The Language Question and the Choice of Africa's Lingua Franca: Is Kiswahili the Most Likely Candidate?

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Abstract

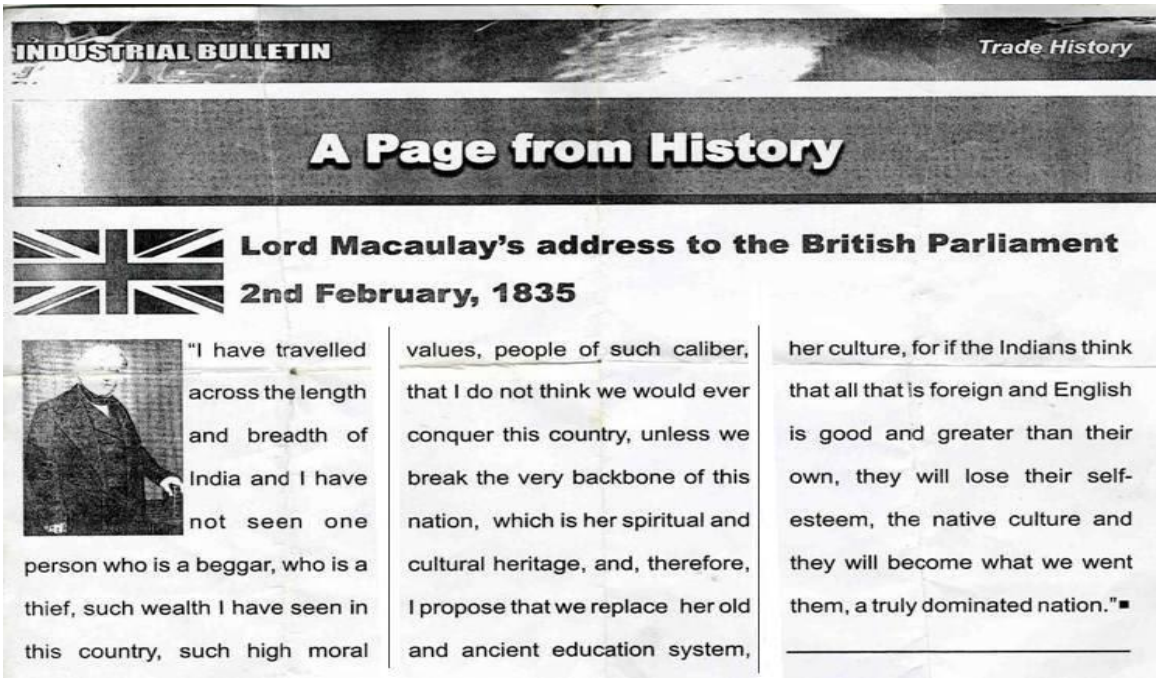
The thrust of this paper is that knowledge is power, and its issuance through another people's languages in which foreign cultural values and inclination are embedded ensures the domination, dependence and non-creativity of a people. The paper is premised on the conviction that promotion and production of knowledge, through various channels, including the issuance of education by Africans, for Africans and in African languages, that truly reflects Africa's challenges and dynamics, is an imperative for deconstructing the neo-liberal post-colonial narratives that have, by and large, overlooked the language question; and, in contributing positively towards the effective implementation of the development agenda for the continent. Taking the language question on board the continent's development equation certainly contributes towards empowering the African masses in general. The paper shows how, in trying to highlight efforts that must be made to propel Africa to its desired future, Africa and Africans must play a big role in ensuring that the language question is mainstreamed into every aspect of life, including the education system and in research done on and about Africa. Above all, efforts must also be made to establish solid grounds for instituting a common lingua franca for the whole continent. The paper shows, and argues for the choice of Kiswahili as that lingua franca.

