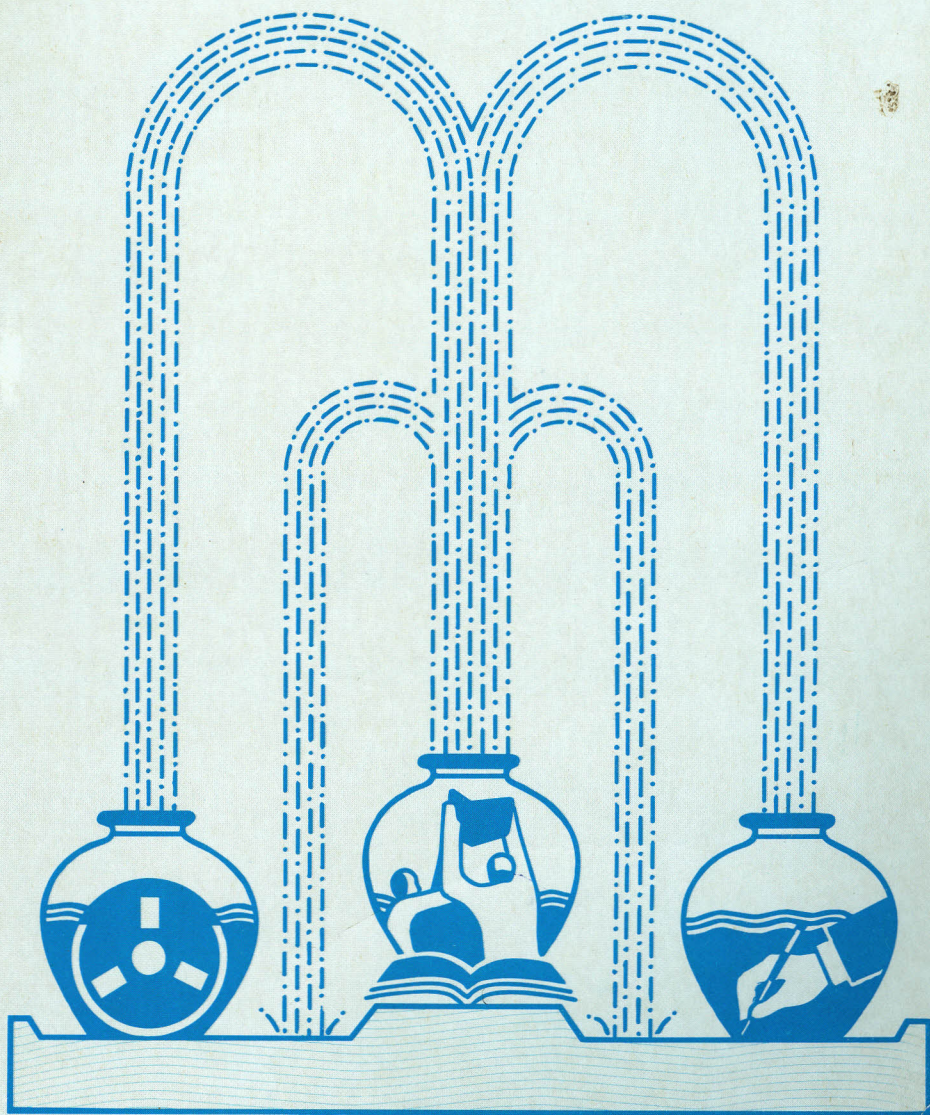


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## **LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE PLANNING IN KENYA**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper investigates the attitudes that Kenyans have towards Kiswahili and English, two languages that have official status in Kenya. It draws its data from letters to the editors of two popular Kenyan dailies, Daily Nation and Taifa Leo. The paper shows that those who argue for Kiswahili do so principally for patriotic reasons. Kiswahili is seen as a 'neutral' language that is well suited to foster national unity, regional integration, pride and cultural identity. On the other hand, arguments that are in favour of English are mainly utilitarian or functional in nature. English is seen as an important language for international communication, accessing science and technology, and a language of prestige without which it is impossible to climb the social ladder.*

*The main conclusion that is drawn in the paper is that although the two languages appear to be in competition, their roles are complementary. What is required is a language policy that defines the role of each language. It is suggested that such a policy will maintain English while expanding the functional roles of Kiswahili in government administration and education.*

### **Introduction**

Attitudes have been defined variously (see for instance, Agheyisi and Fishman 1970, Ryan et. al. 1982, and Fasold 1984). In this paper, however, we will be content with the definition given by Edwards (1982: 20), quoting Sanorff (1970), in which attitude is defined as 'disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects'. This disposition comprises three components, i.e. feelings, thoughts and predispositions to act. This paper also subscribes to the elaboration given by Rockeah (1968), quoted in Agheyisi and Fishman (1970: 140), that attitudes should be viewed as 'agendas for action', 'wants' and 'situational conditions'.

