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Table of Contents

Mother Language in the Early Years Education in Kenya: The Place and Role of Folklore	1
<i>1Boswell Owuor, 2Carolyn Omulando.....</i>	<i>1</i>
Mother language in its real element: The capacities of indigenous languages in national development.....	24
<i>Felicia Arudo Yieke</i>	<i>24</i>
Language Maintenance and its Role in Expanding Language Domains in Kenya with Special Reference to Kimeru.....	36
<i>John Kiriimi M'Raiji.....</i>	<i>36</i>
Mother Language as Repository of Culture and Identity: A Case of Classic Kiswahili Poetry	51
<i>Amiri Swaleh.....</i>	<i>51</i>
A Historical Analysis of the Mother Language Crisis in Urban Primary Schools in Uganda 1903-2007	67
<i>Priscilla Asiimire</i>	<i>67</i>
The Importance of Learning Materials in Mother Tongue Education in the Kenyan Competency Based Curriculum....	75
<i>Joyce Imali Wangia.....</i>	<i>75</i>
Social Media and Mother Tongue: An analysis of the use of Dholuo in Facebook.....	87
<i>Kashara Juma Erick</i>	<i>87</i>
Non-Equivalence and the Translatability of English Medical Discourse into Lukabarasi.....	103
<i>Benard Mudogo.....</i>	<i>103</i>
Towards Afrocentricism in Africa: Is Afro – Language an Antidote to Africans’ Double - Consciousness?	113
<i>Jeremiah Mutuku Muneeni</i>	<i>113</i>
Constitutionalism and Mother Tongue: The Contradictions in the Kenyan Justice System.....	123
<i>Henry Simiyu Nandelenga</i>	<i>123</i>
The Killer Languages of Kenya.....	141
<i>Kenneth K. Ngure.....</i>	<i>141</i>
African Indigenous Languages and Culture for Peace and Sustainable Development through Education.....	158
<i>Lucy Mandillah</i>	<i>158</i>

Mother Language in the Early Years Education in Kenya: The Place and Role of Folklore

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Abstract

In 1953, UNESCO made a pronouncement that stressed the importance of educating children in their mother language. Language is the vehicle that carries the folklore of a group of people expressed in myriad form, basically embodying the culture, which is the way of life of its speakers. Actually, language reflects the culture – beliefs and worldview of the folk that speak it. Folklore includes the traditional elements of the way of life of a group of people and the creative expressions developing naturally as part of this life. Examples of folklore include: folk songs, dances, tales and the resultant activities from their beliefs. Folklore encompasses a child's heritage and all the groups associated with the child such as family, neighbourhood, school, church, race, tribe and nationality. The most significant folklore to a child is that to which the child has the closest ties and closely relates to their worldview. Folklore has also been seen as a generic term that designates customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices and proverbs; in short the accumulated knowledge of a homogeneous unsophisticated people passed on through the generations by word of mouth. An emerging conceptualization of folklore as expressed by some scholars incorporates riddles, chants, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, greeting, leave taking formulas, drama (mime), folk medicine, names and nicknames among folklore. Language –especially one's mother language is the expression of both culture and the individuality of the speaker who perceives the world through language. Expert opinion, as expressed through literature on the significance of mother language notes that, it is the best and most natural means of self-expression. Therefore, this paper explores the opportunities available to teachers in early years' education (EYE) in Kenya as an avenue for establishing a strong education system that considers the wholesome education of a child by incorporating folklore personified in the mother language(s). This discourse is advanced from the backdrop of the benefits accruing as significant for both the personal development of the child and the larger society.

Keywords: Mother language, folklore, culture, early years' education, child development

Introduction

Why focus on folklore? Particularly in our contemporary and progressive society where the term conjures up thoughts of ignorant and backward people. This is the question that begs as we embark on our journey to explore folklore integration within EYE classrooms in Kenya today, with particular reference to the teaching of language and its use within the classroom setting. It is imperative at this point to mention that, communities in the present-day society are continuously grappling with elements of ethnic identity, seemingly striving to trace, understand and go back to their roots, more because they do not seem to have a concrete comprehension of who they are. Concepts like: self-cultural, self-ethnic and self-social awareness are represented by rather remote impressions when juxtaposed against existing realities. In reality, many people live within indefinite boundaries of exactly who they really are, and are consequently compelled to rethink, redefine and unmask their identities as they

relate to and within diverse social environments. Given this backdrop, a clear understanding of folklore is essential so that we provided a sound platform upon which carry on the conversation of the ideas in this paper.

The term "folk" insinuates people belonging to a group assigned certain shared features like religion, culture, traditions and language. However, whereas language is an element of folklore in its own right, it actually acts as the carrier and transmitter of the folklore from one generation to another. Essentially, folklore is typically contained and expressed in oral tradition – the spoken word or the oral language – which in reality is clothed in our mother languages. Barasa and Omulando (2019) conceptualize this form of oral linguistic representation as the “African idiom”, seen from a broad sense with different levels and forms of communication; with intertwined elements making up the whole: the tongue (the word) – which embodies creativity, artistry and symbolism – thus defining the communicative power of the African idiom. In addition, as expressed by Dundes, (1965) speech is a primary and productive skill of language as used by a specific community, and performs a very significant part in containing, carrying, transmitting and communicating the varied products of the experience and knowledge of the people and community. The spoken word not only encompasses the cognitive, cultural and social effects of the society/community, but also profiles the trends of that society/community. Thus, orality is the symbol of a people’s culture and identity. Borrowing from the thoughts of these authors, this all-encompassing sense of folklore, brings to light the fact that folklore is the key to the understanding of our cultural and identity realities. In essence, digging deeper into an understanding of folklore suggests an all-inclusive phenomenon that includes everything that is connected to human life and tells a story of a group of people and/or a community and their worldviews. In addition, it essentially represents all the categories of human culture including the spiritual and material components. It is the oral tradition often used as a tool of voicing our social realities, achievements and predicaments. This is because it constitutes the worldview of a particular language group of people or community expressed through their customs, beliefs, attitudes, life style, joys, sorrows, entertainments, events, states, habits, traditions and so forth. It is usually manifested in myths, legends, fairy tales, proverbs or sayings, idioms, riddles, tales, poetry, puns, anecdotes, jokes, dance, songs, epics and rituals along other forms of artistic expression like folk painting, artefacts like folk costumes and folk theatre. All these are preserved and passed down through their oral tradition.

Having soaked our minds with an understanding of the concept of folklore, what it entails, how it was practiced and how it was and is maintained, now it is more visible that the richness within it can be harnessed for learning purposes within Kenyan schooling environments. It is important to critically think about these possibilities because in most African countries as noted by Barasa and Omulando (2019) and Wangia, Furaha, and Kikech, (2014), the colonial languages are mainly used for official purposes and as languages of education. This is a situation which according to Orwenjo, Njoroge, Ndung’u, and Phyllis, Mwangi, (2014) (2014) has been fuelled by the highly multilingual state in Africa. This multiplicity of languages has created a number of challenges, especially in education, as many African countries draft and implement their language policies,” (p. 1). “... it is evident that many African countries still have to resolve many linguistic issues, (Wangia, Furaha, & Kikech, 2014, p. 11).

In our view, this would imply that mother languages, the carriers of folklore, have not been assigned defined roles within education circles, and if they have, their roles are being undermined, either deliberately or due to ignorance. Our support for integration of folklore in and for education is entrenched within the advocacy by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which has encouraged mother tongue instruction in primary education since 1953 (UNESCO, 1953, 2003 & 2008). It further commits to multilanguage education, emphasising the central role of mother language(s) as an integral part of formal education in achieving Education for All (EFA), (UNESCO, 2003, 2008) and advocates protecting children's indigenous languages for purposes of preserving the linguistic diversity, through bilingual education, (UNESCO, 2008).

The foregoing sentiments do not necessarily imply that, African countries have not made any efforts to bring on board African and mother languages in educational contexts. In very subtle ways, this has been done by highlighting their roles and value in the general society. Barasa and Omulando (2019) observe that, there is generally a great desire to uphold an African image by maintaining the sociocultural prestige that comes with the identification and use of indigenous African languages; the focus on indigenous languages basically, geared towards the development, promotion, and protection of the identity of various users. They further advance that, this is done with the aim of providing a platform upon which various indigenous language users can understand and appreciate their linguistic and cultural diversity and be able to promote homogeneity in the manner in which they relate. For example, narrowing down to the focus in this paper, in Kenya – it is noted in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, that the national language of the Republic is Kiswahili, while the official languages are Kiswahili and English. It is further noted that, “the State shall – promote and protect the diversity of language of the people of Kenya, and promote the development and use of indigenous languages (RoK, 2010, p. 14).

Drawn from this discussion, folklore is an embodiment of human culture, and human culture, clothed in language, thus the focus on mother languages. We ride on the certainty that culture is and can be communicated, strengthened and changed through language. Similarly, language can be used to as a tool to dominate, discriminate against, modify, and dislodge people's culture. Given these capabilities of language, we build our argument on the premise that folklore not only provides identify, but “elements of folk culture can also be tools of change in society because they have always been a part of the socialization of living beings”, (Pandey, 2019, p. 85).

It is from this platform of reason that folklore in the context of this paper, is viewed as a possible agent of change, being considered as an integral part of the education system – especially at the formative stages of learning – in order to equip the young learners with desirable values, morals, attitudes and spoken skills, and also be used as a basis for general language development. Folklore, which is carried in various forms/genres as already mentioned, is an efficient vehicle for language teaching because of its orality personality. Morgan-Fleming (1999, p. 274), observes that, “One body of literature that can be helpful in expanding our understanding of orality in classrooms is that of performance-centred folklore.” They are suitable for the child audiences, especially so because the words and forms used are usually very expressive and embody life due to their performative and educative nature.

These in essence have the added advantage of introducing young children to literature in forms that would easily appeal to the levels of their cognitive facilities and conceptualization of the environments in which they live. Ideally, folklore is clothed in the language of a people and enacts their life activities. Furthermore, as expressed by Taylor (2000), oral forms appeal to child audiences because of their relatively simple forms of language and a storyline with proper beginning, middle and end in the case of folktales. Also, despite their outwardly simple appearance, folktales in particular address themes and issues that are profound for all humanity. These touch on psychologically significant themes of honesty, kindness, generosity, jealousy, arrogance, greed and so forth- such themes can be significant for all ages and all humanity, making them suitable for language learners of all ages. Other forms of folklore such as songs are appealing since the learners are actively involved; short forms like proverbs and wise sayings appeal to the learners' intuition and this makes learning an enjoyable, joyful, simple and interactive process. Folklore have features of oral language which makes them suitable for oral face-to-face audiences as compared to other literary forms that may be in written texts such as novels or short stories which require more advanced language and cognitive skills.

Value of Mother Language in Society and Education

The clear study and understanding of mother language, by extension folklore, has several benefits that range from personal to societal. However, most importantly, in understanding and appreciating the folklore of our lineages, we develop a grasp of their culture from whence we sprung. Consequently, providing sound basis for the origin of our identity, rich folklore and mystic tradition and culture from an ancestry perspective, as we interrelate it to the modern world cosmopolitan culture(s). Certainly, folklore has been used and continues to be used as an instrument to cement and rebuild ageless beliefs, customs and rituals. Putman (1964) identifies several values as follows: because of its artistic nature, folklore can stimulate understanding and appreciation of many types of artistic expression; they provide pleasure and stimulation for development of imagination; promote desirable values that may last a lifetime in the individual.

In school contexts, Lwin (2015) advances that, folklore should be considered and explored for use in formal schooling. Folklore reveals the traditions, customs and culture of a speech community and transmits them through speech in spontaneous and natural functioning; and according to Putman, (1964) it reflects human nature, and pupils become aware of the universalities of human thought and activity and in this manner promote cohesion.

In addition, he avers that the effectiveness of an instructional program can be enhanced through enlightened use of folklore, primarily through the intellectual, emotional, artistic and social benefits it offers to the pupils and teachers. Further, if the school fails to utilize its local folklore resources, a portion of significant local cultural heritage may be lost. Finally, if the school does make intelligent utilization of its folklore resources, the instructional program will be more effective; the children and youth of each community may be enabled to find greater meaning and significance in their own lives: their creative and artistic talents will have additional opportunities for expression and development. Pupils will in effect be better equipped to understand and deal intelligently with those universal characteristics of human nature which affect the lives of people throughout the world. Generally:

Learners need to understand their origins and identity; linguistically and culturally through folklore. The characteristics of African folklore contribute towards learners' understanding of their culture and language. It can never be underestimated that the understanding of one's language is shaped by one's culture. Many folk texts are seen as a means of cultural expression from which valuable lessons about groups' differences and similarities may be learned, (Mzimela, 2016, p. 137).