Key Words: African languages, development agenda, education, Kiswahili, knowledge, lingua franca

Introduction

The following quote, taken from a separate publication (Senkoro, 2018:145 - 146), with an attached newspaper cutting, appropriately titled "A page from history," should serve as an excellent introduction to our present enterprise:

> As we discuss the question of the language medium of instruction in Africa's education system, and the efforts to establish one common language for the continent, it is indeed, very useful to take into account the nature of imperial power and its driving forces - cultural, economic, and political domination in character and essence. Let us not forget that we are talking and tempering with imperial control and supremacy in the form of Her Majesty's prized and priced commodity: English and other majesties from whom the continent did get baptized as *Anglophone, Francophone* and *Lusophone*. As Wole Soyinka (2010:1- 3) puts it, human history is a narrative of the rise and falls of empires; and the fundamental drive for the survival of human beings and their kith and kin is based on expansion and domination. History is made of a motion and impulse of the powerful to validate their ability to conquer and spread out as they strive to enroll all the weaker others into their imperial powers' cultural, economic, and political sphere and identity. This is why the testimony in the quote below implies how, as early as 1835 the aim had been, and continues to be, to use English, among others, as a weapon and a commodity; to use English language as a way of de-culturing those under the domination of imperial powers. It is worthwhile to paste the historical quote hereunder:



INDUSTRIAL BULLETIN

Trade History

A Page from History

Lord Macaulay's address to the British Parliament
2nd February, 1835

"I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief, such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, the native culture and they will become what we went them, a truly dominated nation."■

Of significance here is the fact that this address to the British Parliament in 1835 was reported in a newspaper appropriately named *Industrial Bulletin*, that deals with *Trade History*. Indeed, for Her Majesty the Queen of England and her empire, English language is a commodity for sale. The same can be said of the French, Portuguese, Germans and all *former* colonial powers alike. Unfortunately, we, including our intellectuals, have been made to buy this commodity wholesale. When Lord Macaulay insists that the British must replace India's "old and ancient education system, and her culture" by making the Indians think and believe that "all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own" he is aiming at, as he says it himself, making the Indians lose their self-esteem so that they and their culture become what the British want them to be - "a truly dominated nation". This is imperial expansion and domination at its best.

We have witnessed history repeating itself through the different moves and programs of strengthening English teaching in our education system in Tanzania, for example, engineered by the British Government through her various channels. Incidentally, the French Government has, sometimes, countered these moves through her own French Language development programs; and now the Chinese have come with full force with their Confucius Centres all over universities in Africa. The 1884/5 Scramble continues unabated! It is the same stance that this time has come from our very own Ministers of Education when they insist on English/French/Portuguese medium of instruction as the way out of the quandary that our education is facing in our countries. For them, Lord Macaulay's ideas are the best answer on which to model our education. The Colonial Master has succeeded in making us believe in him so much that he can control the means of production of the goods that are put in front of us for sale. Such goods include English and other colonial languages that will ultimately ensure the control of the circulation of knowledge and, thus, fulfill the main aim of the imperial power: total domination of not only the economies and policies but also the mindsets and the thinking processes of our so-called educated people.

Knowledge is power, and its issuance through another people's languages in which are embedded the cultural values and inclination of the imperial powers, ensures that kind of domination, dependence, and non-creativity. I am sure most of us are aware of the fact that at the end of each British financial year figures are provided on how much English language has fetched in monetary terms from her various projects in Great Britain and abroad. I am sure the decision to cuddle English language medium of instruction as embraced by our Ministers in the so-called Anglophone

countries in Africa, will add on to the net figures announced annually by the British Government since such a move will trigger dependency on so many English-related items that the British will sell to us.

The above is the postmodern condition that does not only determine and legitimize the state of knowledge production, especially when transformation projects (our university Institutional Transformation Programmes included) have turned our education into a commodity for sale rather than knowledge and innovativeness that will at least emancipate the poor and marginalized from abject poverty and its accompanying evils – diseases, ignorance, and despair. Since our education has joined the bandwagon of the omnipotence of the so-called free-market neo-liberal economy, no wonder our ministers' concern is with the job competition in, for example, the East African Community and beyond, which they, truly and sincerely, think and believe rests on the use of English medium of instruction, if possible, right from kindergarten to university. Those with "knowledge" are now supposed to turn into consumers of more knowledge for the sake of consumption, and selling it.

