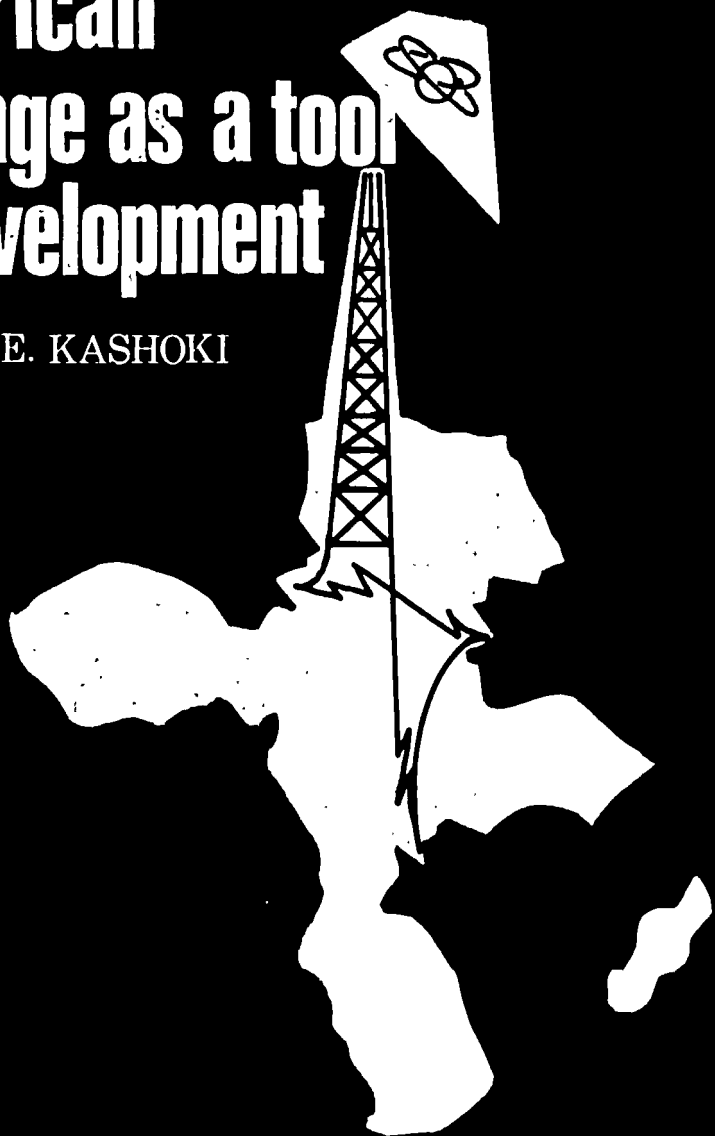


the african language as a tool of development

MUBANGA E. KASHOKI



OAU Inter-African Bureau of Languages
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PREFACE

The present paper is the first in a series of papers whose primary aim is to provide information about development in African languages as they relate to Member States of the Organisation of African Unity.

Much of what is happening in Africa today in the effort to promote African languages is little known outside the scholarly circles of Linguists. And yet it is clear that Africa in spite of its tremendous achievement politically still faces a linguistic problem created in the aftermath of colonial domination. Not only is the Continent still curved up linguistically into Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone blocs according to the former colonial power which is reflected in the continued predominance of colonial languages, but the Continent's own indigenous languages are still largely viewed negatively and unfavourably both within and outside the Continent. If Africa's attitude towards its languages is to be changed in favour of African languages, then the whole of Africa stands to benefit from the efforts that are being geared towards making people sufficiently aware about developments taking place in Africa in this vital sphere.

Being the languages of the majority populations of Africa, African languages have always been and will continue to be on the forefront of development. As viable tools of development we can no longer afford to continue regarding them as inconsequential. Every African has therefore the responsibility of ensuring that we develop the right attitudes towards African languages, evolve and implement the right policies that would enhance their status and generally rehabilitate them within the mainstream of all activities as Africa forges ahead towards the year 2000.