Folktales provide meaningful, authentic comprehensible input in language learning situations, (Thi Hong Nhung, 2016). Since language is essential to understanding and can also be central to creating roles that different groups play in society, folklore can likewise be highly influential in initiating understanding relationships and encouraging an atmosphere of understanding, using classrooms as a platform of expression and delivery. In this regard, Lwin (2015) states that folklore, in its various forms, can be used in helping learners develop competencies in language; such forms can also be used as pedagogical resources in language classes. Such resources Putman, (1964) identifies as folk songs, dances and games which easily provide relief from formality and often produces improved attitudes toward school and school work – judicious use of folklore can help school work become more “alive” and more meaningful for the pupil. Based on these ideas, we posit that folklore has major benefits and can form a backbone for teaching English as a second language; this is especially so for the appreciation of literary texts such as novels, short stories and plays at later stages of learning. Generally, folklore content is a rich source of cultural history that provides a full range of colourful and interesting facts about peoples' culture, artefacts and places. We too can appreciate the study of folklore for its own sake, as Hymes, (1974) observes, that the study of folklore and its use may also provide a special opportunity for the development of folklore itself.

Folklore and Early Years' Education in Kenya

We have endeavoured to conceptualize the term 'folklore' capturing the various components that render it dynamic as defined within the unique boundaries of community specific worldviews. We further have highlighted its value in human communities, at the individual, societal and educational levels. Ingrained within these understandings, we now shift focus into a deeper understanding and interrogation of how folklore feeds into educational contexts with a view of inculcating desired values and morals among the learners, as already pinpointed in the preceding sections of this paper.

We begin by noting that Kenya as a people, through the Ministry of Education, have a great desire of producing an all-rounded learner at the end of each level of learning and cumulatively, at the end of school. This is intended should be achieved, not only through focusing on academic excellence but also providing opportunities for development of social skills, abilities, competencies and knowledge among the learners through a value – based education. The first and sixth, among the eight national goals of education in Kenya mirror these efforts. They state that education should be able to: first, foster nationalism, patriotism and promote national unity and second, promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures, (KIE, 2002). In this regard, Wamahiu (2017, p. 1) acknowledges that even though there is no subject called value--based education:

the teaching of values has been a critical part of the Kenyan school curricula since before independence in 1963. Rooted in various Kenyan ethnic cultures, value transmission was integral to indigenous education systems, inculcated throughout one's life and interwoven into the fabric of life and society.... formal education [has] reflected a concern for the teaching of values in Kenyan education curricula both during the colonial period, and after independence albeit reasons for their inclusion, the type of values prioritized and mode of delivery may have differed.

In order to put this into the perspective of this study, any educational context, the "... goals of education [should] seek to answer the question[s], "What purposes should the educational system seek to attain?" "What qualities of mind, what knowledge, skills, values, do we wish our learners to acquire?" The formulation of the goals of education is meant to specify more precisely, what qualities are thought most desirable to develop among the citizens of the country," (Mwaka, Kafwa, Musamas & Wambua, 2013, p. 151). This can only be attained through education enabling the learner to acquire a sense of nationhood and patriotism, promoting peace and mutual respect for harmonious co-existence.

Beside this, instilling in the learner appreciation of Kenya's rich and diverse cultural heritage, drawing them into valuing their own culture and being able to respect other people's cultures as well as embrace positive cultural practices in a dynamic society (KICD, 2017b). In the light of this, given the focus in this paper, our view is that, the national educational goals provide a perfect context within which to reflect upon the inherent linguistic and cultural benefits of consciously, intentionally, purposefully and functionally integrating folklore in EYE classrooms in Kenya. This thought is supported by Blyznyuk and Nafalska (2017, p. 156) who opine that, "Education through folk art has to attract students not only to their own folk culture but also other world cultures" ... "... because students get better acquainted with variety of customs, traditions and beliefs of the multicultural world through folk art," (p. 159). Besides, we focus the discussion in this paper on the EYE, as observed by Mzimela, (2016) because "it is at this stage where folklore as oral narratives and communication plays a pivotal role in developing learners' mother tongue ..." (p. 129), including "... the entire language development and also developing other basic literacy skills, (p. 136).

In Kenya EYE is a learning level that enrolls children of the ages between 4 – 8 years, and is covered at pre-primary for 2 years and lower-primary for 3 years, along the learning progression ladder, in the basic education framework, (KICD, 2017a).

At these levels of learning, two levels of integration of mother languages into the curriculum are highlighted as: medium of instruction and learning area referred to as, 'Indigenous Language Activities'. Specifically, it is stated that: mother language is a significant component in introducing children to formal education. In pre-primary education, "... the medium of instruction is the language of the catchment area," (p. 17), and in lower primary, 'Literacy' one of the learning areas "... shall be taught in the first language of the learner", (p. 22), and lastly, another learning area in lower primary the 'Indigenous language activities' will "... be carried out in the language of the catchment area," (p. 23), while in upper primary, 'Indigenous Languages' an optional learning areas will "... further develop the language skills acquired in lower primary ..." (p. 27). These references do not seem to directly highlight the actual place of Kiswahili, which is an African language, and equally carries the 'lore' – systems, beliefs and

attitudes among others, of its speakers – Kenyans and Africans – it has also become an invaluable means of cultural orientation and transmission. We note, reference to the language of the catchment area, insinuates the use of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction, to be utilised in cosmopolitan classrooms where there is a varied range of ethnic and cultural representations. At lower primary school level Kiswahili is taught as one of the three languages learning area referred to as Kiswahili Activities.

Looking beyond the national educational goals, our thinking is further stirred by six among nine of the general learning outcomes for EYE in Kenya, (KICD, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d). Our analysis of these learning outcomes as presented in the pre-primary one (PP1), pre-primary two (PP2) and lower primary education curriculum designs reveals that they embody the values embedded within folklore. It is stated that, by the end of early years' education, the learner should be able to: communicate appropriately using verbal and/or non-verbal modes in a variety of contexts; demonstrate appropriate etiquette in social relationships; apply creativity and critical thinking skills in problem solving, explore the immediate environment for learning and enjoyment; demonstrate the acquisition of emotional, physical, spiritual, aesthetic and moral development for balanced living; and lastly, demonstrate appreciation of the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage for harmonious co-existence. Therefore, we are of the strong opinion that, if teachers who are the actual curriculum implementers, wholly and correctly conceptualize the functions of the mother languages in the EYE curriculum, and the inherent interlink between mother languages and folklore, they will be able to harness the benefits engrained within folklore, first to attain the national goals of education, and second, the objectives of teaching at EYE level that are inclined to the inculcation of cultural values and morals.

In addition, we also take cognisance of the fact that, the many general learning objectives of teaching languages at EYE level through the three language activities learning areas will also be attained. This is because, the teachers will be in a position to determine language structures and items that can be learnt through the selected genres and forms of folklore. In this connection, for example: it is stated in the curriculum designs for lower primary, that the aim of teaching literacy skills is to equip the learner with basic skills in reading and writing to aid in all other subjects. It will assist the learner to communicate with others as well as promote learning to learn. The set of skills acquired will be useful in giving learners a head start in essential skills that they will carry throughout their lives. The knowledge acquired includes the ability to understand, respond to and use forms of written language to communicate in varied contexts are important to facilitate learners' understanding of English as a second language.

At the PP1 and PP2 levels of learning, through learning of language activities, the objectives state that the learner should be able to: develop appropriate listening skills from varied experiences to enrich their ability to communicate; express own opinions, ideas and feelings creatively freely and confidently in varied situations as they appreciate others; participate in conversation using appropriate verbal and non-verbal language in their everyday experiences; articulate letter sounds correctly in preparation for reading; develop appropriate reading readiness skills in varied learning experiences; and lastly, apply appropriate writing readiness skills in varied learning experiences.

At this point of the discussion, we should be able to appreciate that mother languages play a central role in the education setup in Kenya. As such, as noted in KICD, (2017a), mother tongue is a significant component of introducing children to formal education, all learning experiences of a learner being delivered in the mother language – the language of the catchment area. The use of mother language is a way of welcoming a learner to school at the pre-school level of learning.

Generally, mother language is praised for its ‘friendliness’ to such young learners since it takes advantage of their background experiences and culture to introduce them to formal learning and schooling. At this level also, there is emphasis on learning activities that sustain learners’ interest and augments well with the use of folklore since in order to sustain learners’ interest in the learning process and make learning successful, learning activities ought to be age appropriate (Gichuba, Opasta & Nguchu, 2009). Folklore, because it is carried in simple and child-friendly forms like songs, riddles, tales, among others, it therefore is an effective means of sustaining learners interest at such formative levels of learning and development. John Dewey (1859 – 1952), a re-known educationist argues for “participatory learning” and the use of folklore – songs, dance, riddling sessions, among others would enhance this aspect because the learners must be actively involved to make the use of folklore meaningful, foregrounding and taking advantage of the performative character of folklore.

The integration of folklore in the classroom is complimentary to the learning process because classrooms have been defined as oral in nature given the nature of interactions that take place during instruction. Morgan-Fleming (1999, p. 273) observes that “... teachers spend most of their workday talking...”, therefore in the context of this paper, they become the most appropriate channels through which oral traditions can be used for learning and also passed on to the young learners. Moreover, “... the students’ world also is oral. Children talk as they play with one another, ask questions of their teacher, take part in oral classroom performances such as the book report or show and tell, or in playground centred genre such as jump rope rhymes, taunting, joking, and confiding life’s truths learned so far.” (p. 273). The teachers in EYE level should be able to take advantage of the children’s oral personality to introduce and utilize different forms of folklore for learning purposes as defined by the national goals of education and learning outcomes at each level of learning at EYE.

Elements of Application of Folklore in Early Years’ Education in Kenya

In this paper we maintain that mother language is the source of folklore.

Thus, our reference to elements highlighted in the competency based curriculum (CBC) basic education framework (KICD, 2017a) that we consider would be achieved through the integration of folklore in the CBC at EYE level of learning. These are:

- a) “... language development during early years involves engagement in social and environmental activities that promote the learner’s ability to understand words and communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally,” (p. 17).
- b) “The essence of the language activity area is to develop oral, reading readiness and writing readiness competencies in order to lay the foundation for language acquisition,” (p. 17).

- c) “The aim of language activities at pre-primary school level is to enable learners to express themselves fluently. The purpose of teaching language at this level is also to assist learners to improve listening ability, concentration, understanding and memory,” (pp. 17 – 18).
- d) In lower primary a foundational level of learning, “... literacy aims at equipping the learner with basic skills in reading and writing to aid in all other learning areas. It will assist the learner to communicate with others as well as promote learning to learn,” (p. 22).
- e) Referring to learning of indigenous languages, it is noted that it, “... will enhance the acquisition of language and relevant vocabulary as well as the acquisition of foundational skills and knowledge in speaking, reading and writing in indigenous languages,” (p. 23).
- f) It is further noted that, “learning in a language the learners are familiar with will make it easier for them to construct their own understanding and look for meaning in their daily experiences, thus reinforcing their unique strengths,” (p. 23).
- g) In addition, “it is expected that learners will gradually acquire, construct, and use knowledge through the different learning levels. The skills and knowledge gained at this level will be a stepping stone to the next level of learning,” (p. 23).
- h) Building up from the knowledge gained at lower primary school learning, in upper primary through indigenous languages, learners will develop, “... positive attitudes and behaviours towards learning. ... and will provide a rich and supportive environment to enhance the development of their potential in indigenous language learning,” (p. 27).
- i) Furthermore, “... learning in a language they are already familiar with will give learners the required confidence to participate more actively in the learning process and think critically as well as imaginatively,” (p. 27).

More specifically, as highlighted in the curriculum designs for PP1 and PP2 levels of learning, (KICD, 2017c & 2017d), each of the five learning activity areas have been assigned clearly stipulated general and specific learning outcomes which we strongly believe, in the context of the ideas presented in this paper, can selectively be achieved by integrating folklore through mother languages. In the curriculum designs it is emphasized that during the curriculum delivery process, through all the learning experiences that the young learner will be exposed to, the teachers should endeavour to have the following achieved: first, acquisition of specific core competences: communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, imagination and creativity, citizenship, learning to learn and self-efficacy. Second, learning through integration of pertinent and contemporary issues into the curriculum design to prepare learners for the ever-changing society specifically in order to address the changing needs of the society and ensure the learner’s safety.

These include: life skills development through storytelling, living values, moral values and social responsibility. Third, holistic development of the learner which:

... can be achieved by embracing the thematic integrated learning approach which is ideal for teaching learners in their formative stage of development. The themes are derived from things and situations that learners are likely to interact with in everyday life. Each theme is expected to cut across all the activity areas. Learning at the pre-primary level is expected to be flexible hence

a theme may be interrupted to enable learners use an emerging situation as the learning theme for the period, (KICD, 2017c, p. x & KICD, 2017d, p. ix).

Specifically drawing from the concept of thematic integrated approach, teachers at EYE level should be in a position to appropriately select and apply the wide range of folklore to ensure that the desired skills, abilities and competencies are acquired and learnt by the young learners across all the activity learning areas. In this respect, Ashokan (2014, p. 51) acknowledges that “thematic units greatly enhance learning because they integrate different intelligences and topics into a single lesson which mirrors how young children actually learn.” In addition, delineating the values of the thematic approach in the instruction in early childhood education, he observes that the:

Thematic Approach is a way of teaching and learning, whereby many areas of the curriculum are connected together and integrated within a theme. It allows learning to be more natural and less fragmented than the way where a school day is time divided into different subject areas whereby children practice exercises frequently related to nothing other than what the teacher thinks up, as he or she writes them on the chalk board. It allows literacy to grow progressively, with vocabulary linked and with spelling and sentence writing being frequently, yet smoothly, reinforced, (p. 49).