One main reason for studying language attitudes has to do with language planning, i.e., the deliberate effort to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or functional allocation of language codes (Cooper. 1989: 183). As Giles (1983: 94) states, proper and full appreciation of existing circumstances, which is always vital for successful policy, must include examination of the functions fulfilled by community attitudes towards language. It is thus important that language-planning recommendations should be preceded not only by a full understanding of the language situation in question, but also by the identification of language attitudes that prevail in a given society. It is in recognition of this vital role that language attitudes play in language planning that Adegbija (1994: 50) underscores the need for studies on language attitudes in Africa. He particularly argues a case for more research that pinpoints attitudes towards European languages and African indigenous languages.

Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) identify three major categories of studies on language attitudes. The first category is of those studies dealing with language-oriented or language-directed attitudes where evaluations such as 'rich', 'poor', 'balanced', 'beautiful' etc., are used. The second category is of studies dealing with community-wide stereotyped impressions toward particular languages or

category is concerned with implementation of different types of language attitudes such as language choice and usage, language reinforcement and planning, language learning etc. This study is not limited to any of the above-mentioned categories; it generally touches on aspects of each one of them.

The study draws its data from language debates that have been taking place in the popular press (mainly letters to the editors) in Kenya between 1963 and 1996 concerning the two languages that have official status, i.e. Kiswahili and English. This is, therefore, a study of unsolicited views, opinions, beliefs and feelings with regard to the two languages. The study has two main objectives:

- a) To find out what kind of attitudes exist with respect to Kiswahili and English, in the popular press.
- b) To discuss what implications the attitudes might have for language planning in Kenya.

### **Historical Development of Language Planning in Kenya**

The correspondence and exchange of views discussed in this paper did not occur in a vacuum. It was promoted by certain forces in the history of language policies in Kenya. This confirms what St. Clair (1982: 164) quoted in Adegbija (1994: 24) says, that to understand fully how language attitudes develop, it may be necessary to reach back into the past and investigate the social and political forces operating within the history of a nation. If one is therefore to make some sense of the language attitudes in post-colonial Kenya, one must of necessity understand the colonial and post-colonial language policies especially in education. We shall therefore briefly consider some of those policies.

Education language policy in Kenya during the colonial period revolved around three languages. These are English, Kiswahili and the vernaculars. According to Gorman (1974: 404) and Whiteley (1969), in the first decades of the twentieth century, it was generally believed that the language best known and understood by the child on his entry into school life was the most effective medium of instruction. In adherence to this principle, the early mission schools taught in the vernaculars in the first three classes. Kiswahili was introduced in Class Three, while English was introduced between Classes Three and Four. This policy was however, not followed consistently. In 1919, for instance, the Education Commission which was established by the colonial government to consider education policy recommended that initial stages of instruction must be in the vernacular and after the necessary initial instructions, English should be taught in all native schools. The commission did not think positively of Kiswahili which they referred to as a 'foreign language'. These views were echoed by the Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924 which recommended the use of vernaculars as languages of instruction and the teaching of English as a second language after the mastery of writing and reading in the vernacular. As regards Kiswahili, the Phelps-Stokes Commission recommended that it should cease to be taught except in the coastal area where it is the vernacular.

The colonial language policy in Kenya therefore encouraged the teaching of vernaculars in the first few years and English later on. In fact at one time, the Governor of Kenya wrote that the ultimate aim in Kenya was to make English the one recognised lingua franca (Gorman. 1974: 420). Thus although Kiswahili was widely used as a lingua franca, the colonial language policy did not give it a chance. Indeed, just some ten years before independence, the East African Royal Commission Report of 1953 – 5 recommended the teaching of English as early as possible. This paved the way for the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools from Class One in 1958.

At independence, Kenya inherited a language policy in education that was in favour of English and which was ambivalent on the teaching of Kiswahili and other indigenous languages. The Ominde Commission which was appointed to review education matters for independent Kenya in 1964

recommended the continued use of English as the medium of instruction in schools from Class One. Kiswahili was, however, recognised as a tool of national integration and a means of Pan-African communication. It was therefore recommended that Kiswahili should be a compulsory subject in all primary schools. As for the vernaculars, the commission recommended a daily period of story telling! It is important to note that the recommendations of the commission were adhered to with respect to English. Kiswahili was taught as a subject, but was not examined. The result was that both teachers and pupils did not take the language seriously. It was not until 1984 that Kiswahili became a compulsory and examinable subject in both primary and secondary schools.

