Final Report
of the
Seminar on a Linguistic Map of Africa
Niamey, Niger, March 26 - 28, 1991

1. Introduction

The UNESCO Seminar on a Linguistic Map of Africa was held at the OAU's Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition (CELHTO), Niamey, Niger on March 26 - 28, 1991.

The principal host, Mr. Dioulde LAYA, Director of OAU/CELHTO, welcomed the participants and invited Mr. Mangoné NIANG, Head of the Linguistic Unit of OAU/CELHTO to preside over the opening ceremony. Mr. NIANG stressed the quality of the working document and the multipurpose nature of the linguistic maps. He said that these would serve as a useful starting point for the deliberations of the Seminar. He pointed out that the Seminar was coming at the right time considering current OAU concerns.

The representative of UNESCO, Mr. E. A. Ayandele welcomed participants on behalf of the Director General. He stressed the excellent cooperation between UNESCO and the OAU in general and, in particular, the material and financial inputs of CELHTO which had contributed in no small measure to the quality of preparations for the Seminar. He mentioned the interdisciplinary nature of the Seminar which accounts for participation and contribution of Mr. Clifford FYLE, UNESCO's Expert on African Languages.

The following invited experts took part in the work of the Seminar:

Ayo BAMGBOSE (Nigeria)
Ben ELUGBE (Nigeria) (consultant)
Abdou MIJINGUINI (Niger)
Noe NGUEFFO (Cameroon)
Klaus SCHUBERT (Niger/Germany)
Livingstone WALUSIMBI (Uganda)
Vinou YE (Burkina Faso)

For various reasons the following experts were unable to attend the meeting:

Florence DOLPHYNE (Ghana)
Marc HAZOUME (Bénin)

The following observers attended the meeting:

Laouali AMANI (INDRAP)
Halima KAMAYE (CFCA)
Mariama SALIFOU (University of Niamey)
Alimata SIDIBE (University of Niamey)
Mary WHITE-KABA (SNV).

Furthermore CELHTO had a number of observers at the meeting:

Altine Ag ARIAS
Louis DACOURY-TABLEY
Aboubacar MAHAMANE
Mangoné NIANG
Oumarou ISSA

The simultaneous interpretation was by

Laouali Malam MOUSSA
F. C. QUASHIE

The UNESCO secretariat was represented by
Mr. E. A. AYANDELE (Regional Advisor for Culture in Africa)
Mr. C. FYLE (Specialist in African Languages, UNESCO Regional Office, Dakar)

After the opening session the experts appointed their bureau which was composed as follows:
Chairman: A. BAMGBOSE (Nigeria)
Vice-Chairman: K. SCHUBERT (Niger)
Rapporteur: N. NGUEFFO

The draft agenda, which had been preprepared, was discussed and adopted. The draft maps of language families and cross-border languages, as well as the accompanying commentary, both of which had been commissioned earlier by UNESCO and circulated beforehand, were presented by the Consultant, Mr Ben ELUGBE. The Consultant also animated the discussions throughout the Seminar.

2. Aims of the Seminar

This Seminar was to consider the issue of linguistic affinity and cross-border languages in Africa. It is UNESCO's feeling that a compilation of a list of cross-border languages can help in the promotion of inter-African cooperation. Such cooperation would be in areas such as the promotion of linguistic research and language description which are required if a clear picture of language classification in Africa is to emerge.

Other areas of possible cooperation include
- language standardization
- the use of cross border languages in national and inter-African communication in the print and electronic media
- the use of cross-border mother-tongues in education leading to the exchange of curricula, books, teaching materials etc. as well as cooperation in teacher training

It is also expected that this project will encourage and facilitate cooperation in research into, and development of, culture. Cultural aspects of cooperation would include the compilation of oral traditions, customs and beliefs, norms and standards of traditional society etc.; development of an African theatre, cinema etc. and book development in African languages.

It is known that the promotion of culture in this way is a necessary foundation for socio-economic development in Africa.

3. Draft maps and commentary

The commentary highlighted some of the causes of linguistic diversity in Africa and how this is partly responsible for the emergence of cross-border languages. It lamented the paucity of linguistic research and language description on the continent, saying that this was mainly responsible for current uncertainty in the classification of African languages. The presentation ended with a list of cross-border languages. A copy of the commentary and the maps is attached to this Report as Appendix 3.

4. Proposals

Following extensive discussion of the issues raised by the presentation, the experts came to the conclusion that a single linguistic map with all the practical information needed, no matter how simplified, would be too overloaded and therefore too difficult to read. On the other hand, although a comprehensive atlas would be the ideal, the experts thought that this would not be possible within the present limits of time and funds. As a compromise it was therefore decided to draw a map of each of the following:
- higher level genetic relationships
- the major cross-border languages
- the major languages in the countries of Africa.

In this connection the Seminar considered and decided against the production of regional or sectional maps because such maps would be repetitive, considering that the map of genetic relationships would not go beyond the main outlines of each phylum as detailed below, and the other two maps would not contain so many languages as to become unreadable.

The Seminar also proposed that in future further maps should be drawn (see section 5):
- of languages used in the media and
- of languages of education, both as subject and as medium.

Concerning the details of the map of genetic relationships, the Seminar decided to include in general the second level of sub-classification of the major phyla, and specifically in the case of Niger-Congo to use a compromise between Greenberg's 1963 and Williamson's 1989 classifications. This presentation is open to further refinements which may result from future research.