Application of Folklore in Classroom Contexts

There are several genres of folklore that are significant in the development of language skills and creativity of learners. The most basic language skills, listening and speaking can be enhanced by the use of oral forms, which is the basic form in which folklore is stored and carried. Besides, as already mentioned, children’s world is created and woven around orality, therefore they best learn through listening and speaking accompanied by doing, and all these are perfectly displayed and experienced through oral tradition forms. In this particular paper, we present only two genres of folklore from the Luo and Luhya communities, Nilotic and Bantu speaking groups respectively, that are found in the western parts of Kenya. In order to contextualize the classroom applications, we also provide definitions and explanations of the selected folklore forms.

Features of Folktales

Thi Hong Nhung (2016, p. 23) defines a folktale as “a story, myth or legend forming part of an oral tradition, does not have a single, identifiable author or writer and is or was passed down from one generation to the next.” In addition, Lwin (2009, p. 69) provided a more elaborate description that, “folktales in general are part of folk literature, which is more widely referred to as folklore. They can be classified as one of the categories of folk storytelling.

Many folklorists have labelled myths, legends and folktales, as major narrative genres in folklore... Simply put, a folktale is a traditional story that has been passed on by word of mouth.” First, we notice that the folktale is communally owned and its content is derived from the tradition of that community. In addition, “The narrative structure of a tale can be regarded as the form, its social purpose the function, and its content the field,” (Lwin, 2009, p. 70).

However, despite these universal features, Lwin (2015) notes that studies of narrative and its structures have made a distinction between the narrative content (often referred to as the

“what” or story elements) and the varying manner in which the story is told (often referred to as the “how” or discourse features – actual words and grammatical patterns). The “what” or story elements are said to have the possibility of “total transfer” from one medium to another and from one language to another, whereas the “how” or discourse features used in an actual presentation of the story will vary (Toolan, 2001). Basically, “a folktale can change over time, be reshaped by modifications and was often changed with each retelling. As a result, there can be various versions of the same folktale,” (Thi Hong Nhung, 2016, p. 23). If we take the well-known story of ‘Cinderella’ as an example, there exist the English, French, Native American and Japanese accounts. We also advance that Luo, Luhya and many other versions of the story are to be found in the Kenyan native languages – albeit with different setting(s), characters and discourse features, nonetheless, maintaining a similar story line and the underlying thematic concern(s). We have given the Luo version in this paper; its title is “In Search of Husbands.” According to Propp (1968), all these versions share more or less the same fundamental event sequence. Further, the reward/punishment storyline found in folktales from different cultures is a common phenomenon (Lwin, 2009). In this type of narrative, one of the two characters was good natured, performed the tasks or tests with humility, honesty or other moral qualities successfully, and was rewarded. The other character was bad tempered, failed in the similar tasks or tests, and was punished. Lwin (2009, 2015) summarizes the fundamental event sequence of narrative structure in such types of tales as follows:

Protagonist A: Task → Success → Reward

Protagonist B: Task → Failure → Punishment

Such a constructive narrative structure is to be found in Myanmar folktales, for example: ‘The Golden Crow’ (Maung, 1948, Lwin, 2010); Korean folktales, for example: ‘Hungbu and Noblu’ (Grayson, 2002); Medieval Arabic folktales, for example: ‘Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves’ (Drory, 1977); among others. Such a structure is to be found in many Luo tales including ‘In Search of Husbands’ (Onyango-Ogutu & Roscoe, 1974) and among the Luhya group of speakers, *Nashikufu* and many more. What these examples show is that different cultures may use different tasks or tests for the characters; nevertheless, the underlying message is of what are morally or ethically right, what is wrong and the consequences of actions, and the use of contrastive narrative structure to render such messages proves to be the same (Lwin, 2010). Besides, “folktales of a culture are usually preserved as part of a long folk tradition reflecting the humour, romance and wisdom of the people in the culture,” (Lwin, 2009, p. 69). This resonates well with the message that folklore/folktales are universal in their ideology and intentions; as such folklore should be encouraged not only for their educational and social value, but also for their aesthetics and entertain value.

Example of using a folktale in a classroom situation

Below is an example of a folktale from the Luo community, a Nilotic speaking language group found in the western part of Kenya along the shores of Lake Victoria. The title of the folktale is – **In search of husbands** – translated from Dholuo spoken by the Luo community

Long ... long time ago ... a group of girls once set out to look for husbands. But there was one among them infinitely more lovely than her friends; and they all, in their hearts, knew it. As they travelled along they met a party of their own people and asked them, “People of ours, do you think we are all beautiful?” Where- upon the reply came, “Ee, indeed you are, but there’s one among you more beautiful than the rest.”

These words fired the jealousy of the unfavoured girls, who discussed what they should do with their lovelier companion. They decided to change her into a smoking- pipe, and this they did at once. Further along the road they met more people who asked the girls where they were going. "We're looking for somewhere to cook," they replied. "Don't we strike you as beautiful?" "Ee, you do," the people replied, "but that smoking- pipe is lovelier than you all. If only it had been a girl...!" and saying this, they continued on their way.

With the fire of jealousy now raging in their hearts, and with yet another band of folk approaching, the girls changed their rival into a calabash, convinced that their beauty must surpass so square and ugly vessel. "Dear friends," they said, as the party approached, "how do we look? Aren't we all ravishing?" but the familiar reply came back. 'Ee,' they agreed, "you are lovely, but had that calabash been human it would have been more lovely than you all."

Still dissatisfied, they now turned the girl into a *mbiru*, the brown pot with the big mouth. Meeting more travellers, they asked yet again, "Aren't we all beautiful?" "Ee," came the reply, "indeed you are, but that pot has a special beauty. If it were human, it would be fairer than you all."

Their anger mounting, the jealous creatures now changed their victim into a dog- a wretched animal, thin and stingy, its eyes flowing with pus, like scum on a stagnant pool. There was never seen so mean and ugly a creature. Meeting yet another band of travellers, they asked their familiar question, "Good people, doesn't our beauty impress you?" But again the answer was disappointing. "It does indeed," they said "but if that dog was a girl her beauty would defy description."

At a loss for new ideas, the girls left their friend as a dog and continued on their way. Arriving among the clan where they hoped to find husbands, they found all the young men had left to go hunting. Not a single youth was in sight. Instead, they were welcomed by eager mothers, who broke up the party to secure a girl for their sons. Soon the square was deserted. Only the dog remained. No one wanted it. It stood there lonely, its tail between its legs.

Now it happened that Obong'o's mother was in her garden when the girls arrived, and heard the news later than her friends. She hurried to the square only to find the wretched weeping dog. "What shall I do?" she asked in her heart, "now all these beauties have been taken. Obong'o will kill himself when he finds out."

She stood for a while, deep in thought, before deciding- for no good reason at least to take the dog home. "It will keep the hens from the corn," she told herself, "and can watch the house when I'm away."

When Obong'o returned he asked to see the girl his mother had chosen. His face grew stormy as his mother told her story until finally his anger broke loose and he kicked out savagely at the dog, shouting hysterically and demanding, "Mama, why couldn't you bring me a girl like all the other mothers did for their sons?" But she could only insist again that she had arrived too late and had found only the dog. She strove to console him saying, "Don't cry, my son, you'll find a lovely girl of perfect manners and behaviour. Of this I'm sure."

Next day, Obong’o went hunting again. His mother spread out some corn to dry, some millet for bread and some finger millet for porridge. Then she went off to work in her garden. As soon as she was gone, the dog discarded its skin and resumed the shape of a girl – a girl of dazzling beauty who gently took the millet and begun to grind it, singing:

Giloka kwesi giweya
Giloka agwata giweya
Giloka mbiru giweya
Ndhi Ndhi pala.
Dhako nokwanya
Dhano kanobed jahawi
Ndia Ndhia pala
Dhako nokwanya
Dhano kanoneye lenya.
Giloka agwata giweya
Giloka mbiru giweya
Giloka kwesi giweya

(Among my age mates I am the loveliest, the one whose charm lights jealous fires. The victim, alas, of desperate rivals. The one they changed to a smoking-pipe, a calabash, a beer pot, and a dog. Good fortune will grace the woman who chooses me for her son’s wife. She will rejoice in me, for her son’s wife. She will rejoice in me, for I am the shining one with the smooth ochre skin, the girl who can work as well as love.)

With the millet ground, she took the flour into the house and resumed her dog skin, curling up on the floor by the millstone. On her return Obong’o’s mother was astonished to find the corn ground and flour stored neatly in the granary. “What can this mean?” she asked. “Has the devil sent me a dog that can grind corn like this and carry the flour into the house? I’ll cook my food and eat it. If I die, it must be the devil’s work. If I survive, I’ll know it’s an earthly creature at work.”

She waited for Obong’o to return and they ate together, with no effect appearing. At bedtime, Obong’o was told to take the dog to his hut to protect him against evil- doers; but he refused saying that his mother should keep the foolish beast near her; and so the dog curled up near the fireplace close to where Obongo’s mother slept.

Next morning mother and son went about their daily tasks, Obong’o going to hunt and his mother spreading out her grain to dry in the sun. The lovely maiden waited until the grain had dried and then, once more, ground it all, singing as she worked:

Giloka agwata giweya
Giloka mbiru giweya
Giloka kwesi giweya.....

Her task complete, she stored the flour, returned the millstone, and returned to her dog skin; but this time not before she had also split and stacked a good supply of firewood. The mother on her return was once more astonished. “What is this thing that grinds and stores all I have

out to dry," she asked, "and even splits my firewood? I'll cook and eat. If there's evil here, I'll die. If it's good, I'll survive."

The mystery long remained unsolved. Obong'o's mother mentioned it to him, but he could offer no explanation, merely remarking that he always came back at sunset and saw nothing. Finally, his mother thought of a plan. "Tomorrow," she said, "neither of us will go out. Instead we'll watch the house." And so the next day, when Obong'o took his spear and club and his mother had spread out the grain, they pretended that a normal day was starting. Obong'o set off towards the forest and mother with her and pipe hobbled towards the garden. But soon they both turned in their tracks, crept back through the bush and concealed themselves near the house.

It was not long before the girl shed her skin, took the grain from the mats, and begun to grind it, singing sweetly to herself:

Giloka agwata giweya
Giloka mbiru giweya
Giloka kwesi giweya.....

Mother and son were amazed to find that their ugly dog was in truth a lovely maiden, and they dashed from their hiding place to seize her. She struggled hard, begging them to release her and return her skin. But Obong'o snatched this up in disgust and flung it away in the forest. Trying now to calm her, and speaking to her in gentle tones, the mother asked, "In truth, daughter of someone, you are a lovely girl, why do you make yourself repulsive like this?" The girl could only reply with hysterical sobbing. But at last they were able to quiet her. Sobbing over, and anger cooled, she was persuaded to remain with her hosts. It was indeed good fortune had graced the hearth of Obong'o and his mother with so lovely a girl.

Now interest in the husband-seekers still ran high. Young men argued hotly, each insisting he had secured the best girl himself. It was decided; therefore, that a competition be held to decide which girl cooked the best porridge.

On the appointed day, Obong'o's girl washed her brown pot and ground her finger millet fine. She cooked her porridge, poured it into her pot, and scoured so vigorously the calabashes from which it would be dunk that the vessels shone like the sun. It happened that her rivals took their porridge in ordinary pots; and the calabashes they brought were very dirty. The youths refused to take what they served, telling them hotly to carry home all they had prepared for the competition. However, they gladly drank the porridge cooked by Obong'o's girl, finding the vessels clean and their contents delicious.

Returning home, the youths quarrelled with their mothers, each one demanding, "Mama, why didn't you bring me that dog of Obong'o's instead of this ugly dirty girl who can't even cook porridge or clean a calabash?" Obong'o of course went home rejoicing. He married his lovely girl and they lived happily ever after.

Tinda

We suggest for a more logical lesson presentation, the teacher and learner activities derived from the oral narrative/folktale should be modelled on conventional reading or listening

comprehension lesson presentations that are usually accomplished in three main stages: before, during and after reading/listening/narration activities. Before the narration the teacher could engage learners in prep-reading/listening activities that to prepare the learners for the listening/reading activity by helping them to set a context for the narrative, think about what they know about a topic of the text or narrative and predict what they will read or listen to, and arouse interest. The teacher could pre-teach new words to familiarize them with the unknown vocabulary, engage them in brainstorming, answering pre-prepared questions related to the topic of the narrative, identifying what they know in relation to the title and pictures of the narrative, guessing what the story is about from the title and pictures and presenting a video related to the story, among others.