In the political scene, it is important to state that the rhetoric on Kiswahili as a national language was not matched by concrete measures of implementation. Very little was done in concrete terms to make Kiswahili a truly national language. In July, 1974, however, the ruling party decreed that Kiswahili should become the language of parliament deliberations. This was, however, changed in April 1979 when parliament amended the constitution to allow for the use of both English and Kiswahili.

### **The Language Situation in Kenya**

Kenya is a linguistically heterogeneous country. According to Gorman (1974: 398) there are over 30 distinct language and dialect clusters that are spoken in Kenya. Roughly 66 per cent of the population speak languages of the Bantu family. Some of the bigger groups of this category are Kikuyu, Kamba and Luyia. About 31 per cent of the population speak Nilotic languages among which are Luo and Maasai. The rest of the population speaks Cushitic languages (for example, Somali) and languages of the Indian sub-continent such as Gujarat and Urdu. It is also important to mention that, Kenya has few but large ethnolinguistic groups (see Whiteley 1971 and Fasold 1984:277). According to the results of 1999 census (see *Daily Nation*, February 17<sup>th</sup> 2000) the Kikuyu comprise about 19 per cent, the Luo 11 per cent, the Luyia about 14 per cent and the Kamba about 10.4 per cent. Each of these languages has more than one million speakers and is spoken in a particular geographical area. According to Whiteley (1971: 146) 75 per cent of the population is accounted for by the seven largest groups, six Bantu and one Nilotic.

Two languages have official status in Kenya. These are Kiswahili and English. Kiswahili is an indigenous African language of Bantu origin (see Nurse and Spear. 1985). It is a language of cross-ethnic communication in Kenya. It is also a language of wider communication in the East and Central African region. During the struggle for independence, Kiswahili was used by African politicians in Kenya such as Jomo Kenyatta to mobilise the people in their quest for independence. In the post – independence period, Kenyan politicians see this language as the symbol of nationhood and integration. It is the declared national language. The main advantage with Kiswahili in Kenya, unlike the choice of Amharic in Ethiopia, which has been resisted (Hameso. 1997: 3), is that it is considered ‘ethnically neutral’ (Mazrui and Tidy. 1984: 300). This is because it is not associated with any particular community numerically or politically strong enough to arouse the linguistic jealousies of the other groups. This is a particularly important advantage in a country where there are few but large ethnolinguistic groups.

English, on the other hand, was introduced to Kenyans, like in all other British colonies, during the colonial period. It is the official language in which most of the government business is conducted. It is also the medium of instruction in schools and tertiary institutions of learning. English is the language of power and elitism and it is almost impossible to climb the socio-economic ladder without it.

The linguistic landscape in Kenya also includes many indigenous languages usually referred to as ‘mother tongues or vernaculars’. These are the languages of intra-ethnic communication and solidarity. These languages are used as the media of instruction in the first 3 years of primary school education in areas where they are dominant.

## Data Collection

There are several methods which can be used to determine language attitudes (see for instance, Agheyisi and Fishman. 1970; Ryan et.al. 1982; Fasold. 1984). The respondents could, for instance, be asked to respond to a questionnaire. The questionnaire could be either closed or open. If it is open, the respondents have a lot of freedom to present their views. If, on the other hand, it is closed, then the answers are limited. Respondents could also be asked to respond to interview questions. Although this method is time-consuming, it makes it possible for the interviewer to guide the conversation. Another method could be the matched-guise-technique (see Fasold. 1984: 149). In this method, a number of bilingual speakers, fluent in the languages under investigation are recruited. These speakers are tape-recorded reading exactly the same passage, once in one language and once in the other. The recorded passages are arranged in a tape-recording in such a way; that it appears that a different speaker has recorded each passage. After that, a sample of bilingual listeners from the same speech community are asked to listen to the recordings and rate the speakers on various characteristics, such as 'intelligence', 'social class' and 'likeability'. The other method that can be used is that of observation. In this method, subjects' activities are recorded by the researcher. The researcher infers what the attitudes of a particular person are on the basis of the observation.

