to individual and group rights when the question of functional

allocation of languages is being discussed and in multilingual societies in Africa, this is a basic concern if we are to build true democratic societies where diversity is celebrated and respected, where linguistic plurality is nurtured as a resource and not exploited to bring political mayhem at election time.

The Colonial Literacy Project

> With the advent of writing, native peoples, previously traditional and outside civilization, are seen as entering the modern world. If the beginning of writing induces epochal change, previously from primitive to civilized and now traditional to modern, this is because writing has consequences (Collins and Blot 2001:11).

The encounter between the white man and the natives from the second half of the 19th Century was the beginning of a long narrative of Kenya's colonial history. There were two immediate aims of the initial colonial team: to pacify the war-like tribes and to civilize the individuals. Pacification was mainly carried out by the political and military wing of the European invaders whereas the civilizing wing called for collaboration with missionaries who were to deal with conversion of the pagan minds to Christianity through evangelism and literacy campaigns.

A story is told that when the white man first visited Gwassi, my birth place, around the beginning of the 20th Century, a meeting was convened by the village elders to welcome the visitor, who was accompanied by an interpreter. During the meeting the interpreter whispered the names of the villagers and the white man wrote them down for purposes of population census and tax. On the next visit, after everybody had settled down, the white man started by calling out the names from his list to make sure he had the same people and to add more names, if any. The

villagers started wondering how smart the white man was! He just looks at something white in his hands and our names just pop up! He must be a magician! The piece of paper was like a crystal ball that could tell this stranger anything about you and your family. So watch out!

This magical power was later to be passed on to a core of African men, generally from the chosen families of chiefs and church leaders; literacy was being used to prepare community leadership and that lives with us up to the present. President Khama of Botswana comes from a long line of chiefs, President Mandela is from one of the royal families among the Xhosa. It is no wonder that President Uhuru Kenyatta was crowned chief the other day. His father, a commoner, had a cunning streak that helped him to worm his way into Chief Koinange's family to get a bride and later on Chief Muhoho's. The colonial government used literacy to effect individual improvement and to set up political and social structures that would change the African society in a very fundamental way. Literacy in this scheme was not neutral.

The missionary team was similarly aggressive in their moral literacy campaigns which included condemnation of local religions and gods, polygamy, traditional dressing, etc. In the Seventh Day Adventist Church the followers had to learn to read so that they would read the Bible, the Hymn Book and the Lesson. My only surviving mother who is now 80 years can still read but her husband had no patience to teach her to write as well. His two wives who were catholic did not learn to read because it was not a requirement by the catholic fathers.

In a book titled *Fifty years in Nyanza (1906 – 1956). The History of the CMS and the Anglican Church in Nyanza Province, Kenya,* Elizabeth Richards, a missionary at Maseno recounts a conversation between a new local convert, Yona Rao and a British missionary teacher, Miss Edith Hill as follows:

> On the Bunyore Hills accompanied by the senior boy of Maseno School – Yona Rao, she writes:

Yona pointed to me his home along a thickly populated ridge saying:

> "You English people are doing a very wrong thing. You are educating us boys and leading us to Christ but you are doing nothing for our girls. In all that mass of huts there is no one Christian girl whom I could marry. Are we to be half Christian? What will our children be like? (Richards 1956:18).

This is a genuine cry of a boy gradually being alienated from his village and beginning to question the validity of the new literacy being introduced from outside his culture. The second fundamental issue is the ideology of gender discrimination where boys are given education and girls are kept illiterate. Was this accidental or deliberate? Literacy has been used to keep the chasm between men and women and to justify the asymmetric distribution of power and privilege along gender lines. But the social stratification did not end with bias against women. As Richards (1956:15) reports in the same book:

> Gradually the difference between school boys and the villages became noticeable. Intelligent and relevant worship began to appear first in the school, then in the general Sunday congregation. The strangeness began to wear off and interest to grow.

Literacy must be considered as part of the community's social fabric, an integrated skill or activity that blends with the people's social and moral order. The 'moral' literacy being introduced is beginning to create cracks in the society calling for the relativists' question: Who has access to what type of literacy? Literacy cannot be viewed as an innocent and mental skill or knowledge; it must be provided, used and evaluated within a socio–cultural context. The attitude of the missionaries providing literacy to the Kavirondo natives betrays the ideological underpinning of the project. Richards writes:

> 'What vision these men (missionaries) had! As they were: apathetic, suspicious and uninterested. Of what use then was undue book – learning provided. They got to know their Bible? So, from the first, the founders laid great emphasis on manual and technical training and for about twenty years that emphasis continued (Richards 1956:18).

The general scheme of things during this period was to mould the native to fit the motif that was already created in the European mind, whether a missionary or a colonial administrator. The literacy project given by the colonial government produced a pliable subject who would facilitate total occupation of the country. The so called Iona Model was based on the theory of a Christian basis for political leadership. So,

> The Gospel might be carried far and wide into the surrounding country, with a school for sons of Luo chiefs at which the future leaders of the country could be trained in a Christian atmosphere (Richards 1956:15).

Literacy was aimed at producing community leaders who reported about and on their people, to an authority elsewhere. The British indirect rule philosophy was adequately served

by the literacy project churning out functionaries to prop the system from below. The project created disintegration of the African communities and can be seen in the severe divisions among families, especially in central Kenya during the Mau Mau revolt against the British. The violence was not only directed at the white man but also at the so–called homeguards, especially colonial African chiefs and their families. Writing about the assassination of his father, Senior Chief Waruhiu in 1952, Samuel Waruhiu (2011) leaves no doubt that his father's death was connected to the 'home-guard' role he played, especially by condemning the Mau Mau Movement. He describes his father as '…a leading government spokesman in Kikuyu County. He was also a prominent Christian leader in his native Kiambu District. '(p15').This description fits a Europeanized local elite and a representative of the British Government *par excellence.* The British government, according to the author, was faithful to this loyal servant of Her Majesty's government and at the funeral:

> "Senior Chief Waruhui was accorded the *full honours of a fallen British h*ero. As the coffin was lowered to the grave, the detachment of the Kenya Police gave the final salute with a bugle sounding the last pibroch and reveille" (Waruhui 2011:24) (emphasis added)

At the time of his death one of his sons David was already a chief and the author, Samuel was in Wales on a British Government scholarship. That is how the literate families reproduced themselves as leaders of the communities they were picked from and how the chain has remained unbroken over the years through a system partly supported by the use of a foreign language as a symbol of group membership.

As summed by Lord Macaulay writing about the British education and the Indian elite:

> 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect (cited in Ngugi 2010:21).

You replace India with Kenya and the narrative is the same.

At this point we shall move on to look at the medium of education which was suitable for this kind of enterprise.

Chapter Three

Medium of Instruction and Education Performance

While conducting research on Language Use Patterns and Language Attitudes in Kenya in the early nineties I asked parents, teachers and students if they would support replacing English as medium of instruction with Kiswahili or mother tongue. The overwhelming majority said 'NO' (Kembo-Sure, 1994). One decade or so later Nathan Ogechi and I asked about the same question but this time only to teachers in primary schools and the answer was still 'NO' (Kembo-Sure and Ogechi, 2009). The latter study asked teachers whether they would like mother tongue to be used for longer than three years as is the case today or extend it to the end of the primary cycle (eight years). Nearly all of them agreed that the current three-year policy was appropriate.

While parents and teachers agree that English medium is good for Kenyan children, empirical research in the primary school classrooms indicates that after six years of primary education (3 years mother tongue and 3 years English medium) Kenyan children can hardly read meaningfully in English (Nzomo et al, 2000). According to this report:

> "These figures indicate the need for a major ministry review of policy related to the development of literacy skills in Kenyan primary schools. *It is not acceptable that only around two-thirds of Standard 6 pupils reach the minimum level of literacy, and only around one quarter reach desirable level'* (Nzomo et al 2000:67).(emphasis added)

The report, however, does not connect the failure to achieve 'desirable' level of literacy to the medium of education at all. It highlights teacher preparation, input into education, home background etc, but nothing about the fact that children transition to English after only three years in school and after very sketchy introduction of English as subject in Standard One. The failure to see the link can be interpreted as an example of 'a language as problem orientation' policy which views local languages as a hindrance to educational attainment and not as a natural source of intellectual stimulus for learning and cultural development.

The Kenyan situation is similar to what Hornberger (2002:28) reports about Bolivia when she says:

> …the Vice-Minister of education welcomes workshop participants, emphasizing to us that the Key to that is Spanish as a Second Language. In recent months she tells us, questions have been raised about Reform's attention to indigenous languages, and indigenous parents have begun to demand that their children be taught Spanish. Perhaps the Reform erred.

The Bolivian Education Reform initiative was aimed at strengthening the use of indigenous languages and using them for longer in primary school in order to make school education more culturally relevant and intellectually accessible to the majority indigenous children. However, as the Vice-Minister reckons, the parents want their children to learn Spanish and perhaps the 'Reform erred.'

Brock-Utne (2005) reports about a Tanzanian Minister of Education arguing ,almost in the same vein, as he was reacting to the Tanzanian academicians' demand for Kiswahili as medium in secondary schools. The minister argued:

I hear there is some pressure to change. It mostly comes from professors. My own is that I have to take into account what the community wants. Is it the community that has asked for the change? I get a large number of groups that want a license to start English-medium primary schools. I have not had a single application from anyone who wants to start Kiswahili–medium secondary school.

The positions taken in support of a foreign–language medium in Kenya, Tanzania and Bolivia are reminiscent of what Ricento and Hornberger (1996) call the 'outer layer' of the onion – 'Legislation and political processes'. The authors emphasize the enormous power of official policy over decision–making processes at the lower levels and in directing attitudes and linguistic behavior in a polity. In their own words:

States have the resources to engage in language planning that are not available in other sectors of society as well as the ability to operationalize language policies through legislation, executive orders, and so on. However, with few exceptions, states are most likely to engage in planning and policy activities in those areas (for example, education) *where their interests seem clearly apparent and where structures already exist to disseminate policy* (e.g. state boards of education, commissioners of education (pp 413 – 414).(emphasis added.)

This brings us to the question: Who needs mother-tongue education? In educational and psycho-social terms research shows that a familiar home language is the best medium for children beginning their education career (Bialystok, 1999; Greene, 1995; Cummins 2000; Wilmot, 2003). However, politicians (and by extension parents) claim that social equality can only be guaranteed through a foreign-language medium, which, they

claim, is neutral and also better developed for educational development. In the neo-Marxist approach, this is viewed as a subtle way the state and ruling elite manipulate public opinion to maintain power and control and hence reproduce themselves through education (Phillipson, 1992). Foreign languages (Spanish, English, French etc) are also marketed as serving instrumental purposes by ensuring equal opportunities for all when in actual fact, for the disadvantaged children, the learning of these languages is purely symbolic – only to demonstrate that they have been to school but remaining unable to use the minimal linguistic proficiency for any gainful economic or cultural activity (Davies, 2009).

The official resistance to linguistic diversity in education by Bolivia, Kenya, Tanzania and all other developing countries is not accidental but ideology-driven. It is a drive towards monolingualism , which is rationalised and naturalised by what Philipson (1992) calls *fallacies* but I will call *Grand Deceptions:*

1. English, being foreign, is neutral and hence acceptable to all linguistic groups and can be used to bring about national unity.

2. English is a standardized language, and hence suitable for the teaching of science and technology and mathematics

3. English cannot be learned effectively if children are allowed to use mother tongue in school. That is, use of other languages hampers the acquisition of English.