In the course of narrating the folktale, pupils would be engaged in while-reading/listening activities, that form the main task the listening/reading session aimed at helping the learners to focus on specific elements of the text/story and to understand it better. The teacher should guide learners to put to use their memory, critical listening and critical thinking skills, since they are very helpful in the comprehension process. The teacher's aims should be to help the learners to deal with the challenges of certain linguistic elements of the mother language though keen listening/reading. Examples of activities that can be used to accomplish this include: identification of topic sentences or lead sentences in the story line, and the main idea of paragraphs or sections of the story; distinguishing between general and specific ideas or sections of the story; identification of parts of the story or words that provide the linkage in the plot events, these could be connectors and transition words or phrases; making predictions about next action in the story based on the flow of events experienced. The teacher could actively engage the learners through singing the song therein and responding to narration questions/cues. They also should be encouraged to non-verbally engage with the narrator to enhance interaction during the process, and for the teacher to ensure that each learner is on board. This could be done through, clapping hands at the right time, nodding the head in agreement or disagreement, and appropriately responding to the moods evoked by the narrative for example smiling and laughing, and frowning and so on.

After the during listening/reading session, the teacher should engage learners in activities for post-listening/reading. These are aimed at helping the learner to understand the narrative/text further through critical analysis of what they have heard/read or to provide personalization of the story/text.

The activities utilized should help the learner be able to integrate the narrative/text content into their real-life situations in order to keep the authentic elements of language use as expressed in the mother language(s). **Examples of activities for learners would include: short and creative discussions in small groups based on guides from the teacher;** asking learners to think and come up with the continuation of the story, they could consider changing some traits of the main characters, introducing a new character and provide an imaginative account of how the storyline would build up through specific events or episodes.; engaging the learners in enacting or reciting or role playing sections of the story that render themselves to performance, and lastly, the teacher asking **learners** to prepare some few questions about what they read, then they can ask each other; asking learners to tell similar **stories to the one they listened to or read.**

The foregoing ideas provide theoretical and general guidance to the teacher, however, the points presented here below capture some real examples of how the teacher could engage with the narrative presentation:

- a) They could engage in retelling the narrative or parts of the story, for instance where the girls meet different groups who marvel at the beauty of the smoking pipe or calabash, describing certain episodes and answering other questions on plot, activities in the story, seasons in the story among others.
- b) They could also respond to comprehension tasks – the questions should be presented from simple ones that require recall to those that require inference depending on the cognitive level of the learners. Such could include what the girls were looking for; what people they came across, were doing; the probable age of the girls; why *Obong'o's* wife emerged the winner of the cooking competition, among others. Other questions that could be asked are: Why do you think 'millet' was featured in the tale? Why not maize or bread? Why do you think a smoking pipe and calabash were chosen? Why do you think a dog was used and not a cat? What economic activities do the people in the narrative engage in? What social activities do we find the people in the narrative engaged in?
- c) They could enact performable portions of the story, for instance where the girls come across people working and they tell that they are looking for a place to cook; or where the young men were quarrelling their mothers for not choosing on *Obon'go's* wife or the dialogue sections of the story – this could be done either during the presentation or after
- d) At varying levels of task difficulty determined by learner age and cognitive abilities, the narrative could be used for tasks on development of vocabulary, synonyms and grammar. These are given at the end of the narration. They could also be asked to rewrite the narrative as a news story.
- e) Learners could also be asked the moral lessons in the story. Such may include: avoidance of jealousy, commitment to work, love for animals, among others.
- f) They could also identify the cultural practices and social economic activities of the community in the story is told. Further to this, other tasks could involve learners comparing the cultural activities in the narrative with their own; discussion on socio-economic activities such as communal work, farming, marriage, among others.
- g) For advanced learners answer questions on character and characterization, and rewriting the story as a news story.
- h) Repeated or parallel sequences of events in folktales are useful for providing learners with opportunities to become familiar with syntactic structures which are used more than once to describe these repeated or parallel sequences of events in a tale. Some examples of parallel structures in the narrative include: the corn ground and flour stored; she cooked her porridge, poured it into her pot and scoured so vigorously the calabashes; begging them to release her and return her skin, etc.

With the teacher playing the role of facilitator, folklore in its various forms is also vital for speech skills development. This is especially so since the learners are actively involved in narration, singing and reciting. Challenging sounds – whether single consonants or consonant clusters – are learnt easily in an informal, easy, relaxed and playful atmosphere. Desirable attitudes could as such be developed if the narratives are used appropriately in character and value development. For the older learners, after listening to a tale like *Man Must Dig* or *Hawk*

and Crow (Onyango-Ogutu & Roscoe, 1974) or any other popular tale, can be asked to rewrite it as a news story – a news story typically has the most important event on the top with less important information in the background. Therefore, like other forms of literary texts, folktales can be used for demonstration to language learners, the importance of language forms and structures such as – vocabulary, syntactic structure and organization of texts – to create a particular effect in meaning to achieve a specific communicative purpose. More importantly, effective learning to be achieved, the learning tasks, activities and exercises must be pitched at the cognitive developmental level of the young learners.

Luhya Folklore – Short Forms

In this section, we focus on analysis of folklore short forms drawn from the Luhya, a Bantu speaking language group found in the western part of Kenya. They comprise one of the largest language ethnic groups in Kenya.

Features of Folklore Short Forms

Folklore short forms usually take different structural forms, however the main defining feature is that they are short in length and tend to use condensed words to pass across deep meanings. Sometimes, they are statements or questions that have indirect or under laying meaning, put forth as a puzzle to be solved, for example the riddles. They are concisely written or spoken linguistic expressions that are particularly memorable because of their meanings, and generally symbolic in nature. Thus their content is predominantly clothed in figurative, metaphorical or allegorical language. They derive their content from everyday happening, that expresses certain truths based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. Their aim is always to expose certain evils, bad or good societal elements, but more importantly they focus on teaching of values and morals based on respective cultural foundations. Generally, these short forms of folklore act as tool of to initiate and enhance life-skills development, social control, explanation of certain societal phenomenon, entertainment, educate and language development. For instance, tongue twisters can be used for training in speech sounds where various consonants are emphasized. They can also be used to impart certain morals, values and cultural practices.

Just like the Luo, the Luhya also have various forms of folklore, however, for the lack of space we identify two forms of short form Luhya folklore – ‘proverbs’ and ‘sayings’ – which are among other short forms found in the community. Illustrations of these are demonstrated in the short forms below from the Luhya community language:

- a) *Oyoyo yayia meno*
- b) *Niwenya oteba etebo oteba otie?*
- c) *Otubeba tubiri tulia tuingire mutwina twabwe*
- d) *Amatsi kakhulukusia akalakhulukusirianga*
- e) *Okwe tsindaya okworera are*

Translated, the above mean the following- respectively:

- a) *Oyoyo* -a character- *burnt his teeth*

For being greedy or hurrying with his food.

- b) *If you want to ask a question you ask how/how do you ask?*
How does one ask a question. Strong emphasis on the consonant sounds /t/and/b/
- c) *Those two mice entered into their holes.*
Strong emphasis on the consonant /t/ and accompanying syllables /otu;/tu/ and /tw/
- d) *Water flows where it never flows*
 A flood will flow along a path it never follows.
- e) *That which produces sparks you warm yourself far from it.*
 It is used to caution against bad company.

Based on these short forms, the teacher and learner activities would include:

- a) The sounds in bold will be emphasized for development of speech are resultant speech organs.
- b) The learners would engage in recitation, accomplished in a continuous manner – usually in one breathe without a significant break in between the words. These are invaluable not only for language development but also for social training of values held in high esteem by the community to which they belong.
- c) Actually, in the presentation of such forms, learning is seen as part of play and this motivates learners to use their mother language. Because these forms are in the learners’ mother language, they are an efficient way of welcoming the learners to formal school since school is perceived as an extension of home learning.
- d) Further, they pass on the *lore*- the culture of the people.

Generally, in using folklore in its various forms whether short forms – such as riddles, proverbs, wise sayings or tongue twisters; or long forms such as narratives – fables, trickster stories, monster stories; poems, among others, it must be appreciated that in the foundational stages of education, play an important role in orientation of learners into formal schooling. Due to their orality character, they are also a means of ushering in written literary texts at advanced levels of learning since folklore helps in development of language skills, comprehension, problem solving and critical thinking skills. In addition, folklore is inherently performative and therefore features of an oral performance are vital in understanding their meaning and learners feeding into its entertainment quality. This implies that the teacher must always work from the knowledge that performance of any kind, determined by the folklore form being used in class, must be part of the instructional activities, for both the teacher and learners.

In addition, the teacher should pay attention to specific learner language needs in order to also draw on the full linguistic benefit from the narrative by including short speaking, reading and writing activities whenever possible during the listening sessions. The focus of the lesson is listening to the story or any other folklore form, but having diverse lesson activities enable learners to have a balanced learning of other language structures and skills as well as building their language rapporteur and confidence. The teacher should pay attention to go through word recognition by allowing learner opportunities to recognize written or spoken words; comprehension process by allowing the learners to read the folklore text, narrate the story, recite the oral poetry or other folklore short forms. through this activity, where the learner should be able to express fluency, that is, reading or orally producing the text accurately and quickly. After that the teacher should give the learners time for processing the folklore text by providing interpretation and assigning it meaning.

Implications for Integrating Folklore in Early Years' Education

The general presentation in this paper has revealed that the benefits of using folklore for and in learning cannot be underestimated. Further, we have highlight and underscored the fact that folklore is oral in nature, thus the reference to folklore as oral tradition of a people. Whereas, not all folklore is inherently oral, we take cognisance of the fact that, its transmission through generations is principally achieved orally. It has been argued that classroom activities are orally oriented. Both teachers and learners engage in a lot of oral interactions, and besides, the children's sphere of expression is wrapped around orality, thus our inclination that folklore should easily and perfectly fit into classroom discourse as an instructional tool. Although the teacher has the latitude to work within the boundaries of an already orally oriented classroom, Morgan-Fleming (1999, p. 273) notes that "one important function of schooling is the connection of the child's oral world to the literate world of past knowledge and narrative." [However in] making such a connection, thought and written text are certainly important, but a classroom in which print and thought existed without the mediation of the spoken word would appear strange to most educators." In this regard, upholding to the notion of integrating indigenous languages into the classroom, UNESCO (2008) highlights that the process needs serious efforts to make sure that learners can be educated in their mother tongue.

Whereas this may pose a challenge amid the possibilities and practicability of integrating folklore into classroom environments, "... lessons on folk tales, when properly organized might be the right place for not only effective language learning but also learning moral values," (Blyznyuk, & Nafalska, 2017, p. 160). It is for this reason that we emphasize that integration of folklore in the classroom must be implemented with a lot of cautiousness since a number factors could impede the teachers' efforts and desires of imparting certain skills, competencies, values and morals among the young learners. Given this background, the following provide a background on the implications of integration of folklore and would as well act as guiding points for the ministry of education and the teachers teaching at EYE level in Kenya:

- a) Based on the CBC basic education Framework (KICD, 2017a), integration of elements of folklore should principally be accomplished through the use of mother languages either as a medium of instruction or as a learning area.
- b) The objectives to be attained and intended learning outcomes as outlined (KICD, 2017b, 2017c & 2017d) should be the main guide to which genres of folklore can be utilized and how they should be manipulated for effectiveness. In actual classroom situations, it is imperative that the choice of folklore is made according to the lesson objectives of the particular lesson. It implies that the teacher should therefore be very objective and also selective as regards the type and complexity of the folklore form selected. The form selected ought to be according to the learners' mental development levels in order for them to comprehend and appreciate it. If the teacher fails to tailor his/her choice of folklore according to the teaching objectives, the use of folklore may not provide appropriate and desired learning experiences.
- c) Teachers at EYE level of learning should be creative and innovative enough to deliberately and consciously incorporate elements of folklore within their classrooms and in other school activities in order to reap the myriad linguistic, social, psychological, cultural and entertainment benefits accrued with its integration into the written curriculum. Thi Hong Nhung, (2016, p. 24) notes that as a result of their exposure to

folktales “... stories, legends and fairy tales have become an important part of children’s intellectual life and for many provide an indispensable part in the process of growing up.”

- d) Teachers should also be equipped with the relevant teacher pedagogical knowledge to be able to appropriately utilise the values based and thematic integration approaches to teaching for young learners as envisaged, at macro-level in the national goals of education, and at a micro-level, in the CBC basic education framework. It should be focused on the appropriate teaching methods and on the improvement of literacy practices in the classroom.
- e) There is a need to have authentic instructional materials for both the teacher and learners, one that embodies the diverse and expansive oral tradition repertoires of Kenyan cultural expressions in form of language use, and the folklore content.
- f) The teachers involved at EYE level of learning should make efforts to expose themselves to a range of oral tradition forms and culture in order to increase their orientation to the understanding and appreciation of, not only the beautiful, rich yet diverse Kenya cultures but also to the other world folklores.