This study did not use any of these methods; it used an indirect method of determining attitudes. It relied on views expressed in two of the most widely circulated daily papers in Kenya, namely the *Daily Nation* and its sister publication, *Taifa Leo*. The former is published in English while the latter is in Kiswahili. These papers were started in the early 1960s just before Kenya's independence in 1963. Not all the issues were read. For the *Daily Nation*, randomly selected issues spanning 14 years (between 1963 – 1996) were read while for *Taifa Leo* randomly selected issues spanning 10 years (between 1963 – 1996) were read. In all, 300 letters written to the editors on the language issue were used for this study (13 of these are reproduced in the appendix as examples). Of these 300 letters, 226 were in favour of Kiswahili while 52 were for English; the remaining 22 letters were in favour of both languages. It was assumed that these letters though unsolicited would clearly capture the attitudes that exist among Kenyans with regard to Kiswahili and English and the arguments that are used to support them.

The method used to gather data for this study has several disadvantages. The researcher must, for example, go through a lot of correspondence in order to isolate writers views that are relevant for the study. The other obvious disadvantage is that it is difficult to quantify the data. It is also impossible to correlate the data to other useful factors such as, the age of the subjects, their level of education, their occupations and their status in society. The method used however, has its own advantages. It is like an open-ended questionnaire where the respondents have a lot of freedom to freely present their views, and since their views are unsolicited by the researcher, the issue of the respondents answering questions to please the researcher does not arise. The other advantage is that the researcher does not guide or lead the subjects in any way because he does not suggest possible answers to any questions.

## Attitudes towards Kiswahili

Two hundred and twenty six letters have appeared in the popular press arguing the case for the promotion and development of Kiswahili as the most important language in Kenya which should be the medium of instruction in schools and in which government business should be conducted. The statements that are reproduced here from those letters show a positive attitude towards Kiswahili.

### *Kiswahili as the Language of the Majority*

Some of those who advocated for the promotion of Kiswahili have done so on the basis of the number of people who speak it compared to those who speak English (see letter 6 and 9 in the appendix). Being a lingua franca, Kiswahili is a language of wider communication not only in Kenya but also in East and Central African regions. It is a language that can also be used to promote regional understanding and integration. Some of the subjects seem to be aware of these issues in the following statements:

- a) Kiswahili is a language spoken by the majority of people in Kenya.
- b) Kiswahili is the only language that allows one to communicate in almost every place and every situation.
- c) Kiswahili can promote understanding between Kenyans and their neighbours.

In these statements, the subjects seem to be aware of the fact that Kiswahili is spoken by more people than English and should therefore play a more central role in the communication of Kenyans.

While it is not easy to get an accurate number of the actual speakers of Kiswahili, estimates (see for example Whiteley, 1969: 2) show that Kiswahili is widely spoken. In Kenya it has been estimated (Heine, quoted in Mazrui and Mazrui, 1995: 119) that over 65 per cent of Kenya's population speak Kiswahili as compared to only 5 per cent who speak English. The statement that Kiswahili is a language of the majority is therefore not empty. The fact that this language is spoken by many people has certain advantages. As Mazrui and Tidy (1981: 300) argue, the use of a common African language could promote integration at two levels: horizontally, among the masses of different ethnic groups and vertically narrow the gap between the masses and the élite or reduce what Scotton (1990) refers to as élite closure'. Furthermore, this language can enhance mass mobilization efforts in Kenya.

Besides social integration, Kiswahili can also play a part in regional integration. With the end of bipolar politics, there is increasing talk of the revival of the East African Community. The ideals of this integration can be furthered partly by the use of a common language among the masses of East Africa. Kiswahili can also be used to bridge the gap between the Anglophone and Francophone countries of East and Central Africa.

### *Kiswahili as 'Our Language' that Promotes 'Our Culture'*

Some of the statements made hinge on the fact that Kiswahili is an African language as opposed to English, a European language, which was imposed on Kenyans during colonialism (see letters Nos. 4, 5, 9 and 10 in the appendix). Some subjects are persuaded to believe that what is African, and therefore implicitly theirs, should be preferred over what is foreign. Some of the statements made in support of this conviction are as follows:

- a) Kiswahili is an African language.
- b) Kiswahili has its roots in Africa.
- c) Kiswahili is related to Kenyan languages.
- d) Kiswahili is not Arabic.
- e) Kiswahili is our language.
- f) Kiswahili carries our own culture.
- g) Kiswahili will give us identity.
- h) We must be proud of it.
- i) It will give us respect.
- j) It is a shame not to speak Kiswahili.