OAU INTER-AFRICAN BUREAU OF LANGUAGES

OAU-BIL PAPERS NO. 1

THE AFRICAN LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF DEVELOPMENT

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THE AFRICAN LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF DEVELOPMENT

The Challenge to Africa

This paper assumes as its underlying premise and as a point of departure the Organization of African Unity's now well-known stand on the role of the African language in Africa's developmental process, more especially where that process has to take due account of the sociocultural dimension of development. Under the auspices of its Inter-African Bureau of Languages, the avowed aim of the OAU is the elevation at the national, regional, and continental level of certain viable African languages to the position presently enjoyed dominantly by European languages. This the OAU hopes to achieve by encouraging progressively and with due regard to the political, social and economic circumstances prevalent in each Member State the use of Africa's own languages for educational, commercial and communication purposes without necessarily negating the complementary role European languages will continue to play for the foreseeable future in Africa's long march to maturity in a modern world. This emphasis by the OAU on the greater use of African languages in Africa's development can quite legitimately be perceived as symbolizing a conscious search for alternative patterns of development, a theme more recently given special attention and emphasis by the Economic Commission for Africa.

In a continuing series of seminars, the first convened in Addis Ababa in March, 1979, and the second a few months later in July, 1979 in Nairobi, Kenya, the theme 'Alternative Patterns of Development and Life Styles for the African Region' was discussed in an attempt to examine whether in the task of each nation staking out a form of development best suited to the needs and cultural temperament of its people there are not strategies of development which are in fundamental senses different from those generally tacitly accepted to be based on the Western model. If indeed at this stage the challenge is for Africa consciously to search for a process of devising for itself a pattern of development in better and closer harmony with the social ethos of her peoples, and the OAU's stand on language is a representative pointer to the direction that search should take, then it is reasonable to

argue that one ought to assume the special place of language in that search. I have previously made my position explicit at any rate that if Africa is to reverse in fundamental ways her present apparently vicious circle of dependence on Western leadership in practically every sphere of human endeavour, it is inevitable that at some point a return to Africa's sociocultural roots should be considered by the African peoples as a prerequisite to and as constituting the point of departure for alternative patterns of development. This view holds that perhaps in no other area of her unique being does Africa have a better chance of striking out in significantly unique patterns of development than in the modernization and utilization of her languages. At the most basic level, African sociocultural systems and African languages, it is suggested, should be appreciated as being inseparable, and therefore a pattern of development regarded as more relevant or responsive to Africa's needs and conditions must of necessity accept the centrality of language to that development.

In this paper I am more immediately concerned with the practical steps that are needed in Africa to make African languages serious contenders to the present dominant status of European languages as tools of development. If the search is indeed for alternative patterns of development in Africa and the OAU is seriously committed, and there is no doubt that it is, to the elevation of African languages to a position where they can eventually replace European languages as the preeminent languages in the African peoples' estimation, then it may be argued that the African language ought to be considered a viable tool of contemporary development in Africa's march to modernity. It is not suggested here to dwell on that unrewarding and now largely discarded argument whether African languages, unlike their European counterparts such as English and French, are a relevant answer to Africa's challenges of the future. Rather, the main concern is with the greater utilization in Africa by the African peoples of the African language as a more relevant response to Africa's quest for paths of development that better correspond with the sociocultural conditions of her people. More than that, it is an attempt to contribute in an analytical fashion to the OAU's

challenge to Africa to accord due recognition to African languages as more than just potential tools of development.

It may be asked, and the question is pertinent to a better understanding of that which follows, why the incorporation of African languages in Africa's development has proved so elusive in the past. What factors have accounted for the negligible progress made thus far towards harnessing African languages in the all-important process of providing a better life for the African peoples? The next section attempts to answer these questions.

The obstacles Ahead

It is a fact that thus far African countries have accorded unparalleled strategic and functional centrality to European languages in their development. On the other hand, they have characteristically grudgingly suffered their own indigenous languages to enjoy only a pariah status, assigning them roles on the extreme fringes of their development. A discussion of the future, more relevant and central role of the African language must therefore perforce take account of this fact. Accordingly, I set out in this section to outline some of the more important factors that have acted to inhibit the greater use in Africa of African languages up to the present time. Many of these factors are familiar to those with an interest in the problems facing Africa in its development, and it is therefore useful to give only the barest outline.

The battery of obstacles ranged against the African language run the gamut from the petty (and therefore easily dismissed) to the very serious (and therefore requiring critical attention). They are educational, economic, political, technical and psychological.