The Language Question and the Empowerment of Africa

Perhaps in no other writings than those pitched between Achebe's and Ngugi's ideas and practices, can one find two very opposed views with regard to the language question and creative writing in Africa. In his essay titled "Chinua Achebe and Hybrid Aesthetics" Waliaula (2017) – the famous East African Kiswahili author commonly known as Ken Walibora, brings to the fore the inherent contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalences that typify writing in the colonial language. Using Achebe to represent others of his type, the author rightfully argues that Achebe's choice of

English as a language of his creative works is tensed with rejection and acceptance, aporia and agony, and Anglophilia and Anglophobia.

What we discern from Achebe's attitude is not only a projection of the post-colonial narrative, but also an irresolvable contradiction full of theoretical and logical disjunction that, ultimately, reflect an identity crisis – a crisis that we think has faced the African intellectual in general, and creative writer in particular. Such a person has not managed to cut off the linguistic umbilical cord that continues to connect him or her to the colonial motherland, notwithstanding the excellent subject his or her works may be dealing with.

It is clear that in the expression and prognosis of the postcolonial narrative, Achebe and those who have not yet cut that umbilical cord, intrinsically, struggle and wrestle with the issue of identity in trying to make sense of their world, including the sphere of the characters in their works of fiction. This crisis is grounded on having to capture correctly the African experience in a non-African language. Achebe himself rather despairingly states that his use of a language other than his mother tongue, as a medium of literary expression, was a predetermination of the colonial experience. That is why, in a resigned manner, he admits that English has submerged itself in Africa via "a conspiracy of socio-political and historical factors" (Achebe, 1975). Achebe, and I would imagine it is the same case with others like him, is experiencing an excruciating intercession and triangulation as he uses a foreign language to communicate an object and subject that is itself totally foreign to that language. This takes us back to Fanon's assertion that to speak, and, inversely, to write in a certain

language, means above all to shoulder and adopt a culture and carry the weight of a civilization inherently existing in that language.

I am not sure how many of us know that as a child Achebe was baptized Albert Chinualumogu (Achebe 1995:190) and that he later on decided that this baptism was null and void, and, thus, dropped Queen of England's name Albert, shortened, or perhaps mutilated, his Igbo name to Chinua and added the surname Achebe. One would have expected that the awakening with regard to nomenclature would have been extended to that of Achebe's creative process. However, Achebe ardently chose to defend the use of the English language as a means of reaching a wider world audience, most likely at the expense of the majority of those about and to whom he was writing. This was so successfully executed that very few people are any longer aware of the nomenclature step taken by Achebe.

On the other hand, Achebe's contemporary, Kenya's James Ngugi, chose to drop his Christian name James and in its stead adopted wa Thiong'o. But, unlike Achebe, Ngugi did not end at nomenclature show-off only, for he went a step further in the late 1970s by asserting, in practical terms, that African authors need to decolonize their minds by stopping writing in the colonial languages and starting to use their mother-tongues to express their views; and that was when he embarked on writing *Ciataani Mutharabaini* in Gikuyu *(*Translated in English as *The Devil on the Cross,* and in Kiswahili as *Shetani Msalabani*). From then on, wa Thion'go dropped the use of English language as a medium of his literary expression, letting those who are interested, to translate from Gikuyu to any other languages; although he emphasized the need for his works to be translated first into one major African language - Kiswahili. Ngugi crystallized his thoughts on the

language question and the African creative writer in his 1981 book, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, which he dedicated "to all those who write in African languages, and to all those who over the years have maintained the dignity of the literature, culture, philosophy, and other treasures carried by African languages." Among other pronouncements in this book, Ngugi asserts in his Statement (p. xiii) thus:

> In 1977 I published *Petals of Blood* and said farewell to the English language as a vehicle of my writing of plays, novels and short stories. All my subsequent creative writing has been written directly in Gikuyu language: my novels *Caitaani Mutharabaini* and *Matigari Ma Njiruiingi*, my plays *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (written with Ngugi wa Mirii) and *Maitu Njugira*, and my chidrens' books, *Njamba Nene na Mbaathi i Mathagu*, *Bathitoora ya Njamba Nene* and *Njamba Nene na Cibu King'ang'i*.
> However, I continued writing explanatory prose in English. Thus *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary, Writers in Politics* and *Barrel of a Pen* were all written in English. This book, *Decolonising the Mind*, is my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way.
> However, I hope that through the age old medium of translation I shall be able to continue dialogue with all.

The impact of Ngugi's stance is yet to be measured, especially on the other African creative writers (save for a few, such as those in Tanzania and Kenya who write exclusively in Kiswahili). However, one can, safely, say that his call to decolonize the mind has had ripples throughout the continent, thus necessitating continued discussions on the matter to date.

In the next part of this paper, we argue that the question of the empowerment of the African creative writers is not isolated to individual writers such as Achebe or Ngugi; but rather it goes hand in hand with

deliberate efforts to empower the people of Africa through taking the language question on board the development equation at continental level.

Efforts to take the language question on board Africa's social/cultural, political, and economic liberation agenda have been at a snail's pace, resulting into the stagnation of the question until when the likes of the now defunct EACROTANAL and the AU's brainchild ACALAN (Academy of African Languages), among very few such bodies, were instituted. Even with the creation of these organs, Africa has continued with the colonial umbilical cord that labels her either as *Anglophone, Francophone* or *Lusophone*. Because of this, Africa has not managed to establish and adopt one common language for her people. This is, in part, perhaps due to outmoded nationalistic outlooks and obsolete ethnic alignments, and lack of strong political will on the language question, among other factors. This part of the paper examines these phenomena by sampling the debates on the language question as raised by African authors themselves; and the efforts to find a Pan-African lingua franca. It ends by suggesting the way towards the identification, adoption, and attainment of such common unifying language, with Kiswahili as the most qualifying candidate.

The Need for a Pan- African Lingua Franca

The need and search for a Pan-African lingua franca can be discerned in various publications and action plans by the African Union, amongst which AU's *Language Plan of Action for Africa (2006)* and its complimentary AU's *Agenda 2063* on *Vehicular Cross-Border Languages and Search for a Lingua Franca in Sub-Saharan Africa*, stand out. It is this search that concerns us in this paper; for, indeed it has proven how elusive the Pan-African lingua franca that we are questing for can be.

As we commemorate 50 years of Africa's independence, we need to celebrate the various sectors that contributed to such independence. Among these are the languages that were used to communicate the message for the necessity to fight for Africa's own independence. It would seem to us, however, that the worst failure of the African project, even now as we celebrate more than 50 years of independence, has been the continent's inability to not only inspire and elevate those languages beyond the positions that the colonial masters had relegated them to, to the level of social, economic and political relevance and intellectual importance and functioning in the lives of her people. It is even more bothersome when all indications are that the inherited colonial languages, viz.: English, French and Portuguese, from which the offensive labels of *Anglophone*, *Francophone* and *Lusophone* continue to be used on us; and which, for a major part, have been declared to be "national" and "official" languages, have pitifully failed to cater for Africa's development equation.

A very instructive quote by Mulokozi (2009:1) can serve as our starting point in this discussion. He states the following:

> Africa has 54 countries, 2000 languages (Batibo 2005; UNESCO 2006), and about 800 million people. This works out to about 400,000 speakers per language. These statistics are, of course, misleading, for big languages with more than 30 million speakers, such as Arabic, Amharic, Hausa, and Kiswahili live side by side with small languages of less than 5000 speakers. What is indisputable from these statistics is that Africa is a hugely multilingual continent. This multilingual reality should be respected and maintained even as we seek for a Pan-African language.