Furthermore, it is imperative that teachers appreciate that apart from formal schooling where the use of folklore is significant, they should consciously and intentionally take advantage of integration of folklore as a learning tool through other educationally inclined spaces. Examples of such opportunities would include:

- a) Presentations of folklore inclined content over local radio and television stations programs, specifically tailored for children within the Kenya local context. Such programs have been designed with inclinations for friendly atmosphere with regard to their manner of presentation through singing, riddling, using tongue twisters that are aimed at enhancing certain sounds and speech skills, instilling certain values among others.
- b) Learners’ participation in ministry of education music and drama festivals would provide rich sources of folklore. These co-curricular activities are rich in the nature of folklore displayed and experienced as aspects of formal education in form of poetry, folk and cultural songs and dances. This is made possible since, apart from entertainment, they convey the peoples’ culture and in this way communicate the experiences, way of life and unique knowledge of the community.
- c) Field trips/visits to historical sites, museums, attending traditional/cultural ceremonies that embody folklore through singing and dancing like: burial, wedding, circumcision, and child naming ceremonies among others.
- d) Fieldtrips of visiting homes of the elderly who may engage in singing and dancing, or story-telling, talk about or demonstrate a skill or a cultural practice like playing of games, playing of musical instruments and making of handicrafts. They may also recollect history through narrations about the community regarding different activities and events like names of places and people and their meaning, planting and harvesting seasons, war and victory events, marriage ceremonies among others.
- e) Pupils can study their local history by engaging in a number of activities, these would include: singing and dancing, playing musical instruments, engage in storytelling, play games, do some weaving and make other handcraft work among others. They may also

start a collection of people and place names, songs or folk sayings and language expressions peculiar to the community or locality within which the school is set. They can make a collection of their explanations, meanings and origin(s). In this way, pupils learn generalities that apply to all people; learn relationships between man and his environment.

Such activities and opportunities, offer learners cultural interactions that are significant in moral and value building, peacebuilding, reconciliation of our hopes, fears and aspirations, building of and appreciation of varied identities, and lastly, building of national cohesion and development. In addition, they are able to learn about the relationship between man and the environment – creating understandings and appreciations of why their forefathers lived as they did –not for lack of intelligence but adaptation. Lastly, they will grow into human beings and citizens who are more tolerant to other communities’ way of life, their own and those of their families. All these elements resonate very well with one of the goals of education in Kenya creating cultural awareness and promoting national unity.

We can sum the efforts and implication of integrating folklore in EYE in Kenya, through the words of Blyznyuk, and Nafalska, (2017, p. 160) who advance the idea that:

taking everything into account it has to be stated that incorporating folk art into primary English language lessons is a demanding but valuable undertaking. Clearly, careful choice and well-prepared tasks do play an important role in sustaining motivation for language learning and it leads to greater exposure to the target language and gives opportunity to learn about other cultures.

Conclusion

The presentation of this paper has boldly drawn our attention to contexts in which the teaching of and use of mother language is advocated for and encouraged in the implementation of the CBC in Kenya. Besides this, it has also provided a background to broad and sound understanding of the nature of folklore and how it can be integrated into classroom situations not only for the benefits of language learning but learning across the curriculum. In that breath, we take cognisance of the orality nature of folklore as an immediate enabling factor in its integration into classroom environments. We recognise that, “realizing the centrality of orality to schooling can help bridge the gap between theory and practice as the day-to-day world of schools becomes more clearly defined and understood,” (Morgan-Fleming (1999, p. 288).

In light of this, whereas this presentation has highlighted the values of integrating folklore in and for education, much is demanded of the implementers in order for a breakthrough to be realized, and we begin reaping the benefits of mother language within our schooling system in Kenya as envisaged in the CBC. Consequently, embracing folklore in education – for learning, and for education – learning to learn, requires attention to be given to teachers’ empowerment and capacity building since they are at the core of curriculum implementation. The areas of focus should be: one, development of relevant teaching and learning materials, two, practical guidance for the teachers on the everyday implementation of mother use and teaching in EYE level, three, teachers’ move away from linguistic prejudices and identities that engender segregations resulting from boundaries created along various ethnic languages in Kenya. Barasa and Omulando, (2019) highlighting the elements in the beauty in the African Idiom

argue that, despite the differences, through various ethnic languages expressed in the African idiom of expression, both cultural divergence and convergence should be harnessed for harmonious living. Taking advantage of cultural tolerance, the African community should operate within the knowledge that no culture is superior, wholly isolated, self-contained, and unique; each one has convergent features that allows it to operate as an African culture. Ultimately, the implementation process is crucial since “how [forms of folklore] are actually used in a particular ... class depends on a range of factors, for example, learners’ profiles and proficiency levels, learning objectives, and teachers’ knowledge as well as personal interests in folktales. Nevertheless, having a good understanding of the fundamental characteristics of folktales can be helpful for teachers to start exploring the possibilities of including them as pedagogical resources...”, (Lwin, 2015, p. 81). Thus our thesis in this paper, that the place and role of folklore in and for education in the EYE in Kenya cannot be underrated, and this can only be wholly harnessed through the various rich and dynamic mother language in multilingual Kenya and employment of sound implementation processes.

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Mother language in its real element: The capacities of indigenous languages in national development

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Abstract

What is a mother language? Why not a father language? Is mother language the same as mother tongue? What about an indigenous language? Or even a vernacular? What about a First language or L1? What is the layman's perspective on a mother language? What about the sociolinguistic perspective? What is the UNESCO take on mother language? What is National Development? How do we relate indigenous languages to national development? This paper interrogates all these questions and further looks at language policy in Kenya and the place of mother language in diverse fields as well as the issues and challenges involved due to such diversity. We conclude by discussing the future of mother language in Kenya.

Keywords: Attitudes, diversity, identity, language policy, national development

Introduction

From the sociolinguistic perspective, the term 'vernacular' generally refers to a language which has not been codified or standardized and which does not have official status and is the most closely associated with locally-based communities. This is already a biased view of vernacular since it is already subordinated to an 'official' standard language in a globalized society. In a multilingual speech community, the many different ethnic or 'tribal' languages used by different groups are referred to as vernacular languages. Vernaculars are usually the first language learned by people in multilingual communities and they are often used for a relatively narrow range of informal functions (circumscribed). Again, the fact that it is used in relatively narrow range of functions already denigrates the whole idea of a vernacular which gives it further stigma. In the sense that it is acquired as a first language, then it means that it must have been acquired at home as a first variety. Appraising vernacular positively, we would see a vernacular as a language that gives the speaker a sense of belonging and a positive identity with the self.

More positively still, the term 'vernacular' is sometimes used to indicate that a language is used for everyday interaction, without implying that it is appropriate only in informal domains. For instance, in the process of 'vernacularisation' of Hebrew, its functions were extended from exclusively formal functions to include ordinary informal: from being a language of ritual, Hebrew thus became a language of everyday communication; a vernacular language. In this sense, any language which has value to its speakers will be considered a vernacular. This is a

very broad definition which contrasts with standardized languages which are used for more formal functions.

From our descriptions so far, vernacular could thus also refer to a mother tongue or mother language which refers to a child's first language; the language learned in the home from older family members. Mother tongue instruction thus generally refers to the use of the learners' mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Additionally, it can refer to the mother tongue as a subject of instruction (UNESCO, 2003: 13). It is considered to be an important component of quality education, particularly in the early years. UNESCO (1953) emphasized the importance of educating children in their mother tongue and remark that an education that is packaged in a language which the child does not understand is simply difficult for the child. Children are found to learn better when they start off education in mother tongue then transit smoothly to a second language. Some scholars have questioned the fact that if we talk of mother tongue, then why can we not also talk of father tongue? This would however be a discussion for another day on a topic on Gender and Language education.

Some scholars would still talk of indigenous languages as those languages spoken uniquely by an indigenous community and/or with origins in a given community or country (Spolsky, 2002). Given the nature of language change, however, many 'indigenous' languages may thus not actually meet this definition. Some scholars would be more general and talk of a local language which refers to the language spoken in the homes and marketplaces of a community, as distinguished from a regional, national or international language.

In view of all these different strands but with a lot of similarities, I beg to use the terms interchangeably unless otherwise advised. With this rich resource of a mother language within the reach of many people in the country, we would then ask how we would use our languages for national development. National development in our working definition here refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens politically, socially and economically by providing amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation infrastructure, healthcare, etc. It is expected that such development would spur growth and change in both quantitative and qualitative ways and transform the lives of individuals in a country.

Language Policy in Kenya and the Place of Mother Tongue in Diverse Fields

Nabea (2009) argues that the colonial language policy in Kenya impacted greatly on post-colonial language policy;

[T]he colonial language policy was always inchoate and vacillating such that there were occasions that measures were put in place to promote or deter its learning. However, such denial inadvertently provided a stimulus for Kenyans to learn English considering that they had already taken cognizant of the fact that it was the launching pad for white collar jobs (Nabea, 2009: 122).

Indeed language policy in Africa goes back to the colonial times and scholars and theorists like Chinua Achebe (1973, 1994, 2006), Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986, 1993, 1994), Frantz Fanon (1952, 1963), among others have written extensively about the colonial agenda of stripping African peoples of their languages, cultures and identities that was characteristic of not just the colonial era, but the present day as well. Even though we may not be colonial nations any more,

the effects of colonialism can still be felt in the ways former colonized societies view themselves and their languages (Wa Thiong'o, 1986) and in most cases, this view of themselves is condescending. How did we come to this? Was it the colonial agenda that in linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), there would be domination of the English language at the expense of all the other multitude of all the other African languages in contexts where English was establishing itself?

Phillipson (1992: 47) defines English linguistic imperialism as when 'the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages'. He observes that while the British are heavily implicated in the domination of English in former British colonies, America has also joined forces with the British Council in an effort to make English a 'world language' (Phillipson, 1992: 133) and legitimize this endeavour as being in the best interest of both the national and international community in a globalised world. Achebe (2006) apportion the blame on why African languages are experiencing threats by English as not to imperialism but the fact that Africa is experiencing increasing linguistic plurality as a result of internal migrations that have seen communities and ethnicities mix to the extent that using African languages in schools and other such spaces becomes quite challenging.

It is due to the issues of language, ethnicities and identity that Wa Thiong'o in his writings (1986) would go on to privilege African languages and identities while relegating English and western identities as colonial, whereas writers like Achebe (1994) would support the hybridity of African languages and English. Achebe's position values English for its ability to make communication possible among people from different ethnic backgrounds, while also valuing African languages (Achebe, 2006). He acknowledges that English came to Africa as part of a package that included the evils of colonialism, but argues that this is not justification to reject a language that serves an important role in African literature, and Africa in general (Achebe, 1973). He further argues that it is however important for an African writer to maintain the voice of his own Africanness and his own experiences, since the aim in using English should not be to use it like a native speaker, but to make it serve one's particular voice and culture (Achebe, 1994). In this situation, we see English as an instrument and not really one to express ones cultural identity, although again, an individual can portray multiple identities depending on what they want to do with them.

Wa Thiong'o's position on the language debate is that Africans, including African writers and intellectuals, should not only speak but also write in their African languages. He rejects the notion that English makes it easier to reach a wider audience and instead argues that English rose to such a global status by means of oppression and colonization of other nations. African languages, such as Kiswahili, should be credible candidates for global language status as well (Wa Thiong'o, 1993). Here again is a catch, especially in a scenario where the English language is totally rejected: Excellence in English in Kenya has always been highly celebrated since it is considered the language of upward mobility and in the education system, all examinations are in English, except for Swahili language examinations. What this means is that if one is weak in the English language, one is eliminated in the process thus unable to progress to the next level of education.

It is due to the scenario just described that many parents in Kenya try to minimize the use of mother language by their children in the home background and try to ensure that English is used in all settings so as to improve it (see Campbell & Walsh, 2010; Jones & Barkhuizen, 2011). And even though many families may recognize the importance of local languages for their children's cultural and ethnic identity constructions, they consider mastery of the English language a higher priority because it would afford their children better chances of upward mobility in a more globalized world. Tembe and Norton (2008), Jones and Barkhuizen (2011), Campbell and Walsh 2010, and Kitoko-Nsiku (2007) observe that many parents in post-colonial African nations believe that it is important that their children become as good in English as possible, even if that means sacrificing, or relegating their African languages to a secondary position, in order to achieve that end. Mastery in the English language, they believe, will propel their children upwards in education and consequently give them better chances in the job market arena. This is a tension that is very difficult to handle. Campbell and Walsh (2010) observed that 'elite' parents are increasingly pushing for the English language even at home. In this scenario, they noted that while the children spoke English with their parents, they used *Sheng*, Kiswahili and mother languages with their friends. This may create collateral damage for both the Kiswahili language and the indigenous languages.

The current language policy in Education in Kenya states that in the lower classes in primary school, the language to be used should be that of the catchment area, which in this case would be the vernacular (in a rural situation of more homogeneity) of the area or Kiswahili (in a rural situation of more heterogeneity), and it is only in the upper primary school that English would be used. The reality on the ground and due to pressure from parents and the community around is that teachers are forced to use both Kiswahili and English in most of the context so far described. In as much as parents would like their children to have strong cultural identity, they are also interested in their children's ability to participate and succeed at the national and global level, which would require them to have strong competencies in English.

Another tension brought about by the language policy was that while the majority of the students in an area had a shared mother tongue, some of the children came from families where they had been taught the local dialect of Kiswahili and very little of their mother tongue. So those students did not comprehend when lessons were conducted in the mother tongue, as also the other students did not comprehend when the lessons were in Kiswahili. Teachers were therefore left with the responsibility to make delicate decisions that will allow all students to gain from their instruction. The irony is that exams were in English for all students even though the policy allowed for instruction in the mother tongue. This is a challenge.