Psychologically, the African language has to seek approval of its relevance from a generation of Africans who have been nurtured on the belief that only the European language is so structured and so developed as to constitute the only reasonable means of Africa's advancement to modernity. This generation of Africans genuinely believes, and there are undeniably

historical reasons to account for this, that it is the European languages, in particular those inherited from the colonial experience, and not African languages, which are already sufficiently developed and equipped to cope more relevantly with the demands of the modern age in the scientific, technical, technological and other fields. They argue that it is advantageous, and less costly in terms of money, time and trained human resources, for African countries to continue to engage the services of these 'developed' European languages in their development. They see little economic sense in suggestions that posit African languages as viable alternatives to European languages, convinced as they are that to opt for African languages at this time is to reach for an anachronistic tool, rusty and inadequate for the job at hand. They plainly consider this to be a waste of time and a drain on the national economy, placing maximum faith in the imported linguistic tools.

This psychological barrier to the employment of African languages in development is a major stumbling block to the mobilization of a favourable disposition towards the greater use in future of the African language. The impregnability of this barrier resides in the single fact that the majority of contemporary educated Africans who command decision-making positions in African societies are firm believers in the sanctity of the superiority of the European language over the African language. OAU resolutions to the contrary, it will require a new breed of Africans, with radically different psychological orientations, and a renewed sense of commitment, to alter in any significant manner the present set of circumstances in which the European language continues to command the central stage in Africa's efforts to develop.

Linked to the psychological is the general condemnation of African languages as being still technically undeveloped tools and therefore as irrelevant to Africa's development. The seriousness of this obstacle may be seen in the sentiments expressed recently in Zambia in an official Government publication. In the document, *Educational Reform: Proposals and Recommendations* (1977), the Government of the Republic of Zambia, through its Ministry of Education, re-endorsed the commonplace view that African languages are technically

unsuited to their use in modern forms of development:

“There is — a lot of work to be done in language development, not only at the level of the school, but also at the level of the University if we are to see a meaningful change in the study of Zambian languages as subjects and in their use as media of instruction. There are certain concepts in Mathematics, Science and Technology, for instance, which cannot be expressed precisely in any of the Zambian languages at the present, simply because such concepts and the technical terms used have no equivalents in the Zambian languages or for which the equivalents are imprecise, inadequate and perhaps completely misleading. Therefore, the establishment of the Zambian languages in terms of functionality, richness of vocabulary and social integration, may have to await such developments as have been indicated above” (p. 33).

With such Government stands as this in Africa on language, is it any wonder that only pious and token expressions of support continue to attend the development of African languages? At any rate, the attitude by the Zambian Government, as demonstrated in the cited instance, provides a clear index to the rejection of African languages as viable media of instruction.

The foregoing also serves to illustrate that perhaps in no field of development is the viability of African languages more clearly undermined than in that of education. Undoubtedly, it is in the field of education that the assumed limited utility of African languages receives its most explicit expression. This is abundantly evident in the very principle underlying the use of African languages in education. In emphasizing the concept of the use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction but only during the first three to five years of a child's education, the implication is quite clearly that beyond this stage the utility of the African language has a diminishing value; languages better suited to the task should take over at this point. The remarks I recently made to UNESCO remain pertinent in this regard:

“The very concept stressing the importance of the use of

the mother tongue but only in the primary stages of education, which since its [enunciation] has been the corner-stone of formal education in much of Africa, is predicated on a subtle and carefully orchestrated philosophy of cultural and linguistic imperialism. It rests on a fundamental notion whose persuasive and compelling moral force consist in the assumed psychological, pedagogical and linguistic utility of the mother tongue but only as a stepping stone to the efficient and firmer grasp of European languages. The process is perceived as the least painless transition from African to European languages. As well as being culturally the least disruptive, it is seen as having the decided advantage of providing to the African child the best foundation for the subsequent competent manipulation of the given European language."¹

My concern here is with a process which enhances the practical value of one language at the expense of another. To the extent that in Africa's educational programmes African languages are relegated to the most rudimentary stages of the educational process, to that extent is their potential for their own development effectively inhibited. To assert as an article of faith, as indeed is the case throughout most of Africa, that African languages are viable only as long as they are confined to the lowest rungs of the educational process is to create a vicious circle. A language perceived and then declared to have relevance only for a certain stage of the developmental process is not likely to receive the necessary emphasis to enable it to become viable and relevant for more complex stages. Without this emphasis it is more than likely to remain perpetually 'relevant' to that stage, and only that stage, for which it has been declared to be relevant.