Mulokozi already introduces one of the predicaments and quandaries that we need to address. How do we respect and maintain the multilingual reality and diversity of Africa and, at the same time, curve a way for a Pan-

African lingua franca? For, indeed, this question is not only of a linguistic nature, but it also hinges on political affiliations, nationalistic/"patriotic" outlooks, ethnic alignments and configurations, and cultural feelings and attachments.

Since its birth and inception, the Pan-African movement and vision have helped in shaping the continent's future. Unfortunately, the vision emphasized mostly the political and economic future; and, besides the formation of one continental organization, the OAU and subsequently the AU, the vision resulted in the creation of regional cooperation communities that were mostly economic blocks that emanated from the global geo-political forces and needs. The emphasis of such cooperation blocks was largely in the areas of trade, economic strategies and development, politics, and security. Culture, which includes languages, was not given its due weight in these efforts.

It is true that as early as 1963 in the Charter of the OAU, the founding fathers of the African organization had stated that the working languages of the Organization and all its institutions would be, if possible, African languages, English and French, Arabic and Portuguese – in that order. A number of subsequent Charters, Action Plans and Declarations that followed emphasized the need for using African languages in the OAU, viz.: Cultural Charter (1976), Lagos Plan of Action (1980); Language Plan of Action (1986), Harare Declaration (1997); Lome, Durban and Maputo (2000, 2002, 2003) respectively. While all these did show how on one level, the OAU/AU has, since 1963, continued to show awareness in supporting the documentation and usage of African languages, and that the different charters provide legal and, to some extent, political bases for the use of

indigenous African languages in matters concerning the African people, in practice the Organization has not succeeded to copiously implement its resolves; it has not managed to take steps that would fast-track the process of reaching the goal of having a Pan-African lingua franca, which would, in turn, enable the African people to speak a common language in whatever platform.

In showing the urgency and necessity of the debate on finding one common and indigenous African language and elevate it to a Pan-African lingua franca, it is important to note that, indeed, there is a need for common expression for peace, security, and economic integration of Africa, and a need for common language in summits, negotiations, mediations, and discussions. There is a necessity to have an Afrophone Africa whose common, indigenous language will allow Africans to communicate their needs, aspirations, and ideas. In order for Africans to support the weight of their civilization, to borrow Fanon's words; and in order to attain a Pan-African identity outside the labels of *Anglophone, Francophone* and *Lusophone,* we have to shed off that old colonial skin.

The next part of this paper samples the debates and the efforts of, and among, African creative writers, to find that common expression in Africa, and it concludes by suggesting the way forward towards the identification, adoption and attainment of a Pan-African lingua franca, with Kiswahili being the frontrunner among other major African languages.

The Debates on the Language Question in Africa

Although as early as 1800s the debates on African language issue were expressed by different people including such people like Crummell who believed that African languages were inappropriate and unbefitting as

an instrument of "civilization" because of their phonological, syntactical and lexical crudity; and such scholars like Joaquim Dias Cordeiro da Matta and J.E. Casely-Hayford who contributed to such debate, for purposes of this presentation we shall fast forward to the mid-1900s when the debate became heated and even at times reached consensus that could, once and for all, have produced the sought-after Pan-African lingua franca. However, for the reader who is interested in the review of the ideas on language expressed by the earlier Pan-Africanists of the 19th and early 20th century such as Crummell and William Blyden, and scholars such as Joaquim Dias Cordeiro da Matta and J.E. Casely-Hayford; and for similar review of Language and Pan-Africanism during the colonial period with focus on the contending views of Frantz Fanon (1967; 1977) and Leopold Senghor, and other nationalists and writers; Mulokozi (2009) is an excellent reference.