A consequence of the power of the English language in education in Kenya is that policies are put in place that criminalize the use of other languages other than English in school. These policies are clearly leftovers of colonial policies that were aimed at stumping out African languages and cultures by labelling them backward, primitive, and not fit for humans (Kitoko-Nsiku, 2007). Nieto (2002: 81-82) argues that 'privilege, ethnocentrism, and racism are at the core of policies and practices that limit the use of languages other than officially recognized high-status languages allowed in schools and in the society in general'. The result of these policies in Kenyan schools is that a hierarchy of languages is created, with English at the very top and African vernacular languages at the very bottom. As a national language, Swahili

lingers somewhere in between, as it is half-heartedly tolerated. Due to our multilingual nature, the school has thus become a field for major tensions that pity the English language against all the other indigenous languages including Kiswahili. The school is therefore seen as one of the major sites of linguistic suppression in post-colonial African nations (Muthwii, 2004; Maeda, 2009; Wa Thiong'o, 1986).

Despite having a language policy for the school system, there are still major challenges that are yet to be overcome. Nyaga and Anthonissen (2012) in their study found that there are difficulties in implementing the policy that allows for instruction in the first three years of schooling to be conducted in the students' mother tongue, or the language of the school's catchment area (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002). These difficulties arise from various factors, including the fact that the government does not back this policy up with resources (Nduati, 2016) such as materials for lower primary that are written in the mother tongue, which would be crucial to making implementation of the policy possible. Additionally, teachers are posted to any part of the country upon completing their training, and as such, many teachers end up teaching at an area where the language spoken is not one they can speak themselves. Now with the advent of de-localisation by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), the situation may become even worse. Because of this, and also because of the varying multilingual situations among students in different schools, teachers are forced to make their own interpretations of the policy according to what works for their particular context (Nduati, 2016).

In her study, Jones (2014) found that the teachers in a rural setting where both they and the students spoke the same mother tongue actually supported the national language policy that advocates for the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction during the first three years. However, these same teachers sought to move away from the mother tongue as soon as the requisite level was done. They also recognized the fact that students struggled to understand the English language, and so code switching between the local mother tongue, Swahili, and English was a prominent feature of classroom discourse and when the situation called for it, teachers used either the local mother tongue or Kiswahili to explain concepts to the learners.

As demonstrated in various studies discussed above, the politics of language in schools is complicated. For both teachers and parents, it is a trade-off where they have to weigh what they believe will provide the best possible existence in a globalized world for the learners. The question though is, do we have to give ourselves up, give up our languages, our cultures, our identities and as such, everything that connects us to our roots in favour of white, western cultures and identities in order to move up in society? This is a question many scholars have asked and largely remains unanswered.

Language Policy and its Impact on Learners: What This Means for National Development
The language policy which privileges English over African languages has led to various things that include marginalisation of African languages and identities, as well as silencing them altogether. We look at the marginalization of African languages and identities in Kenya. Marginalization refers to the ways the identities of speakers of African languages especially in the classroom are devalued while dominant linguistic and cultural identities are promoted as

superior. In the Kenyan context, learners' experiences with linguistic and identity marginalization include the punishing, shaming, and silencing of African languages in their schools. Even 'bad' accents while speaking in English are frowned upon (Nduati, 2016).

The kinds of punishment meted out on offenders in the classroom included: corporal punishment (caning); manual labour; public humiliation; writing an apology letters for speaking their African languages, implying that speaking those languages was wrong; writing compositions; writing exercises; even being ordered to buy books; slashing grass in the field; digging holes for planting; removing tree stumps; cleaning the school compound; washing classrooms; and kneeling down or squatting in an awkward position sometimes for long hours. Learners did not usually question the punishments since they felt that they deserved the punishment and were guilty of speaking in their vernaculars, and so would not even tell their parents of the ordeal because parents wanted their children to learn English due to it contributing to upward mobility. The punishments were seen as a way to try and help students learn English. In some 'elitist' schools, if you spoke your mother tongue, the rest of the students looked down upon you and treated you with contempt while assuming that you belonged to a lower social class.

A common system that was used to identify students who would be later punished for speaking their indigenous languages in the participants' experiences was the use of the monto. The word 'monto' came from the English word 'monitor'. The 'monitor' was used in schools during colonialism to monitor those who spoke African languages so that they could be punished for speaking those languages (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). This practice continues to be practised in some schools today. In my opinion, the monto did not make the students to improve on their English language speaking but instead, they shut up the whole day to avoid punishment thus missed out on practising in the language altogether. You cannot teach a language through coercion!

The language policy equally led to the silencing of both African languages and identities altogether. Negative experiences as a result of the English-only language policy in schools that include the punishments just talked about led students to be silent. In their wisdom, they would rather be silent than risk being punished or ridiculed. By punishing their use of mother languages, the students were taught that those languages were inferior, and by extension, as speakers of those languages, they were inferior. This would certainly affect their self-identities as well as their confidence levels. Even speaking in English with a vernacular influenced accent made one a centre of ridicule and humiliation thus making students prefer to be silent and even dislike English since this was their source of pain. Nieto (2002: 82) noted that '[w]hen particular languages are prohibited or denigrated, the voices of those who speak them are silenced and rejected as well' and when students feel that who they are has been rejected in the English classroom, it is unrealistic to expect that they will be motivated to learn English (Nduati, 2016).

Unfortunately, the speaking of indigenous languages is sometimes erroneously linked to tribalism (Orwenjo, 2012). In Kenya, politicians exploited long standing ethnic tensions to work up the infamous violence labeled 'tribal clashes' of the 1990s (KHRC, 1998). Some leaders have in their ignorance even attempted to suppress individual ethnic languages in Kenya in the hope of suppressing ethnicity (Manyasa, 2005; Yieke, 2011). But it should be pointed out that

tribalism is not synonymous with ethnicity but the closest tribalism can get to ethnicity is when we think of negative ethnicity (Wa Wamwere, 2008), which in effect is tribalism and ceases to be ethnicity but ethnocentrism (Manyasa, 2005).

Tribalism is more about politics than language and the political elite would actually use the whole idea of tribalism to protect and safeguard their political interests. After the 2007 post-election violence (PEV) in Kenya, and even earlier, speaking indigenous languages in public places to some extent became politicized as different communities became suspicious of other communities. Speaking indigenous languages in government offices in Kenya was banned and everyone is expected to speak in either English or Swahili in government offices (Orwenjo, 2012). Even prior to the outlawing of vernacular languages in government offices, in some cases, especially in cities where there is a mix of workers from different linguistic backgrounds, speaking indigenous languages in the work environment is also sometimes frowned upon.

The ever perpetuated myth that African languages are the cause of the problem of tribalism in Kenya is therefore not only false but also damaging to the country, as it creates negative ideologies about these languages, which then prevents schools and teachers from exploring the possibilities of using these languages to enhance students' learning (Orwenjo, 2012). In Kenya, therefore, citizens experience a hierarchy of languages in the public domain in Kenya, which exalt English as the language of social, academic and economic success, while downgrading and devaluing Swahili and other African languages as being less useful and less desirable and even accused of promoting tribalism and other negative feelings among citizens. If this is a myth that can be deconstructed as seen as false, then how can we use our diversities in terms of multi-ethnicities and multilingualism for national development?

Fortunately, ethnicity is not an inherently negative phenomenon. It has positive qualities which can become a powerful resource for national development when its potentiality is fully recognized and developed. In a multi-ethnic and multilingual society, from the point of human philosophy, culture, organization and technical knowhow, each ethnic community has its own strengths and weaknesses. For those involved in guiding societal development, the challenge is to mobilize the strengths of the various ethnic groups as the resource or input in the search for the realization of the goals of meaningful development (Yieke, 2011). Such an approach to ethnicity is basically of interest to those politicians who identify the societal interests with those of their own and work towards national development while exploiting this diversity.

Although a positive approach to the issue of ethnicity is rare, it does exist. Malaysia has done this and Kenya could borrow quite a bit from it. The development model from Malaysia integrates the Malays (53.9 per cent), the Chinese (34.9 per cent) and the Indians (10.5 per cent) in a symbiotic relationship between immigrant ethnic communities and indigenous ethnic communities. In this case, the Malay is the indigenous ethnic community whereas the Chinese and the Indians are the immigrant ethnic communities. This developmental model which is referred to by Chien (1984) as the Baba-Ali¹ approach operates on three principles that provide conditions which will reduce the sense of insecurity on the part of the indigenous

¹ In the case of Malaysia, 'Baba' is used here unconventionally to include all non-Malay ethnic communities, and 'Ali' to stand for the Malay ethnic community.

community and to win the allegiance and loyalty of the immigrant communities so that they will contribute to the development and advancement of the well-being of all people in the country; that utilize as fully as possible the strengths of the various communities; and taps the resources of the economically more aggressive ethnic groups to uplift the well-being of the economically disadvantaged ethnic groups so that development can be meaningful to all ethnic communities. The point is an all-inclusive approach to national development where all ethnicities are involved. In a multilingual set up, it would be an approach to national development where all languages in that context play a significant part in their own ways as part of national development without being in a cut throat competition.

What Hope for Mother Tongue in Kenya

The Kenya Constitution of 2010 gives importance on the place of indigenous languages in a citizen's life and considers it a basic human right. The Constitution addresses language issue and recognises equity and diversity, including cultural diversity. In its preamble, the Constitution states that 'we, the people of Kenya... (are) proud of our ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, and are determined to live in peace and unity as one indivisible sovereign nation'. Further, Chapter 2, Section 7(1), of the Kenyan Constitution (The Republic of Kenya, 2010) states that the national language of the Republic is Kiswahili while 7 (2) stipulates that the official languages of the Republic are Kiswahili and English. Chapter 2, Section 7 (3) also notes that the state has an obligation to promote and protect the diversity of languages of the people of Kenya; and to promote the development and use of indigenous languages...'. This is an indication that although indigenous languages are not recognized as official languages in Kenya, they are entrenched in the Constitution and we can begin to work from here to make them desirable.

Although English provides a unifying voice in the face of diverse ethnicities, it remains an impediment for the promotion of African languages. To counter this, the promotion of indigenous languages would be beneficial to the African in the construction of their cultural and ethnic identities and also for use in various spheres of their lives. So far we have just heard of narratives where the indigenous languages are relegated to the rear in schools despite a clear language policy for the school in the lower classes. It has however been observed in certain studies (see Ngendo, 2016) that there are schools in rural Kenya and their teachers who are successfully using African languages in their classroom to support their students' learning. In lower primary levels, teachers in rural schools drew of the literacies that their students already had in their African languages to support their learning of English and content area subjects. Such efforts would enforce the national language-in-education policy, although there are various challenges to implementation of this policy in Kenyan schools. Such efforts should be encouraged and resources availed to make these realities and success stories.

There is need for awareness and re-education of Kenyan parents, teachers and the general public on the importance of indigenous languages and identities, even as they push for the English language for their children and students. This re-education would potentially emphasize the idea that it is possible for languages to co-exist side by side without dominant colonial languages having to attempt to suppress African languages out of existence. There is actually room for African languages and identities in a world that is increasingly dominated by the English language and western identities. Bi/multilingualism does not have to be

subtractive (Ngendo, 2016) where learning the English language means giving up one's other language(s) and identities. In fact, bi/multilingualism and bi/multiculturalism afford one different perspectives that can enrich their learning or teaching experiences and those of all the people around (Ma, 2014; Seloni, 2012; Zheng, 2014).

Acknowledging the value of using mother tongues as the languages of instruction in early classes is thus an important one (UNESCO, 1953). There is therefore need to create awareness among all stakeholders on the important role that mother tongue plays in the lives on young learners and the recognition that it acts as a resource rather than hindrance to learning and is not in any way in competition with the English language learning. It is actually an added advantage to the child.

In recent times, there are many FM stations in Kenya broadcasting in vernacular. This has had the desired effect of promoting the use of vernacular languages in the rural areas and also in the urban areas to a large extent. However, vernacular languages are yet to enjoy the privileges of English and Kiswahili since most of them have no written code and in quite a number of them, the process of codification has not yet even started. In addition, the youth are not even enthusiastic to use vernacular languages regularly in their daily lives, particularly the urban youth.

Although not all countries in Africa are comfortable with Kiswahili, a good number use it in various spheres. As Iraki (00000) notes, 'one would have hoped that Kiswahili would be the unifying glue among East Africans on the political front' although this is not the case because Ugandans for a long time resisted Kiswahili since they viewed it as linguistic imperialism from Kenya. However, Kiswahili remains very influential economically and socially and in business transactions alongside English, especially in the transportation sector and would be a good choice due to the linguistic diversity within the countries.

In Kenya, there are more and more young people, mainly from towns, who are not conversant with their mother tongue. They mostly speak Swahili, Sheng and English even though a number have knowledge of English alone in this mix. This situation may threaten the survival of other African indigenous languages. The launch of vernacular FM radio stations in the early nineties and also the advent of vernacular television stations have been useful in promoting the vernaculars as well as stimulating solidarity among people of the same ethnic backgrounds. Sheng has not been left behind in all this and you have an FM station like Ghetto FM that promotes Sheng. An interesting scenario also unfolds where power relations in Kenya can also be viewed along language lines. Whereas in Kenya, Kiswahili and English enjoy special political positioning in the urban areas, business and politics in the rural scene are dominated by the indigenous languages and further, ethnic communities play a crucial role in determining who rules the country.