More specifically, no African language stands a chance of being developed while all resources, financial, material and human, continue to be diverted predominantly and disproportionately to the promotion of European languages. Perceived irrelevance in this case can have a self-perpetuating effect. The fact that the Yoruba experiment at the University of Ife, Nigeria, in which an attempt is being made to demonstrate the

relevance of an African language as a viable tool of instruction for the entire span of primary education, is being conducted at all is a telling testimony to the psychological battle that has still to be fought and won in international and national forums that African languages have a legitimate position in education beyond the primary stages.

Along with the notion of African languages as educationally irrelevant tools is their perception as essentially culturally relevant curios. In much of Africa, particularly in those instances where rather more serious consideration is given to the greater use of African languages in national development, the African language is still widely considered to be fit primarily for giving continued dignity to the feathered head of the traditional medicine-man. In education, the main, and quite often the only, reason cited for teaching African languages is the cultural one. Where European languages are regarded as providing the means for transition of African societies into the modern age, African languages are in contrast perceived as providing nothing more than sentimental bonds with the culture inherited from our past. In the reasoned opinion of the *Zambian Educational Reform* document, "the use of the mother tongue in teaching and learning can stimulate the child's effective faculties and aid its development emotionally and psychologically. It can encourage the socialization process which education brings thorough song, folk stories, dance and play, etc. In turn, these contribute to the development and preservation of cultural heritage, thus establishing links between the new society and the past" (p. 33). Or as Mwanakatwe (1968:216-217) has argued: "Vernacular teaching has its value. . . . There can be no better way of preserving national culture for all time than by encouraging school children to learn their tribal customs, songs, beliefs, and literature in vernacular lessons."

The psychological and educational obstacles just surveyed have close parallels with and indeed are linked to political and economic obstacles. It is to these I now turn.

At no level of argument does the protagonist of the African language as a relevant tool in the contemporary setting of Africa encounter more formidable counter arguments

than at the political and economic level. At the political level, the issues may be usefully confined largely to three. These involve the argument, first of all, that the very multiplicity of languages on the African continent does not create favourable conditions for African societies in their present form as nation-states. In these states, with high premium being currently placed on nation-building or national integration, the linguistic complexity arising from the highly multilingual situation in Africa is seen as an undesirable stumbling block in the path of national cohesion and national advancement. Multiplicity of languages is not only perceived as acting as a powder keg of political divisiveness evident in much of Africa but is regarded as making it extremely difficult for national governments to make judicious choices as to the language(s) to be deployed towards the development of the country. In the widespread assumption that to select one African language from among the many contending competitors in the given country would automatically give rise to political discontent the rational choice is seen to lie in a 'neutral' language — a European language.

The security of the European language is further assured and enhanced by the current predominantly international outlook of most, if not all, African countries. The OAU itself, most probably because of its own international, if regional, character, places special emphasis on the need for Africa to produce the kind of African who possesses the linguistic ability to interact with fellow-Africans from beyond the border. Because of this emphasis, the education system in Africa is geared more to the production of internationalists — career diplomats and multinational executives — than to the cultivation of the type of African who has a culturally firmer foothold in his own country. It is an implicit policy which tends to see all Africans as 'leaders' and not just *people* with predominantly national needs, aspirations and outlooks rather than international needs, aspirations and orientations.

Reference has already been made to a tendency in Africa to regard European languages as 'neutral' tools and as constituting the only effective rallying point for national cohesion. To this is added the corollary that, being 'neutral',

European languages in Africa should be seen as equalizers of opportunity. This notion appears to rest on the erroneous premise that all Africans come in contact with the European language from the same starting point and have equal access to its acquisition. That this is far from being so is more than adequately demonstrated by available educational statistics. These clearly indicate cross disparities between the opportunities of those who have and of those who don't have access to the official European language through the education system. In Zambia, for example, only a minuscule 20 per cent of enrolled children are able to proceed beyond the first seven years of primary education. About one out of five children of school-going age ever see the inside of a classroom. In the highly competitive pyramidal system of education prevalent in the African countries with which I am familiar, the child who benefits from a university education is a very lucky child indeed. Despite these realities, African educational policies continue to place implicit faith in the accessibility of the European language to all the children of the country and to assume that if only more resources can be diverted to the promotion of the selected European language, African children can be provided with a launching pad to equal opportunities in life.