Before we revisit a congress that went to as far as giving a concrete recommendation on one Pan-African lingua franca, let us cite examples of some platforms in which the language question was discussed.

Arguing for the necessity for the colonized people to adopt and use their languages as part of the liberation process, Fanon (1967:18) had stated the following:

> Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards.

Although Fanon saw the colonial language in a colonial and post-colonial situation as a tool of control and cultural estrangement, he did not come up with tangible solutions to the Pan-African language question. His was that of the necessity to change the mindset of the colonized so as to stop embracing colonial culture.

It would seem that African authors and creative writers are the ones that championed in earnest, the use of African languages, although, again, this was in opposition to colonial domination and legacy, and not necessarily a call for a Pan-African lingua franca. Molokozi (2009) captures this well when he shows how "the language question was addressed more deeply and practically outside the Pan-African framework as it featured … in the emerging literary circles in Africa and the Diaspora." Within Africa, some writers and scholars demonstrated their support for African languages by opting to write in their mother tongues or national languages. Mulokozi cites a number of such writers that include South Africans Thomas Mofolo (1875-1948), A.C. Jordan (1906-1968), and B.W. Vilakazi (1906 - 1947) and others that were churning out prose and poetry works in isiSotho, isiXhosa and isiZulu. He also lists some writers from West Africa that include Casely-Hayford (1866 - 1930) who was agitating for the use of local languages in education, unlike many leading scholars and writers who were using local languages as a matter of choice and national pride. Mulokozi mentions such writers like Umar ibn Abu Bakr ibn Uthman al-Kabbawi al-Kanawi (1858 - 1934), Abubakar Bauchi, alias Tafawa Balewa (1912 - 1966), Daniel O. Fagunwa (1903 - 1963), and Pita Nwana (c. 1881 - 1968). He says that this was before the "Afro-Saxon/French" African writers of the 1950s and afterwards came on the scene (Gérard 1981). With regard to East Africa, Mulokozi mentions Apolo Kaggwa (1864 - 1927),

Franscis X. Lwamgira (c.1870 - 1950), Aniceti Kitereza (1895 - 1982), Jomo Kenyatta (c.1893 - 1978), Shaaban Robert (1909 - 1962) and Saadan Kandoro (1926 - 2001), among many others, who deliberately wrote their works in Kiswahili and other local languages.

Cheikh Anta Diop's dramatic demonstration of the efficacy of African languages, when he wrote the theory of relativity (in Physics) in Wolof brought the efforts to a climax. This was a clear way of not only intellectualizing Wolof language but also to prove that each and every language can tackle science and technological issues.

Here, then, we have three positions regarding African languages. The first one is the age old outmoded colonial belief that African languages cannot equal the former colonial masters' languages; and the second position sees the first one as a typical inferiority complex among the colonized and the once colonized, whose eradication must involve the necessary mindset change. The third position is proof that African languages can and should be used in all fields, from literary works to physics. None of these positions, however, do advocate for a single unifying continental language.

It is at this stage that we get the fourth, rather radical position. In a 1985, essay titled "Our Language Problem" that is reprinted in his book, *Remembering the Dismembered Continent*, Armah reproaches writers like wa Thiong'o who advocate writing in indigenous languages. He says that such writers are trying to drive forward "staring into the rearview mirror [while] the way forward lies through a common language." One would have expected Armah to build his visionary idea on one indigenous African language. However, for his part, Armah sees indigenous languages, such as

Kikuyu, Yoruba and Zulu as ethnic "micro-languages". In their stead, Armah suggests the revival of an ancient "dead language," Egyptian hieroglyphics, as the way out of the quandary. This is in line with a theme that recurs in some of Armah's essays and fiction, in which, for example, in *Osiris Rising* (1995) and *KMT: In the House Life* (2002) the heroes have to learn Egyptian hieroglyphics as the first and basic step in the war for the liberation of Africa from foreign domination. This is an extreme position which, ironically, can accuse Armah of also trying to drive forward while staring into the same rearview mirror of which he accused Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