Iraki (2010) proposed a structure for linguistic co-existence in Kenya that might inform the language policy of Kenya in future. From our discussions so far, four levels of social and language interaction are envisaged; these are the local, national, regional and global arenas and levels. He argues that English can be promoted as the international language connecting Kenya with the rest of the world at a global level. However, national issues such as politics, education,

administration and justice could be dispensed in Kiswahili which is the national language. The cultural identities of Kenya could be promoted through the development and usage of local indigenous languages while Sheng will continue to serve the communication and identity issues of the youth. In this framework, Kiswahili, English, indigenous languages and Sheng have clear and very important roles and should not be seen to be in competition with each other. It is not desirable that English should dominate all spheres of life in Kenya to the detriment of the other languages. This would no longer be the triglossic situation that linguists talk of in the Kenyan situation but probably quadriglossic where a Kenyan would use have at his/her disposal at least 4 languages: mother tongue, Sheng, Kiswahili and English and additionally have other foreign languages and probably other indigenous Kenyan languages despite having a mother tongue.

In this framework as proposed by Iraki (2010), since each of the four levels – indigenous languages, Sheng, Kiswahili and English – has its own distinctive role, it might be desirable to promote all of them instead of focusing too much on English. The vernacular will enhance cognitive development and serve as a repository of age-old values; Sheng will include and exclude and serve as the identity of the youth; Kiswahili will radiate within and across the country to embrace the East African family and solidify them; and English will be the language for international dialogue (Iraki 2003).

Conclusion

In the Kenyan context, where there are multiple languages pushing to co-exist amidst the politics of language, globalization, and the strategic positioning of English and subsequent suppression of indigenous languages, it is important for teachers, parents, and communities to not lose sight of the benefits of a positive ethnic identity, self-perception and the correct attitudes towards both our indigenous languages and cultures. Despite a four level scenario already discussed that describes the existence of a global sphere, a regional sphere, a national sphere and a local sphere, there is the possibility of a cohesive existence and integration of the English language, Kiswahili, the indigenous languages as well as Sheng in different spheres and not necessarily in competition with each other. In this manner, all the languages can then be promoted and at the very least be tolerated. In such a scenario, the indigenous languages will thrive for a long time to come.

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Language Maintenance and its Role in Expanding Language Domains in Kenya with Special Reference to

Kimeru

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Abstract

The paper provides a general overview of language maintenance with the aim of discussing its contribution in expanding domains of usage in Kenya. It provides an exploratory assessment of previous research the maintenance, revitalization and attempts that have been made in the documentation of endangered languages in Kenya. Special attention and focus are given to achievements made by various scholars in the study of language maintenance and revitalization in Kenya. In regard to Kimeru, this paper observes that Kimeru is a mother language (ML) in which basic domains of usage are continually being enhanced despite the language itself being in competition with other more established languages within its immediate environment and in the country. Some of the expanding usages identified in Kimeru include those in the social, educational, political and economic domains. Other Kimeru language domains that the paper highlights as the salient aspects of its vitalization include mass and social media. The methodology used is a survey based on a generalized assessment of the use of Kimeru as a mother language in broadcast, print and digital media. The paper acknowledges the significant role that Kimeru continues to play in the social-economic development of Meru County through provision of employment and in creating ethnic unity and moiety among users of its dialects. It further demonstrates how a ML operating within a multilingual and triglossic background can be revitalized despite its minority and underprivileged status. It concludes that language maintenance and vitalization through sustained usage contributes to positive attitudes towards MLs which should be harnessed as vehicles of social-economic empowerment.

Key Words: Language maintenance (LM), Language shift (LS), Language domains, Language revitalization, mother language(s) (MLs)

Introduction

Language maintenance is variously defined by scholars to refer to the continued use of a language despite its coming into contact with a more dominant language or languages. This means that a language that continues to thrive despite being in contact with another or other languages depicts evidence of language maintenance. Most mother languages in Kenya belong in this category by maintaining their place despite being in a multilingual environment with some languages, such as Kiswahili, being promoted through schooling and lingua franca usage.

The domains ascribed to Kiswahili are in competition for dominance with mother languages in the school, the marketplace, in places of worship and in homes; to the extent that, in some instances, parents and teachers discourage the use of the prevailing mother languages. This language use scenario mirrors Pauwels (2004) definition of language maintenance as a situation in which speakers or speech communities continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life despite the pressure from a dominant language or majority language.

Most mother languages in Kenya can resist pressure from more established languages as evidenced by the fairly small number of dying mother languages in the country. Language maintenance denotes a sustained use of a language by its speakers despite competition from more economically and socially powerful languages within its environment. From the foregoing, therefore, language situation in most parts of Kenya reflects Batibo's (2005) perspective that defines language maintenance in relation to its resilience, strength and degree of resistance to withstand pressure from dominant language(s).

A language that is incapable of the resisting pressure from dominant languages may be replaced in the final analysis. Language replacement is the total or partial assimilation of a language during contact with another superior or dominant language(s) whereby speakers shift or adapt a different language. Language replacement is also variously called language shift is a gradual process that occurs over a long period of time. In essence, language shift is the process by which a language population departs from using one language (often the ML): for a more vitalized or dominant language within the linguistic environment. However, language shift does not include cases in which a language develops from its older versions to newer forms or variants.

Reasons for language shift include social, economic, political, demographic and attitudes to the languages prevailing within a region leading to either subconscious or deliberate choices that speakers use in different domains. Language shift therefore occurs in situations of language contact such as in bilingual, triglossia or multilingual settings. In reality, ML speakers gradually reduce the areas (domains) in which they use a language in communication. Moreover, the ML ceases to expand its functions in emerging domains such as in written literature, music, advertising, in broadcast and print media among other modern usages.

As a linguistic discipline, Pauwels posits that LM and LS emerged from Joshua Fishman's 1964 paper "Language maintenance and language shift as a field of enquiry". Although the initial inquiry focused majorly on language dynamics due to the migrations taking place at the time, a study of LM and LS in Kenya points to more stable language contacts and in environments where education is a key factor leading to changes attitudes to MLs. Cavallaro (2005) notes that

the concept of language maintenance emanates from a linguistic study of languages in contact and multilingualism; hence promoting the notion that one cannot separate LM and LS. In this regard, Cavallaro echoes Fishman's (1964: 35) observation that "language maintenance and language shift is concerned with the relationship between change (and stability) in habitual language use, on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural processes, on the other hand, when populations differing in language are in contact with each other."

To some scholars, LM denotes a situation whereby the speakers of a language nurture and retain its usage within certain (specific) domains such as in school, at home, in market places, and in religious worship (Baker, 2011: 72) even when it is not accorded mainstream domains such as being used as a language of instruction in schools, or in formal communications such as in official government and business documents. Consequently, LM has continuously been seen as a reaction to perceived threat from a more politically and socially powerful language within the region. For instance, a general observation of the use of MLs in Kenya indicates that most, if not all, are used only in informal domains. Despite MLs being taught with various degrees of emphasis in the first three years of schooling in the rural areas in Kenya; Kiswahili and English predominate official and business sectors with varying degrees of vitality.

Mother language

The term ML is usually designated to refer to the language that a person learnt as a child. It is mostly the first language that one acquires from the parents within the family setup. ML is also variously referred to as a mother tongue, native language, and sometimes; an indigenous language. Viewed this way, therefore, every spoken language is a ML. This includes internationally spoken languages such as English and French because they are MLs to their native speakers. Due to the centrality of languages in human relations and development, the UNESCO has designated 21st February as The International Mother Language Day to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday>.

The case for LM

Many scholars and linguists have argued for the maintenance of languages around the world. For instance, Clyne (1982, 1991), Fishman (1977, 1996) have given reasons as to why languages should be maintained. The UNESCO has taken up the LM agenda with its Endangered Language Programme created in 1996 with the aim of supporting stakeholders in preserving and promoting endangered languages. This initiative has ensured that efforts to maintain and revitalize languages are well received and embraced around the world. LM is mainly concerned with the broad agenda of ensuring that the cultural factors that ensure the survival of a language are maintained alongside the target language. Languages are vehicles through which cultures are produced, disseminated and preserved for future generations. Consequently, the reasons advanced for LM are also true to the (re)vitalization of MLs.

Some of the reasons advanced in favour of LM include enhancing group membership and integration. The concept of integration refers to the factors that identify and keep groups together. It also refers to a sense of belonging within a group where members with certain characteristics and features identify themselves as being part of a particular group. Membership in an ethnic group may include physiognomy, ancestry, religion and other aspects

of social-culture and behavior (Fishman,1977). For instance, since most ethnic groups in Kenya have a distinct language or dialect. We can therefore surmise that a ML is a key criterion for ethnic group membership. Some of the unifying factors of ethnic groups include, but are not limited to; a common language, shared beliefs or religion, traditions such as foods, clothing, shared histories or ancestries. However, language seems to be the irreducible minimum in human identity (Weber, 1968).

It has been argued that language is a strong carrier of a group's cultural heritage. Language maintenance entails the maintaining of one's cultural heritage as a marker of group identity. Gunew (1994: 2) argues for an inclusive definition of culture that includes the sociological or anthropological definition that encapsulates "every aspect of life" to include the various elements of everyday life such as foods, religious worship, rituals, sports and games.

The most common definition of culture considers it to be a way of life followed by a community or society or the mode of life in respective social groups (Tanase, 1959: 18-19). This definition of culture also includes a community's practices such as the arts. It also includes a community's methods of communication and representation and which may have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political domains (Said, 1994). In similar vein, Carley (1991) considers culture as the communication of ideas, information, concepts, beliefs, technical knowledge and symbols within a culturally homogenous group like the Meru. In addition, communication as a component of culture suggests that culture is distributed from one individual to another, from one family to another or from one generation to another. Modern communication technology such as through radio, television and digital platforms has expedited the sharing of culture.

Communication can be divided into verbal (the use of words with specific meaning); paraverbal (tone of the voice); and non-verbal communication. Language used in verbal communication is not a universal means, but it is, according to Hargie and Dickson (2004), deeply rooted in a particular culture because members of that society have acquired it through instruction or imitation. This perspective suggests that culture is acquired and shared through communication and imitation. Consequently, culture and language bind communities together but may it also separate them into different communities.

Gunew (1994) expands the definition of culture by observing that it involves the arts such as heritage and tradition "or what a culture wishes to preserve as manifestations of its imaginative and intellectual life" expressed through the use of language in communication. Fishman (1996) buttresses this view when he argues that language is the vehicle through which culture is created and expressed. Fishman (ibid: 7) further opines that there is a symbolic relationship between language and culture in that "...language stands for that whole culture. It represents it in the minds of the speakers and the minds of outsiders. It just stands for it and sums it up for them—the whole economy, religion, health care system, philosophy, all of that together is represented by the language."

Language maintenance can lead to the revitalization of dying cultures especially among minority, languages and subaltern cultures to stem cultural assimilation (Wardhaugh, 1983). Cultural assimilation refers to cases where a minority group identifies with the dominant

culture thereby giving up some if not all of its significant traits in favour of adopting those of the more dominant and powerful culture. It is conceivable that a dominant group may not necessarily discriminate against the minority group in any way. The more powerful group may give unfettered access to opportunities within it by allowing the minority group to benefit from the relationship. For instance, a language group might adopt the music of a dominant group and compromise developing its own genres; or may at best modify its genres alongside those of the dominant group leading to a shared set of characteristics for the society as a whole. However, minorities may at times influence the majority and other minority groups to create a blended culture. Such rare cases of structural assimilation can only occur in a truly multicultural society.

Another reason for LM is the generally accepted theory that speaking more than one language leads to enhanced cognitive abilities. Although earlier studies led by researchers such as Darcy, 1953; Jensen, 1962; Saer, 1923; Smith, 1923 promoted the view that being bilingual or multilingual results in cognitive deficiencies. However, more recent and convincing studies by Ben-Zeev (1977); Cahill (1987); Hakuta (1986); Landry (1974); Peal & Lambert (1962); Hakuta & Díaz (1984) and Lambert (1980) among others: have argued bilingual or multilingual learners are more flexible and capable of divergent thinking than their monolingual counterparts.

Studies that have been carried out to determine how the academic achievement of bilinguals compared with that of monolinguals seem to vouch for the benefits of bilingual education over monolingual education. Ultimately, researchers such as Greene (1998) and Thomas & Collier (2002) have reached the conclusion that there is a positive effect of bilingual education on the academic achievement of bilinguals to further support why languages should be maintained. This paper looks at some of the mechanisms that contribute in reversing language shift by discussing some ways of promoting the maintenance of Kimeru.

An Overview of Language Maintenance and Language Shift in Kenya

Kembo-Sure's (1994) thesis titled "Survey of language use and attitudes towards language in Kenya and their effects on English language proficiency" provides a brief overview of the status and functions of MLs in Kenya. MLs "enjoy official support as media of instruction in the first three years of primary education" partly due to "the UNESCO 1953 recommendation on "The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education" which advocated for the use of mother tongue in education (Kembo-Sure, 1994:31). However, Kembo-Sure observes that there were instances where the directive was ignored in favour of promoting English and hence "a lot should be done to teach mother tongue languages and not just to use them as media of teaching other subjects." (ibid). This point of view is shared by Mberia (2014).