4. English is mastered best if it is introduced early as a subject and used as medium of instruction

5. English is good for developing countries to facilitate international communication in trade, diplomacy, and information and technology

6. Translating existing educational materials into local languages and training teachers to teach in mother tongue would be too expensive for the fragile African economies

Regarding **Deception 1**, we know that after fifty years of English as official language and medium of instruction in the former British colonies in Africa and elsewhere, there still exist fractious middle classes, leading to social and political uncertainty and instability. Communities have clung to their authentic languages for political mobilization as governments bury their heads in the sand by refusing to strengthen them for effective national discourse and development. English has, instead, helped to stratify the society into those who have access to quality and correct amount of English and those who do not, even within the same communities.

Deception 2: The research findings from different organisations, governments and individuals have demonstrated that children perform poorly in science and mathematics particularly, because of the unfamiliar language of the tests and examinations. The Kenya National Examinations Council has constantly warned that unless the standard of English is enhanced, performance in maths and science will continue to be affected adversely.

A research report in Ethiopia has also shown that children taught in Amharic performed constantly better in mathematics than children taught in English (Zewdn and Erkihim 2006). In Tanzania, Brock–Utne (2007) has also reported English as hindrance to learning in Tanzanian secondary schools and universities and called for a rethink of the existing language policy if Tanzanians are to benefit from the education system..

Deception 3: There is sufficient evidence from experimental research that children who are taught effectively in mother tongue as they learn English effectively do better in English

tests and in other tests than those who are taught only through English (Bangbose 2005, Cummins 2000). The key word here is that children must be taught effectively in both the mother tongue and English.

Deception 4: There is no scientific evidence to show that the longer the better. More of the same does not bear better outcomes. Acquisition of English is supported by effective acquisition of mother tongue and effective teaching of English as a second language. PRAESA experiments in Western Cape in South Africa have shown that teaching English based on mother tongue education yields better results than teaching through English alone, (Alexander and Bloch 2004).

Deception 5: Evidence from China, Japan, and Korea, which have trained a small core of staff to handle international cooperation but keep mother tongue education, proves that English is not a necessary or sufficient condition for industrial development. In fact, if there is anything requiring the authentic language, it is science. Perhaps industrial take-off will remain elusive in Africa until we start teaching science and maths in African languages.

Deception 6: There is evidence that the cost of using a foreign language and thus an inefficient education system far outstrips the cost of changing over if the costing is not based on simplistic material calculations of cost-benefit analysis. For example, the human cost in terms of school drop-outs and examination failures is enormous if we care to compute it. Besides, the ineffective and inefficient workforce in industry and the public service costs the countries billions of shillings annually but we have no proper tool to calculate this. However, attempts to compute the hidden human costs of using a foreign language suggests that it would be cheaper to change over. Lo Bianco (1998) cited in Webb (2003:20)

illustrates how this works in Australia and Obanya (1999) argues the same way for African language policies.

What kind of reforms are needed?

When Heads of State and Government met in Jomtien, Indonesia in 1990 and signed the Education for All (EFA) document, the two very important underlying principles were:

- To establish education as a basic human right without which certain rights cannot be enjoyed. For example, right to information requires ability to read and write.

- To emphasize the link between education and sustainable development. The education sector is seen to have a critical link with the industrial sector and the environment from which productive resources are obtained.

The EFA conference are linked to the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one of which is to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the year 2015. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) for Africa puts particular emphasis on quality education through monitoring of learning outcomes and teaching processes. These initiatives are calling for reforms in the education sector but what kind of reforms can restore the efficacy and efficiency of our education systems?

1. We must quickly move emphasis away from product to processes of learning. The processes heavily depend on language of instruction.

2. We must adjust the curriculum to make it relevant and adaptable to local needs as we also benchmark with the rest of the world. That is, the curriculum must address local concerns first and then, address global concerns. For

example, a good mother-tongue foundation leads to greater rewards in later foreign language medium

3. We must align the curriculum content to children's lives, society and the development of requisite scientific and technological knowledge and skills. Science and technology only make sense when they are indigenized and taught through a familiar language.

4. We must put emphasis on the inquiry aspects of learning to promote pupils' autonomy. Children can do inquiry joyfully and effectively in a language they speak well, and that, in many cases, is their 'mother tongue'.

5. We must stress the function of periodic curriculum evaluation in promoting the development of children's learning. Whatever the curriculum content children's learning develops best in their strongest language (culturally and functionally).

In all the five areas of reform, the efficiency of the medium of learning is implied and that leads to the question: In whose language is learning going to be carried out? This is the missing link in the EFA project (Brock-Utne, 2000). In Human-rights based education the critical components are:

Availability, *Acceptability*, *Accessibility* and *Adaptability* (Tomasveski, 2004).

Availability refers to the state's responsibility to make sure schools are built whereas *acceptability* refers to the guarantee of minimum acceptable quality; e.g., professional requirements of teachers. *Accessibility* puts the burden on the state to make a follow-up to make sure children attend school. For example, in Kenya millions of children fail to go to school because they are

hungry, i.e. declaring education free alone is not enough; the state must make sure children attend school. Lastly, *adaptability* is to do with schools being responsive to the needs of the individual child in keeping with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Traditionally, schools expected children to adapt to the school and if they did not the system ejected them.

In summary, we need mother–tongue based education to:

• Promote development and maintenance of the mother tongues.

• Improve educational performance of the vulnerable groups – linguistic minorities.

• Mitigate inequalities that are aggravated and sustained by unequal access to the official language.

• Increase political participation, and social justice.

• Promote inter-group harmony and culture of tolerance.

• Establish cultural harmony between home and school.

The State of Education in Africa

UNESCO's EFA Monitoring Report 2006:

• The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) on the continent was 63% and more than 40 million children were not enrolled in primary school, 55% of whom were girls. Only three African countries had achieved Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2002 (Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Seychelles). Apart from Lesotho and Mauritius which are also about to achieve the goal, the rest are unlikely to achieve it by 2015.

- At secondary level gross enrolment increased from 21 million to 26 million between 1998 and 2002, but the gross enrolment rate was still as low as 28% in 2002. At tertiary level the situation is even grimmer, with more than half of the countries posting a gross enrolment rate of less than 3%.

- In Bukina Faso, Mali, Niger where the literacy rate is below 40%, children enrolled in school expect to stay there for less than 5 years. The region's average is 7.8 years, which is not anything to write home about either.

- In half of the sub-Saharan African countries, 60% of children enrolled in primary education ever reach the last grade. The survival rate varies from 22% in Malawi to 98% in Mauritius.

We should be wondering what mother-tongue based education has to do with all these figures. It has everything to do with them and that is one serious omission in the EFA report when it listed the causes only as: poor mastery of the curriculum, rigid teaching practices, lack of textbooks and other teaching materials and instructional time.

The statistics may be as boring as they are shocking, but they may be just the tip of the iceberg. Detailed studies of classroom practices which focus on language of instruction always reveal even more shocking facts. So, why are we not using African languages in education?

Perhaps the following reaction by Bamgbose (2005:255) answers the question:

Outside Africa no one questions why the languages of countries with smaller populations in Europe should be used as medium, even up to and including the university level. What seems to be lacking in many African countries

is the **political** will to break away from the colonial policy and practice of limiting mother-tongue education to lower primary classes. *Where such a will exists, much can be done in a short period of time.*

Perhaps in response to the distressed cries from below, especially from the academia, the African Heads of State at the Khartoum Summit on 23 – 24 January, 2006 officially authorized the establishment of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) 'as a special office for language policy of the African Union (AU)…' (Alexander, 2009:10). The objectives of ACALAN are outlined as:

1. Promoting African languages;

2. Promoting cross-border languages;

3. Promoting vernacular cross-border languages;

4. Strengthening cooperation between African states in the area of African languages;

5. Promoting African languages in all educational sectors;

6. Promoting African languages at international level;

7. Analyzing language policies in Africa;

8. Promoting scientific and democratic culture based on the use of African languages;

9. Contributing to the harmonization of the economic, social and cultural development of Member States based on African languages in relation with partner languages;

10. Promoting the use of African languages as factors of integration, solidarity, respect of values and mutual understanding in order to promote peace and prevent conflict;

11. Promoting African language organizations on the continent.

Some Examples of Failed Language Policies

I will briefly discuss Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya to illustrate the consequences of imported models of language policies. Ethiopia represents those states which started off with an indigenous language as official. In Tanzania, Kiswahili was adopted as official and medium of instruction in primary school, but English left to continue as medium in secondary school with a time line to exit to Kiswahili in 1985. Kenya opted for a mixed policy, where English and Kiswahili were both 'official'. However, let me hasten to mention here that there are so many variants of these so–called policy models which the typology used here does not capture neatly. This is done only to give us a frame for discussing the complex phenomenon of language policy and planning in Africa.

Ethiopia

Was never colonized (except for Italian occupation between 1938 to 1941).

Population:	66,961,000
Adult literacy:	41.5%
Net Enrolment Rate:	51.1%
Survival Rate (Primary school):	61.5%
Federal Official languages:	English and Amharic
Regional languages:	Each region has a regional language

Medium of Instruction: Regional Language Grades 1-8

English Grade 9 onwards

Although English is designated 'official' in the constitution, for all practical purposes people speak Amharic in offices and all public places in multilingual contexts but English is used alongside Amharic in written communication. Their competence in English is so low nationwide that it does not make sense using it as a medium of instruction. Recent studies have shown that school achievement is so weak that something has to be done to change the trend of declining educational performance. For example, Zewdn and Erkihim (2006) report a consistent better performance in all subjects by those who are taught though mother tongue at Grades 7 and 8 than those in the English-medium classrooms. The most far-reaching recommendations to remedy the Ethiopian crisis were made by a *Study of Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia* commissioned by the Ministry of Education and led by Kathleen Heugh from Cape Town, South Africa. Among the many recommendations were:

1. Teach English as a subject by specialized English language teachers; i.e. teachers must have a near-native like proficiency in English.

2. Begin with English as medium of instruction from university.

3. Remove compulsion to write exams in a foreign language. Offer bilingual papers.

4. All teachers to be trained to teach in MT or a language closest to MT across the curriculum.

5. University departments of linguistics to prepare students for orthographic, lexicographic technology and translation development.

6. Emphasis be put on academic competence rather than English. University should provide English for academic purposes.

7. De-emphasize English and re–emphasize learning and achievement across the curriculum. (Heugh 2006)

However, despite its widespread use as a second language, Amharic is still not accepted wholly by non–Christians and non–Amharas. So, when the emperor was toppled in 1974, the new government introduced mother – tongue education in all regions, but Amharic still remained the language of government. The new constitution promulgated in 1994 now declares English and Amharic as the official languages of the Republic, but all Ethiopian languages are also 'national' and each region has the local language as official and medium of instruction.

However, English becomes medium from Grade Nine onwards. The country is still struggling to standardize the many regional languages to make them efficient for education, but before that is done children are faced with a new language medium at Grade Nine. Although English is introduced as a subject from Grade 1 the teaching of it has not been efficient because of shortage of qualified teachers and lack of teaching materials.

Ethiopia is one of those African countries which were not colonized in the classical sense of the term and also one country that has an indigenous language with a special script and which is also linked to a 'Great Tradition', which includes the Orthodox Church. Amharic was therefore, the obvious choice of 'official language' during the imperial era until things changed dramatically with the overthrow of Emperor Haille Silassie in 1974.

Unfortunately the "Great Tradition" only refers to the culture and history of the Amhara, Tigray and Tigre, who constitute less than 30% of the country's population so far. The country is nearly 50-50 Christian and Moslem, with Afan Oromo and Somali speakers comprising the majority of those professing Islam.

The use of Amharic as the language of government caused it to spread widely in the country and being the school language, all children had to learn it to prepare them for job opportunities in government and private sector and for any transactions across the linguistic regions of the massive country. But with the introduction of English as 'official' and medium of instruction from Grade 9, and without sufficient preparation to effect viable transition, the children's educational achievement is affected adversely. At the national level this is reflected in the inefficient performance of institutions. The recommendation by the commission that English be introduced from university must be considered seriously.