The economic argument, the final point to be considered here, harps back to the multiplicity of African languages so universally lamented in Africa. Their very multiplicity is seen as immediately disqualifying them for deployment in the developmental process on account of the expense that would be involved if they were so deployed. In any case, given the exiguousness of the available resources, runs the argument, to divert time, money and expertise to African languages when more urgent matters are pressing and when the inherited European language can do the job is to indulge in unwarranted expense and idle luxury. Rather, it is considered wiser and more pragmatic to husband Africa's scant resources by ceasing "to play games in the name of misguided cultural nationalism," as some would label it, and by accepting that for the foreseeable future European languages represent the cheaper and more viable tools of development.

The Solution

There are no absolute solutions in life. However, since the primary task of the paper is to tackle a practical problem, I shall attempt in this section to suggest some practical solutions. One solution of course has already been offered somewhat obliquely. Solutions to practical problems ought to begin with a recognition, followed by a critical assessment, of the obstacles that may have impeded such solutions in the past. Thus in calling attention to the broad range of obstacles that appear to lie in the path of the adoption of African languages as the linguistic tools of development in Africa, this in itself represents a first move in providing relevant solutions.

Beyond this, clearly, the desirable path to the future lies in Africa's ability to chart for herself, severally as a continent and individually as a collectivity of independent nations, the direction she intends her development to follow, to take stock of her present path of imitative development, and to recognize that relevant development is that which is not at odds with the sociocultural setting which gives meaning to the people who are the architects of that development. Relevant development cannot germinate largely from foreign seeds, seeds alien to the soil to give them nutritional sustenance and alien to the people to give them expert care requisite for growth. Relevant development is a recognition that, within the overall web of international interdependence, distinct patterns of life styles may be discerned throughout the world. The second important recognition is that development is not uni-directional, pre-determined or inevitably of one type. Within the concept of development, Africa ought to distinguish a plurality of development variants, each uniquely tied to the desired *modus vivendi* of the people engaged in the particular variant of development. Modernity or modernization is not and should not necessarily imply blind westernization. Development should be seen rather as the ability of each people to determine and devise for themselves a form of a betterment of their lives and their surroundings in ways that are in tune with their cultural ethos and in harmony with their physical environment. However, at no point should such development be perceived as negating the growing interdependence of our universe or the international forces at work; it should only mean an

obvious recognition of the ability of a people to adapt alien forms of development to suit their own special needs and circumstances.

Having posited this general understanding of development, the response to be given to the problem of the better and amore effective utilization of African languages will depend on the vision, courage and commitment of the African peoples and their eventual realisation that the African language is basic to any future endeavours aimed at aligning development more relevantly with African life styles. If in future emphasis shifts and focuses on life styles consonant with the indigenous sociocultural setting, then I would argue that African development without African languages is likely to take place in an empty cultural shell. But this is to talk in highly political terms. Incorporation of African languages in a development process better attuned to the life style of the African beneficiary requires practical answers and practical considerations. I attempt to be practical in that which follows.

The first crucial point that needs to be faced is that pious political posturings, however laudable and well-meaning, whether at international forums or from domestic political pulpits, in token support of African languages will not ensure either their incorporation in development or their own modernization. Only genuine commitment and practical support, backed by a sustained shift of resources from European to African languages, will lift them from their present level of neglect and underdevelopment.

Since first things come first, the first requirement, as I see it, in this process of gradual disengagement of the African peoples from the official European language, which after all, as we have stated before, is the ultimate aim of the OAU, is Africa's recognition and unequivocal acknowledgement that its languages, like languages elsewhere in the world, are inherently amenable to scientific, technical and technological development. The lessons of Japan, Israel, South Africa (Afrikaans), and more recently Malaysia and Tanzania are germane here. In these countries no development of the selected (indigenous) language for modernization took place until, and only until, *after* a political decision had been made and a national commitment undertaken to direct all attention

and resources to the development of the language so earmarked. In Africa generally the tendency is to reverse the process. I have already referred to the *Zambian Educational Reform* document in which it is argued at one place (p. 33) that the greater utilization of African languages may have to await the development of the given language before its use in education and presumably in national life. The point is how this can be done at all when the national will is focused on the promotion of the current official European language. In Tanzania practical steps are being taken to modernize Kiswahili in such fields as law, parliament and education. However, this is being done after the political decision was taken to replace English by Kiswahili.