After the above and other similar efforts, and after a number of Pan-African congresses and conferences, most of which concentrated on the original ideas of opposition to colonial plunder and racism; and, thus, a call for African liberation, Pan-African unity, and the reconstruction of Africa - congresses that were more or less silent about the need for Africa's cultural and linguistic rebirth and revitalization; it was the one in 1977 held in Lagos, Nigeria, known as the Festival of Black and African Countries, which we find to be most interesting for purposes of this paper. The congress saw more than 100,000 delegates celebrating the achievements of the African peoples. At the intellectual colloquium one of the major issues discussed was the search for a Pan-African lingua franca. It was at this meeting that the Nigerian author, Wole Soyinka, proposed Kiswahili as a lingua Franca for Africa.

This moment is well captured by Asante (2007 & 2015) thus:

> Many Africans from other ethnic groups wondered aloud why the language should be Kiswahili, some proposing their own languages, and Yoruba people contending that Soyinka had forgotten his roots.

> He argued and was supported by others that Kiswahili is an international language spoken by millions of people although the ethnic group for which it is named is very small. In the end, this was resolved in support of the Kiswahili language with a recommendation that all African nations support the teaching of the language.

The aftershocks of this historic moment sparked some heated discussions, some of which appeared in popular newspapers. In one Nigerian newspaper, for example, the situation was considered to be one of a rivalry between Kiswahili and Hausa[1].

For a short while, this resolution and the ensuing recommendation that Kiswahili be adopted as a Pan-African lingua franca seem to have ended there, and one wonders whether it was because the ethnic affiliations continued to hold it back, or maybe it just needed another, stronger push to materialize. The reasons for this state of affairs could have lied also in the disinclination of most of the member countries to implement the language project, perhaps because of not only internal dissimilarities among the state members, but also due to pressure from out of the continent, largely from former colonial powers and influential multilateral organizations such as the British Council in the case of English, whose interests, for a number of reasons, lay in the thriving of the colonial languages.

[1](http://www.nairaland.com/554437/african-lingua-franca-between-hausa and http://allafrica.com/stories/201011100280.html)

New Developments

Eight years after Lagos 1977, Armah (1985:832) made some kind of a turn around and supported Soyinka's suggestion that Kiswahili be used as the Pan-African lingua franca by saying:

> There is one African language admirably suited to function as our common ancillary language. That is Kiswahili. It enjoys structural and lexical affinities with a lot of African languages over large areas of the continent: East, South, Central and even the lower West. Flexible and highly absorptive, it can take inputs from practically every African language in its future development ... The technical problems likely to arise are soluble. It may be desirable, for instance, to simplify the syntax or at least to streamline it. In addition, the existing vocabulary would have to be, constantly, enriched, as in every living language. This could best be done in a conscious, systematic way, by drawing from the vast lexical storehouse constituted by the continent's languages, especially those of the West and the South. That might facilitate final acceptance as our common language, since each region would recognize its genius in the common pool.

A new dawn arrived that seemed to take off from where Lagos 1977 and Armah (1985) had ended. In 2004, the AU adopted Kiswahili as one of its working languages. Later on, Kiswahili was to be adopted as a working language in the summits of the Great Lakes Region and in the East African Community. These new developments that went side by side with the creation of ACALAN in 2001, the existence of TUKI and now TATAKI, an institute charged with the teaching and researching of Kiswahili language and literature from Bachelor to PhD degrees, and the creation of CHAKAMA, an association of East African University lecturers and professors of Kiswahili, and the existence of different Kiswahili Councils including the recently formed Eastern African Kiswahili Commission (KAKAMA) - all these are a clear indication that the AU and the people

are now taking the language question on board and putting into practice the words of a series of AU's resolutions.