Tanzania

Independence:	1961
Population:	40 m
Number of languages:	120
Compulsory education age:	7
Net enrolment rate (primary):	77.4%
Adult literacy rate:	69.4%
Gross enrolment rate (primary):	0.9%
Survival rate (primary):	82.0%
Trained teachers:	(female 41%, male 100%)

Official language:	Kiswahili, (English?)
National Language:	Kiswahili
Medium of instruction:	Kiswahili (primary), English (secondary onwards)

Tanzania had Kiswahili as a well developed language for government administration and medium of instruction in primary school during the colonial days. It was the language used to mobilize Tanzanians against the British colonial rule and at independence the new government retained English as official but only up to1967, after which Kiswahili replaced English. In education English remained medium of instruction in secondary but to be replaced by Kiswahili at all levels at a later date.

Kiswahili is estimated to be spoken by 99% of Tanzanian (Masato, 2004) and the newspapers in Kiswahili overwhelmingly outnumber English newspapers. It is the language of Parliament and the magistrates' courts, but English is still used at the High Court as an alternative language. Kiswahili could very well be called a second mother tongue of most Tanzanians, but English is taught as a subject from primary school.

The Presidential Commission on Education (1980) recommended that from January, 1985, Kiswahili would replace English as a medium of instruction in secondary school and from January, 1991 the first cohort joining university would start with Kiswahili as medium. Unfortunately all this was abandoned in1983 following what is believed to have been a concerted campaign against Kiswahili by the Tanzanian elite and the international donor community and trade partners. From then on there has been mounting pressure to reverse the earlier commitment to replace English with Kiswahili and instead the campaign is now to reintroduce English as medium, if only in the upper classes of primary.

Following the wave of political democratization in Eastern Europe in the 1980s which led to the fall of the Soviet empire and its satellite communist states, there was pressure on Tanzania to slow down on its socialist programme, which was the philosophy underlying the support for Kiswahili as official and medium of instruction. During this period Tanzanians looked over the fence and saw the Kenyan English medium system as seemingly responsible for a more efficient educational system and national economic management. They started sending their children to Kenya to benefit from this and there soon mushroomed private schools in Kenya's contiguous districts and in the urban centres to absorb the increased demand for English – medium education by Tanzanians.

Eventually Tanzania relaxed the law prohibiting the establishment of English-medium schools in Tanzania and this has since created an awkward situation where the law still does not allow English-medium in public schools but allows English-medium private schools in Tanzania to stop the outflow of funds to Kenya and Uganda.

The war by an African language to replace a colonial language was lost and this is what I consider as the most disgraceful failure of a mother-tongue medium project in Africa. In the seventies and eighties, Tanzania was looked up to by African scholars as the sanctuary of transformative politics, economics, education and progressive governance, that would restore the glory and dignity of the African people. This is a vindication of my doubt about the classical notions of diglossia, exoglossia and particularly the transitional arrangement where a local language would hopefully replace a European language. This failed in India with Hindi but succeeded only in Somalia where Siad Barre threw out of the window all diplomacy and democratic rigmarole and

decreed Somali the official language and medium of education at all levels. Given the present state of unequal access to power and opportunity in the continent and globally, the theory of complementarity in language policy and planning is unlikely to work. It has been realized that languages are only potentially equal but in real social and political situations out there, the existing contextual forces will define the status and role of each language in a multilingual setting as is the case in Africa.

What is most sad is that even after a government -commissioned committee reported in the 1980s that the use of English as medium of instruction was hurting educational efficiency, the ruling elite in Tanzania still did not listen. Criper and Dodd (1984) reported:

• Only about 10 percent of Form IVs are at a level that one might expect English-medium education to begin.

• Fewer than 20 per cent of the university sample tested were at a level where they would find it easy to read even the simplest book required for their academic studies (cited in Brock-Utne, 2000:58).

As recently as 1998 the British Council and Ministry of Education funded another consultancy group to review the English-medium in Tanzania. Their verdict still was that:

At secondary level the data reveal that teachers and students fail to learn effectively through the sole medium of English. Kiswahili is used in class for teachers to express themselves effectively and for students to understand their teachers. Kiswahili is the de facto medium of instruction in many classrooms. Those teachers who were seen using *only English in class were often found to be misleading their students.* Code-

switching is not the solution of a bilingual education system. *It is therefore recommended that Kiswahili become the medium of education at secondary school* (cited in Brock-Utne 2010). (Emphasis added).

As in the case of English Language Improvement Project (ELIP) for Ethiopian teachers, the British Council-supported project of the 1980s recommended an English Language Teaching Support Project (ELTPS) to improve English teaching instead of recommending replacement of English with Kiswahili. So who is gaining from the chaotic bilingual systems being tried out in Africa? This is answered suitably by Barret (1994) already cited earlier in Chapter 2. This is, the Tanzanian elite who reproduce themselves by operating a restrictive and exclusionist education system which ensures that only their children succeed. According to the Uwezo 2012 report… only 51 per cent of Tanzanian children in Standard Seven passed the Uwezo English text and only 68% in Standard Seven passed the Standard Two numeracy test (Uwezo 2012:25).

Kenya

Independence:	1963
Population:	38m
Compulsory age:	6.3
Adult literacy:	73.6%
Net enrolment rate:	66%
Survival rate (primary) female:	41%, male 44%
Gross enrolment rate (primary):	48.1%
Gross enrolment rate (secondary):	32.9%
Gross enrolment rate (tertiary):	2.9%

Kenya is one of the African countries which opted for a mix of a European language (official), an indigenous lingua franca (national) and local languages sharing the national socio–political space. Mother tongue was designated medium of instruction but only for the first three years of a child's life in school. From Grade 4, English takes over as medium for the rest of one's school life. Kiswahili and English are taught as compulsory school subjects for at least twelve years. The usual rationalization applied here is: English for efficient government administration, science education, higher education, international communication etc. Kiswahili symbolizes national unity, cultural political freedom, and of course, mother tongue for home use and maintenance of the diverse cultures of the nation. After 50 years of this arrangement, how has Kenya fared?

After many complaints from citizens abut the falling quality of education the government of Kenya, supported by the British Department for International Development (DfID) commissioned the Kenya National Primary Baseline Project (NPB) in 1998 to assess the quality of education. The study reports the following:

1. As a result, 'real' discussion in which *higher order thinking is needed seemed to be rarely practiced*. There was virtually no pupil-pupil interaction or evidence of *pupil self-reliance or pupils being encouraged to generate their own questions or form some tentative hypotheses.* (Ackers and Hardman, 2001). (emphasis added)

2. Teaching styles for the three core subjects of Math, English and Science were very similar, being dominated by transmission forms of teaching with no interactional space for pupils --- (Ackers, Migoli & Nzomo, 2006:36).

In the list of reforms required in education we mentioned a shift to processes from product and here is an example where the teacher dominates proceedings in the classroom and where teaching a language is done in the same way math and science are taught. The question is: if teachers were teaching through a language they know well, would they behave the same way? If pupils were proficient in English would they participate more actively? The answers to the questions are: For the first one 'Yes' and 'No' and for the second: most probably 'Yes'.

In another study that focused on literacy and numeracy levels at Grade Six, the report is even more disturbing. Nzomo et al (2000) complained that 'it is not acceptable that only one third of Standard 6 pupils reach a minimum level of literacy and only around one quarter reach desirable levels'. The study involved over three thousand pupils in Grade 6 who had had six years of English as a subject and two years of English as medium. This certainly indicts the English-medium policy and certainly calls for an urgent review.

In a recent study on medium of instruction in primary school Prof. Nathan Ogechi and I discovered that the greatest problem in teaching science, maths and English in Grades 4 and 8 that were studied, was the low proficiency in English on the part of both the teachers and pupils (Kembo-Sure and Ogechi, 2009). To cover their deficiency the teachers tend to resort to the traditional delivery style that allows no participation by the pupils; and the pupils, not being quite proficient, never try to speak because they are not sure they can say exactly what they want to say. The situation is different in high-cost private schools, where children go to school with a reasonable level of proficiency in English from home.

The annual examination reports produced by the Kenyan National Examination Council are also consistently warning about the failure of candidates to perform optimally in maths and science because they either fail to understand the questions or they cannot express themselves clearly in English. In the view of Kembo–Sure and Ogechi (2009) this amounts to a denial of quality education to the majority of Kenyan children and hence flouts the provisions of the Children's Act 2002 which specifies children's right to quality education. For example, in a study involving 350,000 children in East Africa, Uwezo (2012) reports: 1) the poor do worse everywhere; children from socio–economically disadvantaged households perform worse on all tests at all ages; 2) students in non-government (private) schools perform better… (Executive Summary p2)

Summary

'In independent multilingual African countries, the retention of colonial languages as official languages of government ironically became the most practical and politically correct choice' (Alidou 2004:201)

This statement rings true for the majority of African countries, but it is also true that even those who chose the so-called 'endoglossic policy with African languages as official, the story of stagnating economies, starvation, falling standards of education, ethnic conflicts and environmental degradation is quite similar. In this chapter we looked at Kenya as representing those that opted for the so-called exoglossic' policy countries and Tanzania, and Ethiopia the endoglossic group. Ethiopia was further included because it was not colonized in the classical sense of a foreign power establishing a hegemony over a territory by controlling the economy, politics and eventually, culture. However, Ethiopia and Liberia (another never colonized country) have not faired

any better than the former colonies since their relationship with the colonizing powers was just politically, and culturally as disruptive as it was in the former colonies. So, why did the language policies fail?

1. In Tanzania the political fervor that came with the promulgation of the Arusha Declaration focused on ideology and ignored the linguistic practice at the grassroots level and took for granted the peoples' evolving cultural aspirations. That is, Tanzanians wanted English education for their children whereas the political class pushed the discourse of Kiswahili as an authentic language for social justice and political relevance. It was not until 1985 that Nyerere acknowledged the mismatch and declared Tanzania needed English as it was the 'Kiswahili of the world'.

2. All three Ethiopian regimes also ignored the true wishes of the people, although using different ideological rhetoric. The imperial rule of Haille Selasse promoted Amharic as the symbol of authenticity, but forgot that Amharic nationalism was being promoted at the expense of the many other nationalities. The Dirg, under Mengitsu introduced socialism and a promise of more democratic space and more political and cultural inclusion at the national level. As he did this, he also kept Amharic as official language and English remained looming in the background by remaining a school subject and co–official at the High Court. Ethiopian languages, other than Amharic, were given a role only in basic literacy campaigns. They wanted more and so disenchantment with the regime boiled over and the military were forced out of power. The third regime has retained Amharic and English as the official languages of the Federal Government and the other languages as official in their regional states. This

seemingly pacified the ethnic communities but only for a moment. There were no resources enough to develop them as languages of education and soon some states resorted to using Amharic as medium since there were ready teaching materials written in Amharic and qualified teachers. Besides Amharic is a school subject in all the states but in Amhara Region the other languages are frowned on.

The worst blow to modernization of Ethiopian education system and the efforts to make it more effective came when English was declared medium of instruction from Grade 9 through university where there are hardly enough qualified teachers and local materials. The education standards have simply collapsed.

3. Kenya, like all the former British colonial domains, stifled the growth of education by introducing English too early as medium without personnel and resources to enable children to acquire requisite linguistic and literacy skills to facilitate useful academic and cognitive development for serious learning in a foreign language. The emphasis on English has not produced the results promised, for example, effective science education has not been realized and general educational achievement has dropped drastically.

4. All the countries ignored the enormous influence of lower-level officials like, teachers, school inspectors, examination boards and curriculum developers. For example, Kenyan teachers participate in curriculum development at the Kenya Institute of Education, and the same teachers write school books which require approval by the Institute before they can be used in school. This is a huge industry controlling millions

of shillings even if you take the primary sector alone. If these people favour English, which they do, they will sabotage the national efforts by the top-level management to bring changes in the education system. They may not have power like the policy–makers but they are critical in the implementation of policy.