These statements affirm Kiswahili as an African language with which Kenyans can culturally identify and which can promote cultural self-reliance as opposed to the perpetuation of cultural dependence. They advocate the right to self-determination in as far as cultural matters are concerned. Being an African language, Kiswahili is also favoured because it can give Kenyans a sense of identity and thus distinguish them from other nations. It can contribute to the consolidation of the identity of the country. This has been successfully done in Tanzania (see Mazrui and Mazrui 1995:82 and Wardhaugh 1987:198) where Kiswahili is not only an expression of the Africanness for the Tanzanian people, but also the expression of being Tanzanian. The ultimate benefits to be accrued from using Kiswahili are thus patriotic in nature and have to do with pride, prestige and self-respect. In other words, Kiswahili can act as a marker of independence in contrast to English.

The statements that are in favour of Kiswahili are in the same breath contrasted with others that are against English. e.g:

- a) English is a foreign language.
- b) English is a colonial/imperialist language.
- c) English is a language of slavery.
- d) English is the language of Western culture.
- e) English is not a language real to the people.

The identification with Kiswahili for cultural and identity purposes is clear. An African language of wider communication is seen as best suited to preserve and promote African culture. This language also seems to be identified with the creation of a supra-ethnic identity and a common culture in a multiethnic society. The European language seems to be disqualified for such a role not only on account of its foreignness, but also on account of its past history as a tool of colonial domination.

#### *Kiswahili as a Language of National Unity*

The subjects also see Kiswahili as a unifying factor of the diverse peoples of Kenya (See letter No. 4 and 6 in the appendix). This line of thinking has perhaps its origins in the belief that one language can, other things being equal, act as a unifying force in a multilingual society. A common language is assumed by the subjects to be able to provide a common medium for people who live together in the pursuance of common national goals. This thinking is not new. Eastman (1983: 34) is of the opinion that a shared language has the potential to unify a national population because it can strengthen both sentimental and instrumental attachment to a national system. This is particularly crucial in Africa. It is common knowledge that many African countries are arbitrary creations, largely the product of European scramble for Africa in the late 1800s. The colonial powers divided the territories they claimed according to administrative convenience rather than social or political arrangement. The result was the lumping together in one territory of people of different cultures and languages and the scattering of people with similar language and cultures across two or more territories. There is therefore the need for Africa to seek ways of integrating its disparate peoples into identifiable nations. One way of doing this is through language and this is what the following statements seem to suggest:

- a) Kiswahili can bring national unity.
- b) Kiswahili can minimise tribalism.
- c) Kiswahili can get rid of classes.

In such statements, Kiswahili is believed to have the potential to minimise differences whether they be of ethnic rivalry or of socio-economic disparities (see also Mazrui and Tidy. 1984: 300). In a nutshell, Kiswahili is considered to be a language of national unity.

As a matter of fact, it is not necessarily true that a common language will guarantee interethnic harmony in Kenya or Africa for that matter. The recent history of Somalia and Rwanda where conflicts have arisen in spite of one common language has debunked the myth that speaking one language leads to national unity. It is also not necessarily true that unity cannot be achieved in diversity. Furthermore, as Skutnabb Kangas and Philipson (1994:4) write, it is not necessarily true that the ideal state is homogeneous and has only one language and that fostering diversity is necessarily a threat to the political unity and territorial integrity of a state. But as indicated elsewhere in this paper, a common African language can integrate the masses of different ethnic groups and can also narrow the gap between the masses and the élite. Furthermore, as Laitin (1992:10) says, the use of a common language could promote efficiency whether it be in the courts, in revenue collection or the dissemination of state regulations.

### *Kiswahili as a Neutral Language*

In a multi-ethnic and multilingual society there is always the fear of domination by one of the languages. The subjects in this study who favour Kiswahili seem to be conscious of the fact that none of the many indigenous languages spoken in Kenya would be acceptable to all Kenyans (see letter No. 11). This opinion is captured in statements such as:

- a) Kiswahili is a neutral language.
- b) Kiswahili is non-tribal.

As seen earlier, Kenya has few but large ethnic groups. None of these major languages say Kikuyu, Luo or Kamba could be promoted for use in the whole country without resentment and hostility. Kiswahili is, however, an exception to this rule. This language is not associated with any particular ethnic community numerically, neither is it politically or economically strong enough to arouse the linguistic jealousy of other groups (see Gorman. 1974: 398). There is no fear therefore, that the native speakers of Kiswahili will dominate the country.