The Seminar recognised that pidgins and creoles, because of their very nature, would not fit into the map of genetic relationships. However, these languages would feature in the other two maps wherever they meet the criteria for identification.

As for the map of major cross-border languages, the Seminar considered the criteria to be used in identifying the languages, including:
- population
- actual use of language (broadcasting, literacy, etc.)
- government recognition
- geographic area.
The Seminar noted that similar criteria had been used by previous conferences on African languages (Niamey 1978, Ouagadougou 1978, Bamako 1979).

The list of languages identified by using these criteria is attached as Appendix 1.

Concerning the details of the map of major African languages, the Seminar used the same criteria to identify languages which are major whether or not they are cross-border languages. The list of languages so identified is attached as Appendix 2.

Thereafter the Seminar listed a number of tasks to be carried out before the next meeting. These include:
- preparation of the three draft maps
- preparation of the commentary to accompany the maps
- compilation of an alphabetic list of the languages to be entered on each map.

The commentary is to include a list of relevant sources whether actually used or not.

The Seminar agreed that the lists in Appendix 1 and 2 are not to be taken as final and that participants are requested to contact the consultant Prof. Elugbe with any additional relevant information. In particular the Seminar requested Mr. FYLE, the UNESCO Specialist in African Languages, to help with further information.

5. Recommendations for further action

The Seminar considered the necessity for further action and decided to recommend the following to UNESCO:
- the production of maps on language use. This would cover the Seminar's earlier proposal in section 4 above.
- a seminar on language use to tackle the whole issue of language use on the continent (particularly in education and the media),
- further language research, including the description of individual languages to sharpen the classification of African languages,
- to seek the cooperation of the OAU in encouraging African countries to embark on language survey projects aimed at precise censuses of languages within their borders and of the speakers of each.

6. Timetable

The Seminar set the date and venue for the next meeting as December 10 - 12, 1991 at CELHTO in Niamey.

7. Closing session

In his closing remarks the Chairman of the Seminar, Prof. Ayo BAMGBOSE, thanked the participants and the organizers. The representative of the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. AYANDELE, also thanked the participants for the work done and expressed his appreciation to CELHTO for hosting the Seminar.

The director of CELHTO, in his final remarks, congratulated everybody on the success of the Seminar and, in particular, the Seminar's Chairman for the high honour he received in his country recently when he won the Nigerian National Merit Award. He expressed the hope that the continent would benefit from Prof. BAMGBOSE's expertise, experience and wisdom.

Signed: Ayo BAMGBOSE) (Chairman)

Appendix 1: List of major cross-border languages

Akan
Bariba
Bemba
Beti-Fang
Bwamu-Boore
Cokwe-Lunda
Dagaari (Dagara)
Ewe
Fula (Pulaar, Fulfulde etc.)
Gbaya
Gulmancema
Hassaniya
Hausa
Herero
Kanuri
Kasem
Kikongo
Kinyarwaanda-Kiruundi
Kissi-Temne
Kiswahili
Kpelle
Kru
Lingala
Lwo
Maasai
Manding (Malinke, Bambara, Jula [Dyula])
Moore
Nama
Nguni-Xhosa-Zulu-Swati-Ndebele
Nyanja-Cewa
Oromo
Ruhaya
Sango
Senufo
Shona
Somali
Songhay-Zarma
Soninke
Tamasheq
Teda-Daza (Tubu)
Tonga-Tsonga
Tswana-Sotho
Venda
Wolof
Yoruba
Zande

The commentary will specify the countries in which these languages
are found.

Appendix 2: List of major languages

Angola:	Kikongo, Kimbundu, Umbundu
Bénin:	Fon-Ewe, Yoruba, Bariba
Botswana:	Tswana
Burkina Faso:	Moore, Jula (Dyula)
Burundi:	Kirundi
Cameroon:	Bamiléké (Fe'fe'-Ghomala), Peti-Fang, Fula (Fulfulde), Pidgin
CAR:	Gbaya, Sango
Chad:	Sara, Teda-Daza (Tubu)
Congo:	Kikongo, Lingala
Côte-d'Ivoire:	Jula (Dyula), Anyi-Baule
Djibouti:	Afar
Equatorial Guinea:	Fang
Ethiopia:	Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo
Gabon:	Fang
Gambia:	Manding (Malinke), Wolof
Ghana:	Ewe, Akan, Ga-Dangme
Guinea Bissao:	Crioulo
Guinée:	Malinke, Fula, Susu
Kenya:	Kiswahili, Kikuyu, Lwo (Luo)
Lesotho:	Sotho
Liberia:	Kpelle
Malagasy Republic:	Malagasy
Malawi:	Cewa
Mali:	Bambara, Fula (Pulaar, Fulfulde etc.)
Mauritania:	Arabic (Hassaniya), Fula (Pulaar)
Mauritius:	Créole (French), Bhojpuri
Mozambique:	? (but see map of cross-border languages, Appendix 3)
Niger:	Hausa, Songhay
Nigeria:	Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo
Rwanda:	Kinyarwaanda
Sénégal:	Wolof, Fula (Pulaar)
Sierra Leone:	Mende, Temne, Krio
Somalia:	Somali
Sudan:	Arabic, Dinka, Nuer
Swaziland:	Swati
Tanzania:	Kiswahili
Togo:	Ewe, Kabiye
Uganda:	Luganda, Luo (Lwo)
Zaïre:	Kiswahili, Lingala, Ciluba, Kikongo
Zambia:	Bemba, Nyanja
Zimbabwe:	Shona, Ndebele

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