Chapter Four

Language Policy and Planning Theories

There are many definitions that have been offered by researchers and other academicians in the area of language policy and planning or language management. The best source of the definitions that I have used is Cooper (1989). Since the definitions of language planning and language policy have been confusing, lately some scholars prefer to combine them to make a composite concept to avoid unending debate (Ricento 2006). This is not to suggest that they cannot be treated differently or that they are incurably too vague to warrant any serious theoretical treatment. It only demonstrates that both the concepts deal with a complex human phenomenon-language- which defies a simple definition. In multilingual settings the definitions of LPP becomes even more complex because of three reasons:

1. Beneath all the disclosures language must be discussed as a multilayered code with varieties which can be labelled as language/dialects, standard/non-standard, vernacular/cultivated, written/spoken, indigenous/foreign etc. All these dichotomous relationships inform the theoretical assumptions made by researchers and the eventual tenets of the theories, (Gal, 2006).

2. Languages are assumed to have functions which they are assigned by members of a polity to fulfil socio–political and economic aspirations of their users. These functions are

apportioned along domains (Fishman 1965). For example, languages are used in the family, at school, at work or on the playground. This suggests not only choices to be made by speakers but also relative statuses of these languages, (Fishman, 1965).

3. LPP discourses involve value (material and non–material) of the competing languages. That is, language is valued as a medium of exchange of messages in transactional encounters but language is also indexical of region, class, gender and/or age group of the speaker. The symbolic value of language is never apparent to casual observers and yet it has enormous impact on the success or not of a language management scheme.

According to Paulston (1997):

> The term *language policy* here refers briefly, to the policy of a society in the area of linguistic communication that is the set of positions, principles and decisions reflecting that community's relationships to its verbal repertoire and communicative potential. *Language planning* is understood as a set of concrete measures taken within the language policy to act on linguistic communication in a community, typically by directing the development of its languages.

We summarize language policy and language planning as involving:

• how people speak their language(s)

• how they think they should speak them/it

• the way they think other people should speak them/it

• who should decide how their languages or language are/is spoken.

- what activities (individual or institutional) direct linguistic behaviour.

In the list we have included practices, ideologies, attitudes, aspirations, and principles which guide the theory and practice of LPP, as I prefer to refer to it here.

Going back to Cooper (1989) we can distil some important ingredients of LPP as including:

a) Application of linguistic or social theory to influence linguistic behaviour

b) It is deliberate and goal-oriented involving evaluation of alternatives and coming up with an optimal set of strategies

c) It is largely political at the institutional level

d) LPP is part of the broader social and cultural plan of a country

e) It is systematic and theory-based.

Goal of Language Policy and Planning

Since LPP is assumed to be part of the broader social and cultural planning of a nation, it would be assumed that every nation has some kind of language policy and planning even where there is no written document that contains specific provisions to that effect. Cooper (1989) then asks the question *'who* plans *what* for *whom* and *how?'*

- The 'who' part of the question refers to the question of agency: who does the planning or who makes the policy? Is it decided from the top or there is grassroots participation? (Bottom-up or Top-down approach).

• The 'what' may be obvious on the surface if the simple answer was language. But LPP may involve an intervention that changes the internal structure of the language (grammar or lexis), the writing system or the script (Corpus planning). It may also involve allocating a new function to a language; e.g. declaring official or removing its official status (status planning). Lastly, LPP may be focussed on the acquisition activities to facilitate the spread of a particular language through school, adult literacy campaigns etc (Acquisition Planning). For example, in Ethiopia one of the questions asked is whether to use the Ethiopic script (that is associated with Amharic) in writing all the Ethiopian languages or use the Roman alphabet.

Apart from the types of acquisition, LPP can be resorted to whenever a language problem or a language-based problem emerges. For example, the elevation of Kiswahili to official status in Kenya has necessitated the reorientation of language attitudes of public officials to accommodate written and spoken Kiswahili communication from the public and a demand for translators and interpreters as people begin to demand to be allowed to use Kiswahili more and more at official functions and in government offices. As for the *'whom'*, part of the question, it is generally agreed that by and large LPP is aimed at solving a 'maximal' language need, but now this includes planning for single institutions, (churches, companies) or supranational entities like SADC, AU, EC, ECOWAS, etc.

Lastly, the '*how*' question refers to the element of LPP that it is goal oriented, systematic and rational. That requires clearly stated implementation activities and a monitoring system to evaluate performance of the plan.

Approaches to LPP

Having looked at the definitions and purposes of language policy and planning, we are tempted to agree that LPP is a worthwhile enterprise and every nation should embark on it. However, there has been a great deal of controversy over the approach to LPP. What we have outlined here are views of those belonging to a group of theorists popularly referred to as positivist. The other group which is opposed to this approach is called the Critical theorists. We shall now discuss the two approaches separately.

Positivist Approaches

The positivist approach has an underlying rationalist philosophy which views language as a 'thing' or a materialist phenomenon whose utilization provides immediate socio–economic and cultural benefits to a polity. They view language choices made as predictable because there are tangible parameters, a combination of which should yield a certain desirable result. The parameters will include benefits and opportunity costs. For example, Fishman (1968) provides three categories of developing countries which he called Types 'A, B and C, where Type A are countries with a Great Tradition and an associated language, Type B are countries with competing Great Traditions and competing languages whereas Type C refers to those developing counties without an established tradition. Following this categorization Spolsky (2004: 22) provides the following predictive statement:

> A nation with consensual great tradition and an associated cultivated language will be most likely to have a monolingual policy. A nation with competing great traditions and associated cultivated languages will endeavour to work out a territorial or demographic compromise --- A nation without

established great traditions and cultivated indigenous languages will continue to use its colonial language or attempt to build the role of an international language, especially English.

The type of nation can be used to predict the LPP so that the monolingual polity is likely to have one national language acceptable to all. The second and third groups will be engaged in a negotiation to select an acceptable national language and the language(s) to be learnt as additional code(s). There are several varieties of the positivist paradigm which regard language policy and planning as primarily used to solve language problems. The approach is strictly structuralist in orientation, for example, there is emphasis on the degree of multilingualism, population size, and functional allocation and language varieties. This is the approach that guided the choice of language policy in most African countries.

Critical Approaches

One name that comes up immediately when we mention critical approach is that of Tollefson (1991), especially when he asserts that:

> Language policy and planning means the institutionalization of language as a basis for distinctions among social groups (classes). That is, language policy is one mechanism for locating language within social structure so that language determines who has access to political power and economic resources. Language policy is one mechanism by which dominant groups establish hegemony in language use (p16).

Tollefson (1991:29) asks three fundamental questions to challenge the validity of the positivist approach.

1   How do language communities form and how do they come to invest their language(s) with varying degrees of value?

> Positivists derive typology of language communities based on *structural characteristics of language varieties,* on the *degree of multilingualism* and *functional variation.*

2. Why do some groups learn others' language(s) easily, perhaps losing their native language altogether, while other groups cling tenaciously to their MT despite enormous pressure to change? History has records of groups going to war in order to defend their language or to kill speakers of another language. But there are also cases of groups easily giving up their languages to learn new ones.

3. What are the mechanisms by which changes in language structure and language use take place, and how does the language planning process affect those mechanisms?

   Positivists fail to explain *how and under what conditions, planning decisions bring about linguistic change.'* Their approach simplistically correlates policy decisions with changes in language structure and use. For example, how do national examination systems influence people's language choices and / or language structure?

The critical approach is not a homogenous paradigm, but is a composite of different conceptual orientations which can be roughly grouped as:-

• Historical-structural approach

• Language as a resource approach

• Linguistic imperialism approach

• Language as a right hypothesis

For the purposes of this paper, I will only discuss Language-as -a-Right and Language as a Resource approaches.

Language as a Right

The language as a right crusade is associated with Skutnabb– Kangas, Stephen May, Robert Phillipson, Kathleen Huegh, Neville Alexander, Aldou Hasan etc. There are two ways of looking at language rights. First, all languages are considered to have a right to exist and all must be recognized and protected as we do with plants and animals in biodiversity discourse. The proposition here is that whenever one language ceases to exist, the world will be the worse off for it. This is the ecological argument (Maffi 2000, Mulhassler, 1996). The second strand is the 'academic legal discourse' that focuses on minority group rights in the context of implementing language rights in national and supranational language plans. According to May (2003: 96) the academicians working in the area of minority rights do so by highlighting the often highly discriminatory processes that not only legally *stigmatise* and *undermine* minority languages *but do so also culturally, socially, economically and politically.* (emphasis added)

Which are some of the areas where minorities may suffer injustice if only the 'official' language is used?

1. Voting rights may suffer if polling documents are all in the dominant language. For example, in 2000 US elections, many immigrants, and black voters in Florida had their votes declared spoilt because they did not understand instructions written in English. This gave George W. Bush a win over Al Gore.

2. Examinations given and answered in an unfamiliar language disadvantage the less proficient candidates. It becomes a test of language proficiency and not a test of knowledge of content.

3. The judicial proceedings conducted in the official language only, (even if interpretation services are provided) excludes litigants and the accused from a crucial discourse in which they have a stake.

4. The administrative procedures issued by the government (local or national) but written strictly in the official language may cause a lot of discomfort for minorities.

5. Interviews for jobs conducted in an unfamiliar language disadvantages minorities and ensure the good jobs go to those proficient in the official language. Even when minorities get initial appointments, their chances of promotion are determined by their ability to work effectively in the language of the workplace.

6. Minorities have their right to information in all forms curtailed if all this is given through the official medium only.

7. Children learning through an unfamiliar official language are seriously disadvantaged.

In response to the recent intense activism in this area, many governments are beginning to yield to the demand to recognize, respect and protect minority languages through constitutional guarantees or by acts of parliament. Minorities are being allowed to choose the language in which their children are taught and demanding public services in their languages. Ordinary laws and constitutions are also including the obligation of the government to teach the official languages to all children to the

level that would erase any form of disadvantage on the part of the minorities.

The minority–rights campaigners argue that in societies where social economic benefits and political power are unequally distributed along ethnic, linguistic, regional and class lines, language becomes an obvious site of struggle and a potential cause of violent conflict.

Tollefson takes issue with ethonolinguistical vitality and the theory of accommodation for ignoring the historical structural factors that lead to levels of vitality and linguistic variation. These two theories assume the 'natural development' of language with no undergirding socio–political forces leading to language change and language use patterns. They view every change as a result of individual choice and not linking the choices to mechanisms that define choices available to individuals.

For example, in Kenya, English and Kiswahili are the declared official languages. That means they have to be taught in school and English has to be used as medium of instruction for most of one's school life. The uneven access to English and Kiswahili means privileging one sector of the community and disadvantaging the other, especially when you consider the variation in the distribution of educational facilities and qualified teachers between rural and urban schools and between the expensive private schools and public schools. The differentials can be explained by the history of the education policy since the colonial era to the present and the development of the powerful elite in the civil service and private sector. The relative ethnolinguistic vitality can also be explained by the institutional arrangements which favour certain linguistic communities at the expense of others. For example, children begin to lose competence

in their mother tongues because the school emphasizes English and Kiswahili and parents believe using the official languages at home enhances chances of success in education. There is need, therefore, to consider relationships that include those of gender, class, region, age and political affiliation in some cases.

Some criticisms

Minority linguistic rights (MLRs), as May (2003) prefers to call them, may sound politically correct to many people but there are very plausible criticisms of the movement.

1. The 'essential' link the campaigners are making between language and cultural identity seems unrealistic and utopian in character. The argument is that there is no 'intrinsic interconnectedness of language and identity. Thus language is neither sufficient nor necessary in the construction of individual or collective identity. Language is at best, only a secondary layer of ethnicity (Brutt-Griffler and Varghese, 2010, Edwards 1985).