### *Kiswahili as a Language that has Inherently Good Attributes*

Some of the statements made by the subjects are oversimplified evaluations, which attribute intrinsic linguistic qualities to Kiswahili (see letter Nos. 3 and 10 in the appendix). These evaluations are not necessarily supportable by known facts. They appear to be emotional statements or stereotypes which nevertheless have something to say about the attitudes of the subjects towards Kiswahili. As Edwards (1982:20) would say, such statements do not reflect either linguistic or aesthetic quality per se, but rather are expressions of preference. Such statements include the following:

- a) Kiswahili is the most flexible language.
- b) Kiswahili is simple to understand and to learn.
- c) Kiswahili has humour.
- d) Kiswahili's elegance is unparalleled.

Although it is not clear what these statements actually mean, the feeling of those who wrote them are not in doubt at all. They can be taken as signs of positive evaluation of Kiswahili.

## Attitudes Towards English

### *English as the most Widespread Language*

Subjects in favour of English seem to be aware of the role that the language, which is widely regarded as the world's most widespread (Wardhaugh. 1987: 128), can play to promote international relations (see for example letter Nos. 8 and 12 in the appendix). For these subjects, English is an indispensable language. Some of the statements that have been made to support this thinking are as follows:

- a) English is spoken in the whole world.
- b) For international relations, English is indispensable.
- c) Through English we can peep into the rest of the world.
- d) English is the best means of communicating with other African countries.
- e) If Kiswahili becomes the national language, our communication with countries abroad will suffer.

The statements above show clearly the value that the subjects attach to international relations. They are possibly aware of the importance of the relation between Kenya and the monetary agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They may also be thinking of the various forms of assistance that Kenya gets from the industrialised countries such as Britain and America. It is probably for such reasons that the subjects feel that English, and not Kiswahili is some sort of lifeline for a developing country like Kenya.

Although there is no doubt that English is a major language of global communication, it is important to distinguish between intra-national language needs and inter-national language needs. Intra-national needs may call for a language that could further national integration and understanding; Kiswahili could serve well such a function in Kenya. Inter-national needs would call for a language like English. As Ansre (1977: 59) says, one must first discover himself as a member of a worthy society with a respectable language, which can be used with pride; thereafter, languages beyond the confines of one's society can be learnt.

The other fact that should be acknowledged is that very few Kenyans actually get involved in international activities. As Philipson (1992: 283) notes, international or global links are of greater significance for the élites than the rest of the people. It may therefore, be partially true to argue that Kenya needs English for international communication. Moreover English is not the only language of international communication.

### *English as a Language of Science and Technology*

Some statements made see English as the only language through which Kenyans could study and access science and technology (see letters Nos. 7 and 8 in the appendix). Probably the subjects are only too aware of the premium attached to modern science and technology. To buttress their opinions on English as the language of science and technology, the subjects made the following statements:

- a) English allows for the study of sciences and technology.
- b) Instead of embracing an African language (read Kiswahili), we should make the best of a language in which science and technology are transmitted.
- c) It is difficult to pursue science studies in Kiswahili.
- d) Kiswahili is not developed to function in many fields.

- e) Kiswahili is too limited for the needs of a modern society.
- f) Kiswahili is an empty language.

In the above statements, subjects seem to appreciate the fact that a language should be developed or modernised to be able to function in many spheres of modern life especially in the communication of sciences. One language, in their own experience, which is able to communicate science, is English while an example of a language that appears underdeveloped for that purpose is Kiswahili.

Admittedly, financial costs would need to be met to make Kiswahili a competitive language of science and technology. It is however important to point out that no language is inherently incapable of handling modern science and technology (see Coulmas. 1989: 182; Mazrui. 1995: 25). All languages are capable of developing or being developed to cope with scientific, technological and philosophical inventions and innovations (Ansre. 1977: 60). There is no known linguistic reason that could make Kiswahili less "scientific" than English. The absence of technical terminology in Kiswahili can be remedied if the language can be modernised so that it can cope with scientific and technological discourse.

The feeling that indigenous languages do not have the potential to develop has been associated with linguistic imperialism (Ansre. 1977: 12), a phenomenon in which the minds and lives of the speakers of a language are dominated by another language to the point where they think they can and should use only that foreign language when it comes to transactions dealing with more advanced aspects of life such as education, philosophy, literature and other disciplines. This argument is also supported by Philipson (1992: 279) who says that the extrinsic arguments which refer to English as the language of technology serve the linguistic purpose of maintaining the inequality between English as a dominant language and the dominated state of others. Indeed, marketing one language as one which holds the key to science and technology has the effect of holding one language as the norm while stigmatising the rest (Philipson and Skutnabb – Kangas. 1994: 339).