Several reasons, including the ingredients that are necessary for a language to qualify as a lingua franca, some of which were mentioned by Armah, may have prompted the elevation of Kiswahili to the possibility of it becoming the lingua franca of Africa south of the Sahara. Foremost is the fact that, despite the existence of a number of other indigenous African languages that have been well developed such as Amharic, Hausa, Yoruba, isiXhosa, and isiZulu, unlike Kiswahili, these have tribal affiliations that could be problematic in the choice of a lingua franca for Africa. In spite of some individual, sporadic, and nostalgic claims to the "ownership" of Kiswahili, Kiswahili is, indeed, no one's language in so far as tribe is concerned. Actually even "the ethnic group for which it is named" that is mentioned in Asante's quote provided earlier, is no longer the small Eastern African coastal group but is now synonymous with the majority of the people of East and Central Africa.

Other ingredients include the following that are synthesized and proposed by Mulokozi (2009), who states that such a language should be:

a. indigenous;
b. acceptable to the prospective speakers and users;
c. commonly used and understood by many people;
d. important in cultural and economic life;
e. capable of conveying the innermost feelings, yearnings, heritage and world view of the indigenous people, so that they can identify with it and view it as a symbol of their own being and nationhood;
f. a grassroots – as opposed to an upper class– language. This means that it should be rooted among the common people, is accessible to them and is shaped by them;

g. fairly well-developed, and developing, in the technical and scientific fields. Furthermore, such a language must:

i. have a wide geographical spread and coverage;
ii. preferably have close linguistic affinity to many if not most of the languages spoken on the continent; and, in relation to this,
iii. have a strong literary tradition; and
iv. have an international reach, possibly even beyond the African continent.

These ingredients and many others seem to have favored Kiswahili as the obvious choice, over not only former colonial masters' languages but also over other sister indigenous African languages, especially considering its wide usage by more than 200 million people, and its intellectualization that has made it more developed and developing in the literary, technological and scientific arena.

Conclusion

The situation that has persisted and the need and call for finding a Pan-African lingua franca, demands for the change of our mindsets so as to rid ourselves of all those factors that hinder the identification and promotion of such lingua franca, including narrow minded political affiliations, negative nationalistic/patriotic outlooks, close-minded ethnic alignments and configurations, and parochial cultural feelings and attachments. However, depending on the consensus among the African states, since there seems to be no other language that is competitively better than Kiswahili, we can assume that this language can be adopted as the Pan-African lingua franca. Kiswahili has for long been billed to be Africa's lingua franca. This language is fast growing into an African lingua franca, mostly on its own. Both the symbolic and instrumental values of Kiswahili contribute to its phenomenal growth in Africa and beyond. Kiswahili has responded to

globalization exigencies in ways that demonstrate that the language is resilient to forces from above and below as it handles well the Pan-Africanism of cultural integration. Its continuing intellectualization has contributed to global knowledge production; making it respond well and competently to globalization forces of the media, science, technology, innovation, tourism, and the arts, while playing a major role in global cultural diplomacy. In this way, Kiswahili is globalizing Africa and Africanizing the world through various channels, including those of translation and interpretation.

The need to use indigenous African languages in creative writing and for literacy purposes cannot be overstated. Indeed, such a move will not only empower African authors who will now be reaching the majority of the African people, but also the literacy levels of such people will definitely rise as they consume literary and other works expressed in the languages that they understand and relate to. This will have its snowballing effects not only in the literary and literacy world but also in the policies on language medium of instruction in our education systems.

The issues of using African indigenous languages in creative writing, and taking African languages on board the development process while aiming at adopting one indigenous language as the Pan-African lingua franca, are liberatory as they will ultimately empower the people of Africa who will own a common identity. This is the backdrop for Africa's fuller liberation and self-reliance as it provides a critical consciousness, cultural freedom and respect among a people that share a common destiny expressed in a common language. This is the basis through which we can move towards an Afrophone Africa.

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