2. Minority – rights sympathizers give undue importance to international conventions and treaties while in practice they know many countries do not implement international declarations until they are domesticated in the individual country's laws; and very few of the countries which sign declarations regarding language rights ever domesticate them and implement them. This aspect of the minority rights is idealistic and therefore, not enforceable (Bamgbose, 2000).

3. Linguistic-rights thinkers are also accused of "ghettoizing' of minority linguistic communities by seeking to keep them in their current backward stations while others move on. The strongest statement comes from Edwards when he says:

> Note here how patronizing and naïve are attempts to preserve as they are on the grounds that they are really better off if only they know it, that progress is not all it is made out to be ---
>
> Little wonder, then, that sensible populations do not accept this lie and that the major proponents of the view [minority elites) are usually securely ensconced within that very segment of society they rail against ---- [Edwards 1985:95-97]

This is a crushing indictment of the minority-rightists as being patronizing and behaving like the generals who burn the bridge after they are safely on the side and leave the rest at the mercy of the enemy, a kind of *inverse snobbery*. The argument is that human individuals make rational choices and, therefore, members of minority linguistic communities know what is good for them in deciding which language to adopt for what purpose; and this includes the choice of which language to adopt to define their identity.

4. Minority-rights sympathizers are also accused of regarding ethnicity as an objective reality whereas the current thinking in sociology regards ethnicity as a 'socially constructed' entity, and of necessity, fluid and constantly evolving with ever-changing socio–historical circumstances. By arguing that language defines ethnicity, they are suggesting that ethnicity is a 'thing', a perceptible object that has a fixed and objectively describable existence. The alternative view is that ethnic identity is a relational phenomenon determined by socio-historical forces present during interethnic interactions at a given location and at a particular time in history. That means that a group's language may change in the course of

their history and the new language would still adequately define them. There is no deterministic relationship between language and ethnic identity.

Language as a Resource Theory

This model is associated especially with Francois Grin, Florian Coulmas and several thinkers in the area of language economics or the economics of language. This models treats language like any commodity with a market value so that a language policy should take into account what linguistic choices would yield the most economic satisfaction to the majority. Paraphrasing Coulmas (1992) Kamwangamalu (2010:12) asserts:

> Within the framework of language economics, linguistic products such as language and language varieties, utterances and accents are seen as food or commodities to which the market assigns a value

The main thrust of this model is that any language policy that is not supported by economic advantages is bound to fail. That is, minority groups must identify specific and significant social benefits and economic rewards which language education will bestow on their children. So, multilingualism (since this is what the minorities are faced with) is regarded as a form of human capital, the benefits of which are measured through *labour productivity, increased regional and international trade, increased local market activity and enhanced individual earnings* (Grin 2003).

Grin (2003: 14-15) considers three generations of studies in economics of language which have contributed to the wealth of data and concepts being used to understand the complex relationships between language, ethnic identity and economic advantage.

1. The first–generation studies were made up of empirical work with a bias towards economic analysis of (racial) *discrimination* and its analytical application for language. Studies view language primarily as an *ethnic attribute*. That is, having a particular language as one's mother tongue *ascribes* a person to a particular group and this language based ascription may have an effect on the person's socio–economic status, particularly his or her earning.

2. The second – generation studies emphasize the *human capital* nature of language.

   --- particular language skills can be interpreted, in the same way as other types of skills, as a form of capital because it is an area in which individuals and societies can profitably invest. *Deliberately* acquired language skills can, therefore, be seen as a *source* of economic advantage.

   This is the model popularly used in assessing the communication function of language in empirical studies on socio-economic status of minorities and dominant groups.

3. The third–generation studies consider both language functions as identity marker and language as capital. The two 'functions are combined and form a set of linguistic *attributes* (embodied in individuals) which together influence actors' socio–economic status. This model provides an expanded view of language economics to include:

   a. The role of language as an explanatory factor of labour income.

   b. The role of economic variables as explanatory factors of linguistic variables, for example, what is the effect of

prices and earnings on individual patterns of language use or on language dynamics.

c. The role of economics as a tool for evaluating the effect of language policies; for example, what are the costs and benefits of existing language policy options? This approach will avoid use of prices, earnings, transactions etc. The focus is on advantages and drawbacks of one policy relative to those of the other options.

Grin (1994) provides a definition of the field as:

The economics of language refers to the paradigm of mainstream theoretical economics and uses the concepts and tools of economics in the study of relationships featuring linguistic variables. It focuses principally, but not exclusively, on those relationships in which economic variables also play a part.

Criticisms

1. The approach is reifying language by emphasizing its money value at the expense of cultural and social values. To view language as a market commodity is simplistic and restrictive.

2. The approach puts too much value on statistical analysis and ignores the qualitative approaches to language policy.

3. There is an inherent assumption in the approach that choosing one language or the other is done in an atmosphere where free choices is possible. That is, it assumes human rationality where individuals should take responsibility for

their choices. On the contrary, language choice, especially those made by minorities, are determined by socio-economic and political forces beyond their control. As Bamgbose (2003) argues, people do not do so because they want but because they need the language for survival.

The diverse approaches to language policy can be regarded as ideology-driven and different states select any one or a combination of some to construct a language policy. The decisions are normally formally stated in constitutions, parliamentary acts but the stated LP in documents still remains a declaration of intent since the de facto LP resides in the language practices of the people (Spolsky 2004, Shohamy 2006). Some of the mechanisms that determine the true LP are hidden (covert) whereas others are overt. The covert ideologies include: language tests, language in public space, regulations and rules etc. These will not be discussed here but they have enormous impact on language attitudes and language behaviour.

Chapter Five

Political and Cultural Implications of English as a Foreign Language

Introduction

The debate on English as a world language is not new and it did not start a few years ago and the fact that the debate has refused to go away underscores its importance for those who like and support it and for those who do not alike. The persistent discourse of English hegemony and/or its international utility has been problematized and is now a subject of intensive and extensive research within diverse theoretical paradigms. This chapter will discuss only a few of the many positions scholars and politicians have taken regarding the role of English in national and international affairs and how this affects the welfare of individuals and communities as well as their languages.

We will start by looking at English as a problem because this is the more explosive side of the debate and we will look at sample statements which illustrate some entrenched positions in the debate on the spread of English

Is English a superior language to others?

One of the admirers of English and its speakers, Otto Jespersen, thought English was the best language that humans had developed. He said, 'An Englishman does not like to commit himself by being too enthusiastic or too distressed, and his language accordingly grows sober, and too sober, perhaps and even barren when

the object is to express emotion'.(Jespersen1938:8). He further argues that English is different from languages such as Latin, Basque, and Russian which use excessive word endings, and these word endings '…produce the impression that the speakers are **innocent, childish, genial beings, with no great business capacities or seriousness in life**' (p 9)(emphasis added). The foundation of this linguistic chauvinism was laid in the early years of the colonization enterprise led by Britain as is witnessed in the following statement by a 19th Century American thinker, Hosmer who said:

> The inevitable issue--- is to be that primacy of the world will lie with us. *English institutions, English Speech, English thought, are to become the main features of the political social and intellectual life of mankind'.* (cited in Hofstadter 1944: 174) (emphasis added).

This was in response to the debate on Social Darwinism in the US and the spread of western imperialism around the world. Jespersen's sentiments, therefore, do not come as a surprise; the foundation was laid much ealier and this explains the dominance of English and the cultural and political forces that were behind its spread. The spread was clearly part of the imperial ideology to dominate the world but which many saw as the natural order of things. That is, in Darwin's theory of natural selection, it is the strong genes that survive and the weak ones are vanquished; and that is determined by forces of nature, not humans. Jespersen is very clear about the superiority of English when he assets that "If briefness, conciseness and terseness are characteristic of the style of men, while women as a rule are not such economizers of speech, **English is more masculine than most languages'** (p.9) (emphasis added). So, is English genetically superior to the local languages in the countries which it spreads to around the world?

Is English promoted by the dominant cultural, economic and military might of Britain and the United states?

The most serious claim against English as part of the post-colonial heritage in the former colonies can be found in works by Robert Phillipson (*Linguistic Imperialis*m), Ngugi wa'Thiong'o (*Decolonization of the Mind*), Alistair Pennycook (*The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language)* and many others that we shall make reference to in the discussion. The central thesis is that English is a critical symbol of political, cultural and sometimes, military domination and that as long as it continues to function as an official language (as it does in most of the former colonies), then the asymmetrical relationships between the developing countries and the western nations will remain.

The second argument is that the spread of English is not a natural and neutral consequence of globalisation but a deliberate policy strategy of the native-speaker countries in the inner circle to promote their economic and military influence in the world. Hence, the adoption of English as 'official' in other parts of the world is viewed as a bridge-head to allow the western nations to pursue their neo-colonial agenda. The 'English as official' policy denies the local people the right to enjoy their culture through their home language and if the trend is not checked, it eventually leads to the weakening or even death of the local languages. As Ngugi (2010:29) argues:

> To starve or kill a language is to kill a people's memory bank. And it is equally true that to impose a language is to impose the weight of experience it carries and its conception of self and otherness--- indeed, the weight of its memory, which includes religion and education.

The cultural challenge a foreign language poses is made forcefully and it is clear that, in his view, the language bearing good experiences of one group is not necessarily good for people of another culture. Speakers symbolically produce, interpret and retain their experiences in their language, but may subtly or violently impose it on others. Languages do not have power in themselves but their speakers do. Neither do languages move to establish contact with each other, but their speakers do. Those who kill others' languages must be more powerful and, perhaps, more treacherous than their victims.

Language is often used as a scapegoat or a mere Trojan horse when the real culprit is the speakers with their economic and political interests. However, the legitimate question still is: Can a foreign language become one's effective 'memory bank'?

Ngugi is answered by Widdowson's claim that as an international language, English serves different communities and their institutional needs well and since these are new international purposes, he claims, they transcend traditional and local cultural boundaries, for example, international trade, tourisms or higher education respect no borders. He claims:

> These activities develop their own conventions of thought and procedures, customs and codes of practice; in short, they in effect create their own cultures, their own standards (Widdowson 1998:241/242).

Widdowson is giving English a culture-neutral face to justify its spread as beneficial and necessary for transacting business with the rest of the world, a function local languages are not suited for. That sounds good, but we know that languages are not neutral tools or instruments; they always embody the political and cultural ideologies of their speakers. English is, therefore,

a symbolic capital for its speakers and to make it an official language in a foreign country cannot be justified by the occasional use in international contacts by a few privileged citizens. Moreover, very few in the outer-circle countries ever master it well enough to have the full benefit of its linguistic resources as a system. In circumstances lacking in qualified teachers, teaching facilities and opportunities to speak English outside school, very few, apart from the minority elite, ever reach the requisite level of proficiency that would yield maximum benefit to them. Therefore, the so called 'their own cultures, their own standards' Widdowson talks about, are just but another myth, camouflaging the cultural, commercial and political interests of outsiders and/ or the local ruling elite.

Another popular defence has been that English no longer belongs to its native speakers in England, United States, Australia and Canada. But the folly of this claim can be illustrated by Crawford's (1999:24) remarks about the use of English in the South African health sector:

> The patients are positioned at the bottom, largely passive bodies whose own version or narrative of their illness is not considered central to the processes of diagnosis and formulation of realistic treatment strategy. The nurses, often also used as (unpaid) interpreters in South Africa where a wide gulf of social class, race, language, and gender frequently separates doctor from patients, occupy a conflicted and ambivalent position intersecting the space between them.