#### *English as the Language of Advantage and Prestige*

Although both English and Kiswahili are compulsory subjects in Kenya's school system, employers often demand proficiency in English as a prerequisite for employment and many professional courses at the universities and other tertiary institutions require passes in the language. To be sure, health related diploma and certificate courses require passes in either Kiswahili or English (see Mbaabu. 1996: 159). The teaching of these courses is, however, done in English only. This state of affairs has made English the language of advantage without which it is not possible to climb the social ladder. Like in many parts of Africa, where English is spoken (see Adegbiya. 1994: 148), English in Kenya functions as a vehicle of upward mobility, socially, politically and economically. With such an advantage, English has gained widely in prestige. The awareness of the advantage and prestige which English enjoys is clearly evident in the following statements (see also letter No. 13):

- a) English can give you a job.
- b) Kiswahili cannot give you a job.
- c) If you want to be despised by your fellow Kenyans, speak Kiswahili or your mother tongue.
- d) Kiswahili is used in offices by the bosses when they talk to their juniors.
- e) Some Kenyans will try to impress a Japanese, a European or an Indian by using English when they are spoken to in Kiswahili.

Nearly all of the statements above have been made with respect to Kiswahili but obviously with English in mind. They are thus in favour of English. The import of the statements is that, when compared to Kiswahili, English is the language of advantage and prestige. The communicative functions that have been assigned to English compared to Kiswahili since the colonial times, undoubtedly make it the most prestigious language to acquire in Kenya. The only way Kiswahili can gain prestige is through what Webb (1994: 187) calls revalorization i.e., a process whereby an undervalued and an underdeveloped language is given a higher functional and instrumental value and a more positive social value. This can be achieved for Kiswahili in Kenya if the language is made, through planning, to become essential in the workplace at all levels – if, for example, knowledge of this language is demanded for access to job opportunity, especially for particular occupations (e.g. government administration, hospitals, the judiciary, agriculture etc.) and for promotional purposes and salary increases. Revalorization can also take place if Kiswahili is given additional education value, i.e., if besides being taught as a subject it can be used as a medium of instruction for some subjects e.g. History, Civics and Ethics.

### *English Need not Inevitably be Linked to Foreign Cultures nor the Evils of Colonialism*

One of the arguments that are used by those who support a bigger role for Kiswahili as opposed to English is that English is a foreign colonial language, a constant reminder of the oppressive past and a symbol of linguistic and cultural dependence. But there is a counter-argument that English should not inherently be associated with colonialism, or even with the British or Americans, or even with any particular culture. According to this counter-argument, English is a language with no proprietor - a language that can be appropriated to serve Kenyans (see letters 1 and 8 in the appendix). Some of the statements that are made in support of this argument include the following:

- a) There is nothing colonial about English.
- b) English does not belong to the British or the Americans only.
- c) English is not a piece of property with an owner, it is a tool available for everybody.
- d) Kenyans will not be identified as Englishmen nor will they become British slaves because they speak English.
- e) Learning English has nothing to do with culture.
- f) Kiswahili is Arabic.
- g) Kiswahili originated from the slave dealers along the coast of East Africa.
- h) Kiswahili is one product of the spread of Arab culture and language.

In these statements, the foreign roots of English and its past history are not seen as a disadvantage. The feeling that English is a “tool at all the people’s disposal” seems to be preferred. The statements above seem to delink the English language from its colonial past. They also seem to delink English from cultural alienation and linguistic and cultural imperialism. They seem to advocate what Wardhaugh (1987: 132) has called ‘value-free’ view of English in the world. In this view, English belongs to no-one, it is a world language with no single proprietor. It is associated with different people and with different political, social, cultural and religious systems. It is thus not tied to a particular view of the world or of a particular culture.

Another meaning to this view has been provided by Kachru (1990: 8) who argues that English can be appropriated or domesticated to serve local needs of a particular country. According to this view, English can, for instance, be learned as a vehicle for interaction among its non-native users with distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This view also holds that English could also be learnt not

as a tool to understand and teach the American or British cultural values but as an important tool 'to impart local traditions and cultural values'. In fact, Kachru (1983: 164) argues that non-native users of English should readjust their attitudes towards English as follows:

- a) They must dissociate English from the colonial past and not treat it as a colonizer's linguistic tool.
- b) They must avoid regarding English as an evil influence which necessarily leads to Westernization.
- c) They should accept the large body of English literature written by local creative writers as part of the native literary tradition.
- d) They ought to develop an identity with the local model of English without feeling that it is a 'deficient' model.