Thus Africa's immediate and difficult task, if its languages are to play a meaningful role in development, is to arrive at clear-cut decisions as to the languages to be selected for deployment in the modernization process and to make an unequivocal commitment to their modernization so as to render them more viable than they are at present. This selection and commitment must be followed by a deliberate switch of the national resources from the official European language to the selected African language(s). This action would be taken in full recognition of the fact that in any case this is the ultimate aim of the OAU to whose Charter and resolutions Member States are a party and a signatory. The OAU, it needs to be reiterated, intends to make certain viable languages, such as Kiswahili, Hausa and Arabic, the operational languages of Africa both at the continental and regional level. Thus the action reversing the present dominance of European languages by placing more reliance in future on African languages would be consonant with the intentions and resolve of the African continent as given concrete expression by the OAU.

In Black Africa in particular, language policies hitherto have been predicated on a socio-political philosophy whose central thesis has been that by merely teaching African languages as subjects in African schools the right environment would thereby be created for the cultivation of an affection and appreciation for them. The measures recently taken in

Tanzania may offer the rest of Africa apt lessons in this regard.

Shortly after independence, Tanzania, in a bold move that radically altered the linguistic situation in the country, made two important decisions. Firstly, it made a political commitment to the gradual take-over of an African language, Kiswahili, from a European language, English. Secondly, this political commitment was followed by practical measures and the expression of a national will to execute those practical measures. The measures included the exclusive use of Kiswahili in parliament, its use in complement with English as the language of statecraft, and its use as a medium of instruction in the primary cycle of education. In addition to these measures, the commitment was clearly visible that Tanzania intended in the long term to make Kiswahili the premier language of its national life. To this end, projects were initiated, and financial and human resources diverted to those projects, in various fields to render Kiswahili terminologically up-to-date and to ensure its viability and relevance in the contemporary setting. The upshot of all this is that it is no longer necessary in Tanzania to exhort a Tanzanian citizen as to the practical value of Kiswahili. The practical value of Kiswahili is all around him to see.

The lesson for Africa then in its search of a form of development more in accord with its life styles, is that political platitudes and moral exhortations are hardly the measures required to persuade its citizens that African languages are viable tools of development, let alone relevant to their lives. Such platitudes will certainly not induce Africans to love their languages. The African is a practical man who puts a high premium on the practicality of the language he is being exhorted to love. The African language today will not give him a job; only French and English will.

The challenge Africa faces, if the OAU resolutions are eventually to have concrete meaning, is simply this that it has to have the courage of its convictions and translate that courage into concrete, practical terms. African languages to become an essential part of the life styles of the contemporary African must find their place in those areas he considers important to

his existence. The contemporary African requires actual proof that his languages are relevant to today's needs before he can switch his allegiance from the European language to the African language. His continuing allegiance is not just a lingering colonial hangover; it has practical implications. Official European languages in Africa at present offer the African citizen the key to a good life. Consequently only when African languages begin to offer this key to a good life will the African be induced to switch his allegiance to them.

There is one area in particular in which the relevance of the African language can begin to be demonstrated almost at once. This concerns the provision of a type of literature most likely to strike a responsive chord in the heart of the contemporary African. Because of, as we have already noted, a perception by Africans of African languages as largely carriers of Africa's cultural heritage, the greater part of the literature so far available in African languages is devoted to topics dealing with the 'cultural' aspects of African life. An economics book in an African language has yet to be written. The net effect of this is that the contemporary African is thoroughly disenchanted with literature in his own language.

There are, however, positive signs that things are changing. In a few African universities, notably where African languages are taught at postgraduate level, theses and dissertations are beginning to be written in African languages themselves. For example, at the University of Dar es Salaam and Nairobi students majoring in Kiswahili are required to write their MA theses in Kiswahili. But, as these cases illustrate, this is confined only to academic activities and academic circles; it is not being extended to the daily life of the people. Books treating subjects of immediate relevance to the contemporary African are not being written in African languages. If they are the number is so negligible as to signify no serious refutation of the basic argument here.

Two reasons account for this. First is the fact that almost all education in Africa is acquired through a European language, thus occasioning illiteracy in both the writer and reader when confronted by an African language. Secondly, in the absence of a commitment to African languages the resources

are not there to encourage this kind of literature, and, in any case, the affection has not been cultivated in the African to dispose him favourably towards the written word in his own language.