The image of English is quite different here as it is used as a language of miscommunication, exclusion, inequality, injustice and a barrier to true communication. South Africans are clearly categorized along whether they can speak English or not and how

well. The doctors are on top of the heap and nurses are barely managing, but mediate between the doctors and patients who speak no English at all. The doctors represent the local minority elite providing the link with the powerful nations of the inner-circle countries. Crawford calls this practising a monolingual policy in a multilingual society. A study of language use in the health facilities in Eldoret and its environs has revealed the same scenario (Ogechi, Sang and Kembo–Sure, 2011)

In Phillipson's (1992) view, the spread of English is linked to the hegemonic cultural and economic power of the native-speaker nations, supported by international capitalism promoted by the World Bank, World Trade Organization and other UN agencies. The British use the British Council personnel to sell English to local communities, especially through training of English teachers in Britain. The US has an elaborate TESOL which promotes the teaching of English at home and abroad. The teaching of English has become an industry which earns the two countries billions of dollars annually. As Edwards (2001:5) puts it, "Languages of wider communication, after all, have no special linguistic capabilities to recommend them; *they are simply the varieties of those who have power and prestige." (*emphasis added)

Does English work against the local cultures and languages?

As long as English is given official status and liberal-democratic principles apply, the law of natural selection will be unleashed. The local languages will be competing English on an uneven playfield and the outcome will always be a preference of English over the other languages. As Grin (2000:7) warns:

> The increase in the presence of language Y in a traditionally X-defined environment is different depending on which languages play the role of X and Y, and it is always a risky

business to suggest general patterns in language dynamics. However, f*ew people would dispute the fact that the increased presence of Y in an X-defined environment is particularly manifest when Y stands for English, and X for just about any other language.*

The attraction to English is irresistable and few parents will dare opt for a local language over English. 'Officialisation' of English as Shohamy(2006) prefers to call it, is an ideological ploy to disadvantage other languages and promote English. It is the unseen language policy which many nations use to discourage the learning and use of local languages while silently promoting the learning of the official language through taxation.

Do local people willingly choose to learn English?

This is also a problematized notion in critical language planning discourse. Following the irresistible pull towards English, even where there are no immediate economic benefits. Bamgbose (2000) argues:

> If a country has had a long history of contact with English, if in the multilingual situation it is the only link language among speakers of different languages, if contacts with other countries through trade, industry and higher education are in English, it does not require a clairvoyant to predict that English is found to occupy a central role in the language policy of the country in question.

This position is contradicted by Brutt–Griffler (2002:223) when she criticises the language-rights campaigners for overdramatizing the hegemonic position of English in the world. According to her, interests of minority groups cannot be treated as uniform and as coterminous with individual interest. She concludes:

> --- the decisions of peoples around the world to acquire English are in part adaptive responses taken on their own initiative (rather than ideologically coerced decisions) to socio-economic forces, reasonable and *times* effective within the conditions they face.

This argument is tenable where languages concerned have more or less equal functional and identity representations in a polity. However, this is not the case in most, if not all, developing countries using English as official and medium of instruction. Besides, as long as English is provided with the institutional support which is denied other languages, it is dishonest to argue that people have a choice to opt for English or a local language. For many people being official, English becomes a need and not a want; they know better than to deny their children English when it is the only language officially sold as the language of privilege and social mobility.

Will English remain the 'global language' for ever?

History tells us that languages ascend to dominant positions over large geographic spaces but later on decline and give way to others. For example, Latin was once a world language but the dominant position of Latin was challenged successfully during Reformation period and national European languages arose to fill in the void by taking the functions hitherto performed by Latin. Looking at the current strength of English as an international lingua franca and official language in many countries, Grin (2001:75) argues that one cannot bet on English holding that power and prestige for ever. As he puts it:

> Yet as people are moved to learn it, they will increase the supply of English language skills, making them more banal, as it were, and driving down the 'premia' to English speakers

--- in other words, the rewards for speaking English will be less and less, and other skills will be required to achieve socio–economic success.

This is the view of a language economist basing his conclusion on the theory of supply and demand, but even with casual observation of what is going on in Kenya between English and Kiswahili, there has been a huge increase in the number of students applying to do Kiswahili, especially in the Schools of Education in all the universities. This has happened in the last twenty or so years since Kiswahili was made a compulsory school subject in 1985. This has created an acute shortage of teachers of Kiswahili in both primary and secondary schools. Coupled with this, there are no immediate jobs for those who specialize in English and English-medium disciplines whereas there is a shortage of teachers of other foreign languages like French and German as well as interpreters and translators. There is certainly a warning to all that linguistic diversity pays and the days of English's unchallenged superiority are over.

Moreover, in the current globalisation trends, the ascendancy of India, China and Brazil as the new economic power houses might soon tilt the balance in favour of another language (or languages) as the language of choice in doing international business. Confucius Centres are being established around the world and generously funded by the Chinese government and public corporations. The centres provide Chinese language courses by Chinese teachers while local personnel are receiving scholarships to train in China to come back and man the centres. China is aggressively providing economic aid to developing countries as it participates in huge tendering projects for infrastructure development in the countries hitherto known to depend on Europe for development support and business contracts.

Indian companies are also visible in construction works and ICT projects in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world. Their presence is changing the perception that quality goods and services can only come from Europe. The balance of economic power is evidently changing and this might be followed soon by cultural changes that will include the linguistic choices people will be making.

The chapter has highlighted the hard positions taken by thinkers in this area but the world is not about hard-line positions only; and there is no universal set of principles that can solve linguistic problems of all countries. There must be contextual differences which necessitate variations in the way we do business, especially in applied linguistics. This brings us to the question of what language to consider our mother tongue and which should define our identity as individuals and as a people

Chapter Six

Mother Tongue and Linguistic Identity

Introduction

Growing up in the 1950s in a multilingual village, I had contact with different speech forms, although the dominant or primary language was Dholuo. During this time the oldest surviving grandfather could have been in his early eighties although he looked much older in my estimation. He was then the guiding and titular head of the Kanyangoko family. He had nine wives, all of whom were living when I was growing up and learning to speak. The last of them died only two years ago (April.2011).

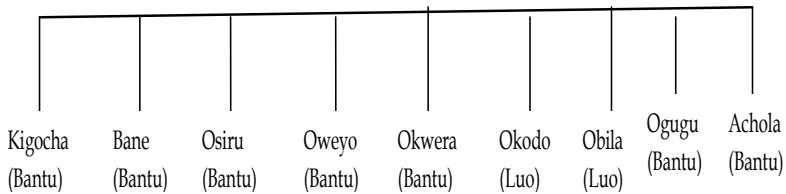| Kigocha	Bane	Osiru	Oweyo	Okwera	Okodo	Obila	Ogugu	Achola
(Bantu)	(Bantu)	(Bantu)	(Bantu)	(Bantu)	(Luo)	(Luo)	(Bantu)	(Bantu)

Figure 2: Okuoro's wives

The other surviving grandfather was Okang'a and he also had a complex linguistically mixed marriage, with half of the wives speaking languages other than Dholuo.
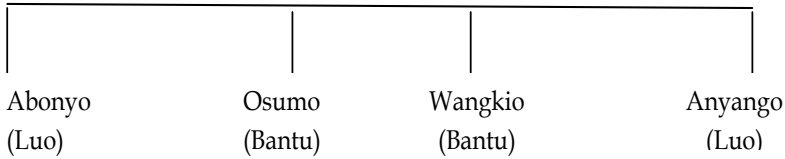
| Abonyo | Osumo | Wangkio | Anyango |
| (Luo) | (Bantu) | (Bantu) | (Luo) |

Figure 3: Okanga's Wives

Like his cousin Okuoro he was fluent in Dholuo and the Olusuba dialects which his wives spoke. We then grew up hearing different languages being spoken around us and code-mixing was a taken-for-granted conversational strategy when the grandfathers spoke to their wives.

The dramatic language shift occurred when all my uncles and aunts failed to learn the Olusuba dialects of their mothers and acquired Dholuo as their primary language.

We (the Abasuba) were surrounded by Dholuo-speaking peoples and about this time Christian missionaries were aggressively moving into the area with churches and schools, each denomination trying to outdo the other. The pastors and teachers who set up these institutions were all Dholuo speakers since missionary incursion started in Dholuo–speaking areas in the early years of the 20th Century.

The intrusion of Dholuo and the institutional support received from the administration and the missionaries endowed it with a unique social and communicative significance that was denied Olusuba. Those who spoke Dholuo, in our estimation as children, were being associated with modernity, progress and maturity because it was the language used for training pastors and teachers –two very prestigious professions at the time. The Bantu codes, used primarily by grandmothers, were being frowned upon and eventually began to decline.

The first sign of obsolescence of Olusuba came when the chain of language transmission from parents to children got broken, with my uncles marrying mostly Luo women. Grandparents remained bilingual as their children learnt only Dholuo. The grandmothers from Dholuo-speaking locations refused to converge and that hastened the reduction of communicative and functional space for Olusuba. My uncles and aunts acquired Dholuo as their primary language and that is what I first knew as *the* language.

When I was eight years I went to a primary school, one kilometre away from my home and here the linguistic configuration became different and intriguing. For the first time I came across children my age speaking Olusuba which at home I associated only with my grandparents. This was a little confusing and curious. These children came about three kilometres from my home but we had not interacted anywhere to realize that some children could speak a language other than Dholuo. This was a new school and the only one in a radius of up to ten kilometres. In that catchment area there were pockets of Olusuba speakers where the language enjoyed full ethnolinguistic vitality and so intergenerational transmission was still taking place, although Dholuo had also penetrated the areas through the church and the colonial administration which also used Dholuo-speaking agents.

The medium of instruction was Dholuo, although some teachers were bilingual. The linguistic variation among the children led to bullying and taunting of the children who spoke Olusuba as their 'strong' language, although they knew Dholuo enough to communicate on the play-ground and follow instruction in class. The worst label we gave them was '*Jomwa*' or *Jamwa* (singular) which means speaker of a foreign language or in some contexts, 'slave'. *Jamwa* has no rights; he has no social prestige and owns

no property, except when from the largess of the master, was allocated a piece of land and wealth to get a wife and start a family. He still was treated as a squatter and only marginally as a member of the core family.

Dholuo was the language of status and privilege and these children felt isolated and tried their best not to speak Olusuba in the hearing of other children. They were a minority whose voices were suppressed. In class they were laughed at when they spoke Dholuo with an accent. This was so humiliating that I, with hand-sight, think it must have led the relatively older ones to drop out of school.

In 1960 our school was promoted to an Intermediate School, (Grades 5 to Grade 8). And since it was run by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, pupils came from much farther away and from outside our administrative location. Some of them came from Olusuba strongholds on the islands of Lake Victoria. On the islands, Olusuba is still used actively, although from recent studies only by people of age 50 and above (Rottland and Okoth 1986; Kembo-Sure,2000). The number of Olusuba speakers increased in the school but they were still overwhelmed by Dholuo speakers.

I was a little older and started to ask why these children spoke a strange language.

My father explained to me that those children were actually speaking the language of our ancestors, and that his father's mother (my great grandmother) came from one of the islands on Lake Victoria now called Rusinga and that she was not a Luo at all. My father's mother, though, was a Luo.

I was now eleven years and soon befriended one of the boys with a strong Olusuba background. Elisha liked football and was always on my team whenever we were out on the field. He occasionally spoke Olusuba with his fellow Olusuba speaking boys and girls, but generally only when they were alone. Some of the boys were old enough to ward off any bullying by us and, therefore, we soon stopped hearing the 'strange' language. Olusuba had become a familiar tongue and the school was superficially bilingual. Elisha lived with a family about three kilometres away from school and therefore, could not run back for lunch as I did. I noticed that he could not play football happily after lunch before afternoon classes started.

I started inviting him to come with me to my home during lunch break and this provided us with a perfect opportunity to cement our relationship. After a few lunches I pleaded with my mother to take him in because he was not happy where he lived. When the new school term started, Elisha was living with me in the same house. We ate and played together; his Dholuo improved tremendously and he was never considered a foreigner anymore; he was like family, but still spoke Dholuo with an accent, which was well tolerated.