The 'value-free view' of English has its critics (see Wardhaugh 1987, and Skutnabb Kangas and Phillipson. 1984). There are those who, for example, believe that buying that view is the same as resigning oneself to linguistic and cultural dependence which have consequences for one's self-respect, self-worth and independence. As Phillipson (1992: 287) says, this argument involves a disconnection between what English is ('culture') from its structural basis (from what it has and does). It disconnects the means from ends or purposes. Phillipson sees this as a rationalization process whereby the unequal power relations between English and other languages are explained and legitimated (Phillipson. 1992: 287).

#### *English as a 'Ready-Made Language' that would not Cost any Money to Develop*

Those who are in favour of English also see it as a ready-made language that would not cost any resources to develop (see letter 12 in the appendix). They argue that instead of developing Kiswahili with the attendant costs, it would be prudent costwise to continue using English. The following statements have been used to support this argument:

- a) It would cost less to continue using English.
- b) It would be expensive to develop Kiswahili.

The argument that it would be too costly to prepare materials in one or several indigenous languages is not new. This argument has, however, been challenged. Ansre (1977: 57), for example, thinks that this is a way of maintaining the dominance of one language by exaggerating the difficulties and deficiencies of other languages. There is also the feeling that the 'cost argument' stems from the belief that dominant languages such as English have intrinsic characteristics which qualify them for more sophisticated use than indigenous ones.

The main problem with the 'cost argument' is that it assumes that the development of indigenous languages is not a priority. It assumes that if there are many sectors of the economy competing for scarce resources, it is the indigenous languages which should be sacrificed. Moreover, this argument assumes that the continued use of European languages in African countries is not in itself problematic.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that views expressed in the popular press in Kenya can be used to pinpoint attitudes generally held with regard to Kiswahili and English. It shows that those who have positive attitudes towards Kiswahili see it as a neutral African Language, spoken by the majority, with which Kenyans

can identify and which can also unify the diverse peoples of Kenya and the region. The arguments for Kiswahili appear to be based on patriotic and nationalistic considerations and seem to emphasize how well the language can aid in national authentication. On the other hand, those who show positive attitudes towards English base their arguments on its role in international communication, its ability to communicate science and technology, its neutrality in a multilingual situation and its advantage and prestige. In brief, those who champion the cause of English seem to do so mainly for utilitarian or instrumental reasons.

The arguments that are used in support of English in this study are not different from those that have been used elsewhere in support of ex-colonial languages in post-colonial Africa (see for example, Philipson. 1992). Although such arguments are commonsensical, they are hegemonic. They appear to legitimize the dominant position of English against the indigenous languages such as Kiswahili. On the other hand, the arguments used for Kiswahili are similar to those that have been used to argue the case for the promotion of African indigenous languages (see for example, Ansre. 1977). They show how the dominated indigenous African languages are struggling to acquire roles and influence in the authentication of post-colonial African states.

One of the major conclusions that can be drawn from this study is that the two languages are in competition for functional roles and influence. There is a feeling, on the one hand, among Kiswahili advocates that the language has the necessary credentials to be the most important language in Kenya but has not been accorded the necessary recognition. On the other hand, those who are in favour of English see it as a useful tool and would like to see its powerful and dominant role continued. This state of affairs confirms what Edwards (1993: 25) says, that in many societies, language-planning activities are characterised by some sort of internal struggle or tension among indigenous varieties and a need to come to terms with the advantages and disadvantages of a powerful non-indigenous form, often of colonial provenance.

Although the two languages appear to be in competition, the main question concerning language policy in Kenya is not one of either English or Kiswahili. A realistic language policy for Kenya would be one which clearly defines the role of both languages. While retaining English, such a policy would strive to make Kiswahili more than a symbolic national language. Kiswahili would be revalorized (Webb. 1984: 187) by giving it a higher functional or instrumental value and a more positive value. For example, some subjects in schools could be taught in the language. In addition, people working for the government and other professionals who train to go and work among Kenyans such as doctors, judiciary officials, agricultural officers etc. would be required to be proficient in the language. Such measures would considerably boost the status of the language and possibly improve its prestige.

Language planning in Kenya would also have to take into account the people's attitudes towards Kiswahili. Although, for instance, Kiswahili is largely believed to be a neutral language, the data available in this paper shows that it is not altogether free from ethnolinguistic stigma. One area therefore which language planners may wish to address would be how the negative language attitudes could be gradually changed in the language planning process.

For policies on language to succeed, there is need not only for status planning but also for corpus planning. For Kiswahili, it may not simply be enough to allocate functions, it is important that the language is modernised to be able to cope with any new roles that it may be assigned in future.

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