And yet clearly, if African languages are to play a greater role in future in development, it is precisely in this area that maximum efforts must be made to increase the relevance of African languages to today's needs. But this can only be done if there is in the first place a political commitment to the promotion of African languages and the national will to accomplish the task.

The tendency in Africa to formulate policies and design educational programmes which focus on producing internationalists or educated citizens with primarily beyond-border orientations has already been alluded to. Undeniably Europe too has its quota of internationalists, and in fact many European countries, such as the Scandinavian group of countries, stress in their education system, especially at secondary school level, the importance of broadening the outlook of their citizens by exposing them to world languages, more particularly English. But in the main Dutchmen remain Dutchmen. Much of their development takes place not in an international language (to which they have been exposed), but in their own language. The ordinary Dutch citizen worries little, if at all, if he has no knowledge of an international language. In this sense, unlike in Africa, where apparently charity is felt to begin abroad, in Europe charity characteristically begins at home.

This is to emphasize that an appropriate language policy in Africa should first take cognizance of the existence of various, if interconnected, levels of need. Broadly, four types of need may be distinguished: parochial or local, national, regional and international. In matters of language, an appropriate language policy, I believe, is that which is responsive to the fact that the vast majority of nationals in African countries are not likely in their lifetime to visit

foreign capitals or to interact with French-speaking or English-speaking multinational executives. For these people, their needs are more immediate, more circumscribed, country-bounded, and certainly minimally international. They are none the worse for it if they cannot pronounce Giscard d'Estaing. Thus, where the needs of the people are predominantly local and national rather than international — a fact of life in Africa and elsewhere — the national language policy should be directed at maximizing the population's interaction and communication within the country's borders. In these circumstances, the African language is undoubtedly the most eligible candidate. Such a policy does not, of course, as is often supposed, negate the teaching of world languages as second or third languages to facilitate international communication and to emphasize the ever-increasing atmosphere of international interdependence. The widespread practice in Europe of teaching world languages as second languages, particularly at secondary school and higher levels, could similarly be adopted in Africa with much the same effect as is now being sought by retaining European languages as the dominant linguistic forces in national life.

But the critical difficulty lies in selecting the one or several African languages that should replace the existing official European languages. The difficulty stems from the dire consequences that are predicted to ensue from elevating one or several African languages to the position previously enjoyed by a European language, to wit, national disintegration, retardation of overall national development, and introduction of social inequalities.

I have elsewhere taken up these issues (cf. Kashoki 1971: 1973; 1978a; 1979) and I shall therefore omit their discussion here. Suffice it to conclude by saying that the choices that are made are the responsibility of individual countries. Secondly, the catastrophic predictions arise chiefly because those making them fail to appreciate that a vast negative propaganda machine has done a lot in the past to dispose Africans unfavourably towards their own languages. In one specific instance, for example, a relentless anti-African-language propaganda has projected African languages as tribal languages,

the property exclusively of tribes, but on the other hand has imbued European languages with non-tribal characteristics and as the only languages which can bring about effective national integration.

Had a more favourable picture of African languages been painted over the past several years, many of the fears commonly expressed would not appear to have such dire consequences or to be beyond the pale of solution. Africans would then, for example, have perceived their languages not as the properties exclusively of particular tribes but just as another national resource², and as more likely than the imported European language to bring about more widespread, more effective, and more rapid access of the selected African language(s) to all the citizens. The selected African language having in most cases a closer linguistic affinity to the non-selected languages than European languages renders it easier for citizens to acquire it more fluently, less painfully and at less cost than the European language to be replaced. This suggests that a major task in front of the OAU and African countries individually, if their goal indeed is to accord a more central role to their indigenous languages in development, is to reverse the tide by mounting a vigorous, sustained campaign of their own aimed at counteracting the negative and unfavourable light in which African languages have hitherto been cast.

NOTES

1. See the paper 'Harmonization of African Languages: standardization of orthography in Zambia', prepared for and issued by UNESCO, 31st May, 1978 under reference No. CC-78/CONF.624/COL. 1.
2. The point is extensively argued in my paper, 'Language, Tribe and the Concept of One Zambia, One Nation', being a public lecture sponsored by the Centre for Continuing Education (Copperbelt Province), University of Zambia, 23rd February, 1979.

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