In Grade 5 the medium of instruction changed from Dholuo to English and we were soon required to speak it in school. Dholuo was now being vilified and proscribed by the school for those in the intermediate classes. In Grade 6 there came two teachers who did not speak Dholuo at all. One was from the Kamba tribe in Kenya; the other was a Sukuma from Tanzania. The Tanzanian taught us Kiswahili, which had been introduced in Grade 5 and speaking English and Kiswahili was slowly creating a multilingual social context, something that must have been a novelty to village children that we were. The language

configuration taking place involved more and different languages than what I was used to at home.

When I joined secondary school in 1963 I was a Luo in my heart, although I now knew my ancestors were not. But the identity changed rather dramatically. There were a few of us from what were called the five Suba locations, the region that was occupied predominantly by the Olusuba-speaking people. Some of the boys from these locations could speak Olusuba fluently and also communicate relatively well enough in Dholuo. To my amazement we (the boys from Suba locations) were lumped together as *Jomwa* with the Kisii and Kuria boys and being taunted by the majority Luo boys for having a foreign ancestry and accent. Olusuba now became my language of identification by others, although I never spoke a word of it. In my turbulent teenage years I badly needed to be sure who I really was and this linguistic identity crisis is what I would have least wanted to deal with.

There were stories of 'my people' being discriminated against by the Luos in the distribution of political appointments in the civil service and local government jobs. Some of the political wars were being reported in the media and enthusiastically debated by the boys at school. Some of the debates degenerated into bitter ethnic disagreements and occasional fist fights. Eventually I changed from my Luo identity to being a Suba at heart. In fact, when I acquired my first national identity card I identified myself as a Suba; that was important then. As they say, history repeats itself; the new devolved system has reintroduced the former jostling for political appointments in the new Homa Bay County. The county jobs have had to be distributed on the basis of constituencies and ethnicity in order to fulfil the constitutional requirement of fair regional and minority representation.

In secondary school English was the language of instruction, whereas Dholuo, the 'mother tongue' of the majority was not allowed in official communication among students and between the boys and the teachers. So Dholuo was not, after all, the superior language the boys thought it was. There was a 'disc system' to catch and punish those found speaking Dholuo in school. The language I thought was superior was now proscribed and Kiswahili and English replaced it.

Kiswahili was taught as a subject but few spoke it outside the Kiswahili classes. It was not a compulsory examination subject, although I liked it, studied it to the end of secondary school and got a decent grade in the final examination.

I got married to a Luo woman whose people referred to me and my people as *jomwa* but ethnicity was not an issue during the marriage negotiations. We have two grown boys, who grew up away from the village and had to learn Dholuo at home from me and the mother and occasionally from a House help. Unfortunately, even House helps who spoke Dholuo also preferred Kiswahili when speaking to the boys to improve their Kiswahili and to be seen to be part of urban life. Kiswahili the lingua franca in urban areas and speaking mother tongue is stigmatized. For people coming from the rural villages, Kiswahili gives status and ensures smooth accommodation to the larger community.

In my family we use English and Dholuo when the sons come home. Between me and my wife it is also English and Dholuo. My sons are fluent in English, Kiswahili, Dholuo and Sheng. They also studied French at school but that is part of their passive linguistic repertoire. Between them they use English and Kiswahili to discuss serious issues but in normal casual conversation it is Kiswahili and Sheng. Code switching is so

normal in family conversations that we never stop to think about it. It is probably the primary 'language' of conversation.

The narrative is not terribly important in and by itself but it is providing us with something to think about. It raises a few questions which need to be answered. And that is, we must begin to reconsider our traditional conception of the terms that we use in linguistics and sociolinguistics. We have used some concepts in our discipline for so long that it is time we revised our definitions in view of the emerging sociolinguistic, socio-political and linguistic realities. I will try to use the story to answer the following questions:

• What is language? What are dialects?

• When does language become a factor in social identification and is that identification permanent?

• What is mother tongue?

• What is bilingualism/multilingualism?

What is a language?

We should start the discussion by looking at what the current thinking is regarding language and I will start with Pennycook (2004: 2) because he holds some of the most radical views about linguistics as a field of study and language planning as a profession. He says:

> ---- the moment has arrived to urge that the language concept too has served its time…, with its long ties with colonialism linguistics needs to be profoundly questioned.

The argument here is that languages must no long be regarded as fixed organic structures and discrete phenomena which can be planned by counting the number of such occurrences in a polity. This is not tenable in highly multilingual areas in Africa and Asia where languages merge in actual practice in a number of domains. For example, the total number of languages spoken in Kenya varies from 42 to 65, depending on who does the counting. This has led Kwesi Prah, through his Harmonisation project, to contemplate 'reducing' the number of African languages to a few tens from the thousands estimated in many studies existing now.

In the biographical story which I have just narrated, how many were the languages spoken by my grandparents when they spoke to each other and to their children? Did they regard themselves as switching between two languages? In the case of my family with English, Kiswahili, Dholuo and Sheng being spoken all in one family, do we ever regard ourselves to be making switches between languages? Hardly!

The language crossing phenomenon is so rampant that it deserves special attention in the definition of language and in drawing national language/dialect atlases but also keeping in mind that isolating languages as discrete entities coterminous with geographic territories is an archaic language ideology that must be handled very carefully, if only to avoid creating new social conflicts in the name of seeking political autonomy for minority groups.

It is now argued that the discrete boundaries are creations of the antiquated European 19th Century conceptions of language, introduced to other parts of the world through colonialism and perpetuated by the powerful elites in these countries in cahoots with language planning experts, teachers, examination boards

and curriculum developers. The ideology assumes language 'to be most basically a technology for naming the world, rather than accomplishing numerous other social tasks; monolingualism is taken as the natural state of human life'(Gal, 2006).

Closely linked to the question of language is that of dialect. The classical definition is that dialects are those varieties of a language which are mutually intelligible, *mutual intelligibility* being the key concept in the definition. For example, when a Kipsigis meets a Nandi each will speak their variety of the so called Kelenjin and they will communicate perfectly. However, away from politics where tyranny of numbers reigns, a Kipsigis will insist his language is Kipsigis and a Nandi will proclaim Nandi an autonomous language. What then is a language and what is a dialect? As someone once said, 'A language is a dialect with an army and a navy'. In other words, the dialect spoken by the powerful carries the day and becomes *the* language.

What is mother tongue?

When writing the Foreword for Kachru's (1982), *The Other Tongue*, Ferguson remarked that the term mother tongue no longer met the purpose for which it was used to categorize people and languages. He recognized the fluidity with which languages were being used and emergence of distinct varieties of English that would deserve the label 'language' as they got acquired by millions as the first or 'second' language.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) went further to hazard a new definition of mother tongue along four dimensions which she calls *criteria*.

Criterion	Definition
Origin	The language one learned first
Identification	
a) Internal	the language one identifies with
b) External	the language one is identified with as a native speaker
Competence	the language one knows best
Function	the language uses most

Skutnabb-Kangas (1994)

Although this is a definition within the *language-as-a-right* paradigm, which is, itself, controversial, I shall use it here to characterize and discuss the languages in my story.

• I said in my story that when I was a child I considered Dholuo as the language of the home and any other was foreign. But when I grew older I met new social situations which changed my view of what my mother tongue was and my loyalty shifted to Olusuba. I suddenly started identifying myself (and still do when occasion demands) with Olusuba, although I don't speak it. Does Dholuo still remain my mother tongue because I learnt it first? Can Olusuba be my mother tongue and yet I never learnt it?

• In my story *identification points* to Olusuba as my mother tongue. In social categorization theory, people define themselves along certain dimensions that they consider salient at the time

to help them stand out as a distinct in-group. Did Olusuba then become my mother tongue in my teenage years? Can we argue that the identification is with the perceived Suba community but not the actual language?

- Besides identifying with Olusuba, the others referred to me (and still do) as a Suba, meaning a speaker of Olusuba. Does that make Olusuba my mother tongue?

- Competence can only identify me with Dholuo and English. I started off as a competent speaker of Dholuo but with the new world challenges related to education (literacy) and the workplace, my proficiency in English has surpassed my proficiency in Dholuo. Does this make English my mother tongue? This can be said of my wife as well.

- But how about my sons whose competence in Kiswahili and English is more or less on a par? They work using English in the office; speak a lot of Kiswahili and English with friends. They also use Sheng in other informal social contexts and speak some Dholuo, if they have to. Are English and Kiswahili their mother tongue? Is Dholuo their mother tongue because their mother is Luo and their parents have native-speaker competence in Dholuo? Can one have more than one mother tongue?

- Lastly, the four of us function a lot in English because it is an official language and most official and public dealings call for the use of English. For me and my wife Dholuo is vital in informal and formal cultural functions. My sons, however, have few occasions when they are forced to use Dholuo.

- The range of functions requiring the use of the Dholuo for us is restricted to cultural engagements but English occupies

most of the space in our functioning in formal and informal situations. My sons have most of their friends operating in Kiswahili and English and the two languages are functionally almost equally spread over all the crucial domains. So, in functional terms which language(s) can we claim to be our mother tongue(s)? Can the use of mother tongue characterize my family (or individual members) accurately?

It is clear from the discussion here that we need a more precise definition of language; what this conceptual frame provides, which is useful, is the fact that mother tongue changes from time to time depending of what is considered salient. That is, mother tongue does not have to be the same all one's life. There are also two pertinent questions arising from this model: Can mother tongue be learnt from other people than one's parents and when the internal identification is in conflict with the external identification (and they often are), then which one counts and why?

Who is a multilingual?

This paper will treat bilingualism and multilingualism as a case where one possesses competence in two or more codes/varieties. It is a composite linguistic condition involving two or more languages. I will restrict this to the psycholinguistic consideration that an individual knows two or more languages but leave out societal bi/multilingualism.

According to Brutt-Griffler (2004:93) bilingualism does not mean being a monolingual in two languages. They often create their own space as bilinguals. She argues, 'Bilinguals simply do not obey the rules set out for them ---- They refuse to hold their two (or more) languages as distinct, disconnected systems'.

The description of language use patterns does certainly defy the definition of language that will regard knowledge of language as neatly divided into mental compartments completely separated from each other. We use these languages without ever consciously deciding that now it is time to move to this or the other. This goes beyond the classical definition of code switching unless we treat code switching as a separate code and not a switch from one language to another. Skutnabb-Kangas (2007) provides a different way of looking at bilingualism:

> A bilingual speaker is one who is able to function in two (or more) languages, either in 'monolingual' or multilingual communities, in accordance with the social cultural demands made on an individual's communicative and cognitive competence by these communities and by the individual herself, at the same level, as native speakers and who is able to identify positively with both (or all) language groups (and cultures) or parts of them (Skutnabb-Kangas/2007)

There are two major problems with this approach which should be pointed out. First the definition is straining to include the four dimensions of: *Origin, identification, competence* and *function* in order that it can establish an essentialist view of relationship between language and culture. Second, the author conceptualizes a bilingual as having native-speaker competence in both or all the languages claimed.

The argument that language is an essential component of culture, so that without language culture dies is no longer tenable because there is evidence that language can be replaced but culture remains. For example, some Suba groups continue to circumcise long after shifting from Olusuba to Dholuo as the primary language. They carry out this sacred ritual in Dholuo, the newly acquired primary language.

The old view of a bilingual that was given to us by Bloomfield which puts undue emphasis on native-speaker competence is a concept which is also controversial. Who determines the competence? Besides, many bilinguals learn and use languages in their home environments where there are no native speakers. Baker (1996:7) defines it simply as' --- the ability to use one or both languages for reasoning and deliberation (p7)'

If we combine Brutt-Griffler's notion and Baker's we can then characterize members of my family as bilinguals/multilinguals without restriction on some level of competence in both or all but also occupying a special category which is not 'monolingual in two languages'.

The notion remains contestable as long as we continue to view languages as distinct or discrete phenomena that have independent existence. In my view language is a human possession and an expression of humanness; it cannot exist apart from the speakers. We may then be characterized as multilinguals who speak multilingualism as our mother tongue.

In a way I agree with Makoni (2012:2) that 'the notion of languages as separate, discrete entities and countable institutions is not central to critical linguistics, making categorisations of individuals based on their ethnicity or language difficult to sustain'. The question of who I and my family are, based on our ethnicity and language or linguistic proficiencies, cannot easily be resolved and I am not actually looking forward to getting an answer because I am not sure it is critical to my wellbeing and least of all, to my very existence as a human person in a world that is becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual.

Chapter Seven

The Alternative Look at Language Policy and Planning

> Let us contribute to the honour of our nationality and learn incessantly from and with others so that together we can seek the truth and cultivate the garden of the common good. (Herder, in Fishman 1985)

Introduction

The discussion of theories and practice of language policy and planning has traversed the choice of medium of instruction, the outcomes in bilingual education programmes in selected countries and definition of the notions: language, dialect, mother tongue and multilingualism. We have also discussed the theories underpinning some of the language plans and their implementation. In this chapter, I would like to move on to suggest a new way of looking at language policy and planning that will possibly bring about joy and progress.

Linguistic Diversity as Ideology

We have already characterised most of Africa as being highly multilingual and multicultural in composition. Diversity, both cultural and linguistic, is a reality which Africans must live with and must plan; we cannot plan monolingually but live multilingually and still expect a happy ending. The ideology of linguistic diversity is based on Fishman's notion of Whorfianism

of the Third Kind (W_3) which regards ethnolinguistic diversity as a social asset. This hypothesis is in line with the theoretical approaches I discussed earlier i.e. *Language as a Right and Language as a Resource.*

These approaches are combined here to give us a composite hypothesis that proclaims the cultural and socio–legal imperatives of learning and using one's language and the benefits and rewards not only to the individual and his/her community, but also to humankind. The Whorfianism of the Third Kind is anchored on Gottfried Herder's notion of the central place of the authentic language in ethnic nationalism as practised in Germany and most of Central Europe in the period up to 18th century. As paraphrased by Fishman (1985: 479):

> ….the entire world needs a diversity of ethnolinguistic entities for its own *salvation*, for its *greater creativity*, for the *more certain solution of human problems*,for the *constant rehumanization of humanity* in the face of materialism, for fostering *greater aesthetic, intellectual and emotional capacities* for humanity as a whole; indeed for arriving at a *higher stage of human functioning*. It is precisely in order to arrive at the higher stage and in order to *participate more fully* in it that less powerful ethnolinguistic collectivities must be *protected, respected and assisted*, because it is they who have the most vital contribution to make to these desirable goals.

The following are the key planks of the ethnolinguistic diversity hypothesis:

1. Ethnolinguistc diversity is a fundamental nature of human society; a cursory observation of the world today points to increased cultural contact and increased multilingualism. Monolingualism is becoming a rarity even among the so-called 'untouched communities'.

2. Ethnolinguistic stability or internal harmony in a linguistic community is 'sanctified' and 'eternal'. If each ethnolinguistic group is well integrated and unified there is blessing and unending peace and happiness for all.

3. '**Transethnification**' and **translinguification**' are 'cataclysmic tragedies'. That is, death of a culture and/or death of a language is/are a catastrophic human loss. Every effort must be made to maintain weaker languages.

4. Ethnolinguistic continuity is enabling, authentic, fulfilling and humanizing. People are proud and feel human and spiritually rewarded when they enjoy their culture and their language. In other words, one feels human by participating in his/her culture and using the authentic language.

5. Rewards (material and spiritual) of fidelity to a language and culture are available to all humanity and not only the community from which it originated; a neighbouring community in cultural turmoil is a security threat to all.

6. Greater creativity for inspired humanity does not and cannot emerge from universal civilization, but out of individuality of separate ethnic collectivities- out of their own authentic languages. That is, the idea of a universal language and culture cannot bring about unity and happiness in the world. In the 19th century an attempt to create a universal language –Esperanto – failed miserably. Or the current proclamation of English as a global language has never brought happiness

to the world. There must be a build-up of this from below – the many small cultures and languages contributing to the cumulative world culture. True globalisation cannot emerge through cultural hegemony.

7. Each collectivity contributes to the human history and then nationalities finally also get rules by a sense of *reciprocity, learning,* and *benefitting* from each other's contribution. It is ethno-linguistic collectivities that can render their members *active, creative, productive, self-respecting,* and *other-accepting* of members of the supranational entity. Creativity in a foreign language is an uphill task, more so for children at school.

8. As greater *opportunities, rewards, understandings and benefits*, (spiritual and material) become available RE-ETHNIFICATION and RE-LINGUIFICATION occur in pursuit of their best interests. That is, people move away from monolingualism and monoculturalism when it is in their best interests to do so, and this is when they embrace PANHUMANISM, a concept which is *plurilinguistic* in character. This is what I will refer to as the virtual linguistic community after Gal (2006), an imagined community which is so real in the minds of the participating members but has no physical existence that we are prone to look out for. We become a new ethnic group (re-ethnification) and we speak a new language (re-linguification). The new ethnicity and the new language are not the classical ones, but of the new definitions.

The Herderian approach that is adopted here combines what is localised and authentic with what is universal or global. There is no place for hard-line positions because in our definition of language earlier on, we no longer regard them as distinct, concrete entities with discrete boundaries. As Brumfit puts it:

> ….so called language contact research indicated the constant permeability of so-called boundaries. Yet we remain prisoner of a simplification which is becoming harmful by our orientation to terms like English, German, French, Hungarian as if they are more than metaphors for affiliation and aspirational identity (Brumfit, 2006:37)

The point here is that in Panhumanism, speech communities do not exist independently, but merge with each other in subtle and imperceptible ways that escape the attention of non-discerning observers. Members of the group feel and enjoy the practice in a way only they can experience and may not even be able to consciously describe. For example, which language do students on campus use in any one communicative event outside the lecture rooms where English predominates? I often hear some English, Kiswahili and some not-so- familiar linguistic codes. Which language do you identify each of them with? Or is it even desirable to start asking that question?

European Union is encouraging Member States to include at least one other European language for every European child going to school, and the move is towards having a borderless Europe. There is also a centre for the study of minority European languages to support their acquisition and maintenance. This is an effort to promote multilingualism across Europe and to maintain the less used languages and save them from extinction (Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 2006).

The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) has the mandate (among others) to:

• promote the teaching and use of African Languages,

• document and help standardize the non-standardized African language

• promote the teaching and use of cross-border African languages like Kiswahili, Hausa, Bambara, Fulfulde, Ndebele, e.t.c.

ACALAN is striving to create

> ……an Africa that acknowledges its ethnolinguistic pluralism and accepts this as a normal way of life and as a rich source for development and progress; a democratic Africa that seeks to promote peaceful co-existence of people or a society where pluralism does not entail replacement of one language and identity by another (Philipson 1999 cited in Brock-Utne and Koloti: 2000: 3)

Neville Alexander (2007) summarises this as a 5D formula: Diversity, Development, Democracy, Didactics, and (human) Dignity.

The Multilingual Plan

The panhumanist approach to language and language planning must reflect the plurilinguistic character of the African societies but there is certainly no single formula that will be prescribed for all African nations. The best we shall do here is provide a rough guideline seen from the language–as–a–right and language–as–a–resource perspectives.

1. The plan is an inclusive one that does not provide 'either –or' solutions. It is not either English or 'mother tongue', it

is both. All children have a right to quality English literacy as they have a right to quality mother tongue education. A plan that de-emphasizes one and privileges the other is a false one.
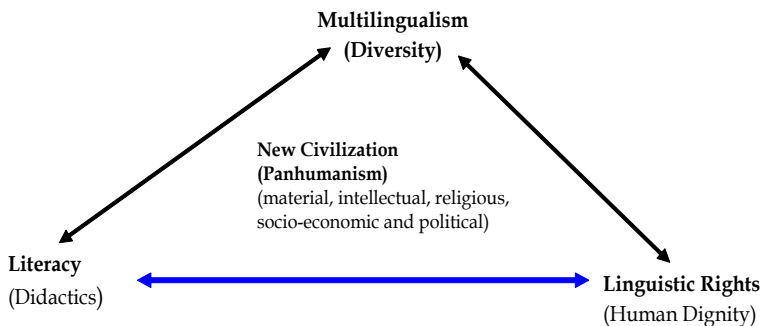
2. Strong 'mother tongue' education must precede 'foreign language' education because there is sufficient evidence that initial mother tongue instruction facilitates and supports the acquisition of English as a subject (Bangbose 2005, Cummins 2000). At least six years before transition is recommended.

3. Strengthening of English literacy at the expense of mother tongue does not only lead to poor education performance, but also leads to cultural disorientation and disempowers the mother tongue.

4. Special mother tongue teacher training must be launched so that mother tongue is taught by experts and not because a teacher is a native speaker. This is in conformity with the right to qualified teachers that all children are promised by the law.

5. Candidates should be given a choice to take examinations in their strongest language. Tests and examinations must not be seen to measure language instead of measuring subject content. This will remove the inequality perpetuated by tests as ideological tools.

6. Local languages must be given official roles to enhance their prestige and ensure their maintenance. Their use by the vernacular radio stations is testimony to their viability as effective media for social, economic and political development. This guarantees all languages the right to exist.

7. Public spaces like shops, streets, hospitals, universities e.t.c must carry local names and notices to enhance visibility of the languages of all communities. Wherever possible, bilingual/multilingual notices should be used.

8. Children should have an opportunity to learn one other Kenyan language to enable them to appreciate other communities' languages and cultures.

9. The constitution should be amended to declare all Kenyan languages 'national' and Kiswahili and English official. The very act of not declaring a constitutional status deprives them of their due symbolic prestige that is critical in forming positive language attitudes.

10 Institutions and professional bodies must begin to construct websites bearing information in the local languages as a matter of policy to signal the viability of these languages in information and technology.

In summary, a multilingual policy will have a net effect that is good for the individual, the society and humanity. Following the 5D formula proposed by Alexander (2001) already referred to earlier, the benefits of the plan will be to:

• Ensure the survival of the human species on the earth through linguistic diversity (DIVERSITY)

• Enhance efficiency and productivity in the work place (DEVELOPMENT)

• Promote greater democratic practices by including diverse linguistic communities in all spheres of social, economic and political decision-making processes (DEMOCRACY)

• Enhance effective pedagogy and spread literacy skills as widely as possible through mother tongue based multilingual education (DIDACTICS)

• Provide an individual with the right to freely and spontaneously use his/her mother tongue to express his/her individual and group identities (DIGNITY.)

Multilingualism (Diversity)

New Civilization (Panhumanism)
(material, intellectual, religious, socio-economic and political)

Literacy
(Didactics)

Linguistic Rights
(Human Dignity)

Multilingualism is the underlying ideology, literacy is the intervention through a national education plan and both are guided by the principles of human dignity and together they generate a new universal civilization (panhumanism), an all inclusive community of people.

The scheme may sound overly abstract and utopian, but a quick look at the spirit of the Kenyan Constitution in establishing the following commissions may cause you to think differently:

• National Cohesion and Integration Commission

• Ethics and Anticorruption Commission

• National Salaries and Remuneration Commission

• National Administration of Justice Commission

• Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission

To this list you may add the National Equalization Fund and the picture that emerges is that of a country intending to transform itself from a fractious ethnic based identities to a universal human community with heterogenous linguistic and regional claims, but thinking and acting like one. The change proposed here is a change from inside out, a transformative transition to a new platform built on synergy that only comes from diversity of languages, ideas and cultures.

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