The author also notes that besides the promotion of MLs through poetry, drama, song and dance; there were also "encouraging attempts to write in these languages." (ibid). Kembo Sure mainly discusses the use of English within a multilingual context by analysing learners' attitudes towards English and how they impact on the linguistic competence and proficiency within the classroom. Kembo-Sure concludes that although English was "gaining greater vitality and acceptability among Kenyans as its functional distribution keeps expanding [and that] Kenyans respect the Kenyan languages and their present roles [but nevertheless] they

seem to want to keep English as medium of education and the language to use in the civil service.” (Kembo-Sure, 211).

The support of the community is important in ensuring that the revitalization of a language succeeds. Consequently, a community needs to be sensitized so as to understand the importance and therefore to own efforts to revitalize their language. As Obiero (2008) argues, however, the revitalization of Suba has faced challenges from the very community it is meant to serve. Obiero discusses the challenges posed by the community in the revitalization of MLs despite its central role in determining its success. Efforts to revitalize the Suba language in Kenya “will most likely persist...partly due to factors that may be local, but well beyond the community’s control.” (Obiero, 2008: 1).

Five of the six factors for LM as expounded by Crystal (2000) and Fishman (1991) underscore the importance of community involvement through a bottom up campaign.

This campaign is geared towards eliciting their support and participation in an effort to revive and expand the domains and functions of the endangered language. Obiero (2008: 6) further points out that there appears to be no tangible gains derived from thirteen years of the Suba revitalization programme owing to a poor design and implementation model more so in regard to advocacy, sensitization regarding the project. According to Obiero (2008: 10), failure in implementing the revitalization program among the Suba is further compounded by lack of “financial resources...money to fund teaching materials, to pay teachers, to outfit schools...” The report points out that it is difficult for poor communities to prioritize LM and revitalization efforts. Moreover, Obiero (2008: 3) “nearly all language revitalization programmes regarded as largely successful began with and were based on a strong community” which, obviously, the Suba isn’t.

On the other hand, Michieka (2012) investigates LM and LS among university students in Kenya and concludes that there exists a gradual language shift in regard to MLs among university students in Kenya. She points out that her findings collaborate other studies by Kamwangamalu (2003, a), Kamwangamalu, (2003, b), Michieka, (2005), Mugane (2003) and Mugambi (2002) which indicated that MLs were being “threatened especially in most urban settings” leading to their endangerment and further cites other factors that may result in language loss such as industrialization and threat from other cultures (Michieka, 2002 : 165).

Wamalwa & Oluoch (2013) report that despite their obvious benefits as vehicles for socialization, cultural identity, preservation and transmission of culture, several MLs in Kenya are endangered; hence the need for their preservation from ultimate loss. They, therefore, propose the use of digital technology in the maintenance and (re)vitalization of MLs through an “active and protracted program of language documentation [and]...a systematic description and codification of the indigenous languages” in line with similar suggestions that have been mooted by scholars such as Kube (2006) and Batibo (2009). This recommendation is also among interventions that have been proposed under the auspices of the African Union’s (AU) ACALAN (Wamalwa & Oluoch, 2013: 7).

Oduor’s (2015) study titled “Towards a practical proposal for multilingualism in education in Kenya” proposes that indigenous languages should be used more in education and that they

should have an economic value. Oduor argues that multilingualism in education whereby MLs are used alongside English as the media of instruction as well as in the teaching of some subjects in schools would go a long way in changing learners' attitudes towards indigenous languages hence promote language maintenance. This recommendation resonates with the outcomes of the expansion of language use domains in Kimeru.

Kimani, et al. (2018) in "Nexus between gender and language shift among the youth in Nairobi" explores the language attitudes and language use patterns from a gender perspective. The findings of the study indicate that female students are more likely to use English while male students are more likely to use sheng. Whereas the study shows that Kiswahili is used equally among both male and female students MLs are not used at all. The study concludes that gender plays a significant role in language shift among the youth in Kenya. This study is a confirmation that language attitudes as well as the ascription of status and domains of language use abound among the youth. A renewed interest by the youth in Meru in the entertainment sector has notably led to an explosion in the creative industry whose target is fellow youth through radio, television and social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram.

Kimani's findings also mirror the results from Letsolo's (2009) language use study among the youth in Botswana which; based on attitudes of 17-25year olds: indicated that Ikalanga youths use Setswana even in domains they could use Ikalanga, which is their ML. Such indications of Language use are partly based on the fact that Setswana is the national language alongside English. Setswana is also taught across Botswana and has consequently acquired a higher status in relation to other minority languages in Botswana. Letsolo reports that Ikalanga youths have developed negative attitudes towards their ML as not to use it among their peers is a pointer to the challenges in language maintenance in most African countries. Research has shown that positive language attitudes are a well-known condition for language maintenance and that language loyalty is closely correlated with language maintenance (Wolfgang Wölck, 2003: 6). Whereas there is need for concerted efforts to vitalize MLs to stem their emasculation by the more dominant languages, this paper asserts that language maintenance and revitalization can and should be undertaken even before MLs start facing serious threats from dominant languages. This assertion is based on the positive gains gleaned from the expansion of Kimeru usage.

Sangili, N, Mohochi, S & Nyandiba, C (2019) in a paper titled "Women, politics, language shift and maintenance in Kenya: Case of Lullogoli in diglossic Uriri Sub-county, Kenya" examine the role of women and politics in both language maintenance and shift. According to the study, women and politics have played a critical role in determining either positive or negative language shifts among the Maragoli. The paper concludes that Lullogoli has remained a stable language and despite several intermarriages between the Lullogoli and Dholuo speakers due to the Maragoli positive attitude towards their language. On the other hand, peaceful coexistence between the speakers of two different languages has ensured that both languages thrived and maintained themselves.

Language (Re)vitalization through Documentation and Digitalization of MLs

According to Fishman (1991) cited in the UNESCO (2003:9) "Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages" the basic criteria in evaluating "the vitality of a language is whether or

not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next.” Simply put, language vitality is the opposite of language endangerment. Endangered languages can be salvaged through a systematic intervention program that includes the involvement of the speech communities working with governments, NGOs and external language experts and professionals. Among a multi-pronged approach to language vitalization, one of the methods used include through promoting literacy and documentation of the endangered language.

UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger has categorized 2,473 languages as endangered with five Kenyan languages of El Molo, Yaaku, Ogiek, Omotik and Suba in the category. However, there are several other languages such as the Burji, Dahalo, Bong'om and Omotik that are considered vulnerable or in different stages of endangerment while Suba language is under a vitalization program.

In “Documenting narrations of personal experiences of the process of initiation into manhood in Terik language of Kenya”, Ojwang (2016:1) documents the rituals of one of Kenya's endangered language groups because “Terik is classified in the UNESCO Red Book of Extinct and Endangered Languages as a language in danger of disappearing because the youngest speakers of the language have either reached or passed middle age”. According to Ojwang, Terik speakers numbering 20,000 are sequestered between more populous language communities who speak different languages with the Luo who speak Dholuo in the South, Lulogooli speakers in the North and the Nandi speakers in the East.

Ojwang (ibid) further reports that Terik speakers are at different stages of “linguistic and cultural assimilation” due to many years of language contact, trade and intermarriages among other sociocultural contact and, therefore, “some Terik speakers have become multilingual and can switch easily between Terik, Nandi, Dholuo, (Luo), Luhya and Kiswahili” leading to continued loss of their language, identity and culture. It is clear that Terik is in dire need of language maintenance interventions to vitalize it. Ojwang's audio and video documentation and narrations of the Terik circumcision ritual is therefore a worthy linguistic and cultural undertaking. The corpus from the research is archived at the Endangered Languages Documentation Project (ELDP) at SOAS University of London for future reference and analysis. Although language contact, maintenance and shift in Kenya are not a new phenomenon, it is only recently that Kenyan scholars have taken interest in investigating language attitudes, language contact, language shift and language maintenance (Sangili et al, 2019; Wamalwa & Oluoch, 2013; Orcutt-Gachiri, 2009; Mberia 2014; Wanjala 2009; Obiero, 2008; Kipsisey, 2009; Fink, 2002). The reason for this could be partly because only a few Kenyan languages have been identified as being endangered or dying. However, it is the position of this paper that MLs operating within bilingual, triglossic or multilingual environments need to expand its usage domains.

Another observation regarding language maintenance in Kenya is the role that Kenya's political leadership, aided by the enactment of a new constitution in 2010, has ensured that MLs have a role to play through public participation in development. Moreover, there has been an upsurge in broadcast media and digital technology that has promoted the use of MLs at the grassroots. Consequently, the digitization of MLs among Kenyan linguists in the investigation of various aspects of language contact is visible. As a result, Kenyan scholars as evidenced in the

digitization of endangered languages such as Terik and Suba are welcome developments. However, there is still a lot to be done.

For instance, there exists numerous opportunities to document not only the endangered languages but to also pay attention to others that may appear safe from the vagaries of language contact. For instance, most of Kenya's MLs do not have standardized orthographies and a majority of ML speakers only use their languages for oral communication. This is to say that most Kenyans, despite being experts in the spoken word, cannot read or write in the same languages. MLs have therefore stagnated insofar as the written word is concerned.

There is also need to not only document our MLs through foreign owned archives but to endeavor to fund our own local research in Kenya and the rest of Africa. Such documentation should go beyond folklore and rituals which may be of interest and benefit to foreign institutions.

This would help to address local cultural challenges such as indigenous knowledge which is available to only a few cultural experts. A case in point includes knowledge relating to medicinal plants, wild fruits and vegetables.

A lot of Africa's indigenous knowledge and expertise remains a preserve of a few elderly people and may not be passed on to future generations. According to Abukutsa-Onyango (2010), that there are well over four hundred (400) types of edible wild vegetables in Kenya. However, only four (4) have been fully domesticated for sustainable consumption. The remaining vegetables are out there in the bushes and forests. Only a few old people actually know and consume them from time to time. The same case applies to the medicinal plants that are unknown but to a few elderly ML speakers. Consequently, collaborative efforts between linguists and other stakeholders such as scientists, nutritionists, indigenous medicine practitioners and communities are required to identify the useful plants for posterity. This can be achieved through the use of digital technology applications. It is not enough to maintain or revitalize our languages but to also endeavor to preserve our heritage for our own survival. We need to find similarly innovative ways to maintain or preserve all aspects of our cultural heritage. It is imperative that Kenyan scholars and researchers need to apply multi-disciplinary approaches to the unique challenges facing MLs even before they become endangered. For instance, the Suba language project has shown that it is an arduous task to resuscitate a dead or dying language (Obiero, 2008). Prevention is better than cure. It is therefore prudent that MLs are protected from endangerment instead of waiting until they are different stages of language death. This realization informs our assessment of how Kimeru is expanding domains of usage and therefore (re)vitalizing itself within a multi-lingual setting.

Kimeru: The Maintaining of a ML

A ML can also be defined as a language that is native to a country. For instance, Kiswahili is a ML to its native speakers especially in coastal Kenya, Tanzania and the Islands; as well as to children who learn it as their first language and within the confines of the home and their immediate environment. On the other hand, Kimeru is a Bantu language belonging to the Niger-Congo language family and native to Meru people who inhabit the Eastern and northern slopes of Mount Kenya and the Nyambene hills in Meru County. Meru people identify themselves as

Ameru (people of Meru); and their language as Kimeru. Kimeru is classified as ISO 639-3 language by glottolog.

Kimeru is a Bantu language consisting of several linguistically and culturally homogenous regional. However, scholars have differed over the actual number of Kimeru dialects. For instance, Bennet (1971) identifies six (6) dialects: the Chuka, the Egoji, the Mwimbi, the Imenti, the Tigania and Tharaka. On the other hand, Marete (1981) lists five (5) regional varieties consisting of Ki-tharaka, Gi-tigania, Gi-chuka, Ki-mwimbi and Ki-imenti. More recent research by Gacunku (2005) further isolates eight (8) dialects by arguing that Ki-igembe, Gi-tigania, Gi-chuka, Ki-muthambi, Ki-mwimbi, Ki-igoji, Ki-imenti and Ki-miutine constitute the Kimeru language family. In contrast to the homogenous perspective adopted by other scholars, Mberia (1981) isolates Ki-tharaka from the other Kimeru dialects to identify it as an independent language. Despite little differences and disparities in intonation and accent, Kimeru dialects are intelligible to speakers in all the sub-tribes.

Kimeru speakers also communicate intelligibly with their Niger-Congo Bantu neighbours; the Kikuyu, Embu and Kamba. However, communication between their Cushite neighbours such as the Boran, Somali and Samburu are done through Kiswahili or English because they belong to a different language family.

Traditional Domains of Kimeru

Language is intrinsic to all cultural groups. Language is one of the most basic of human existence that it is often taken for granted unless one develops deficiencies in using it due to a disability such as mental retardation, deafness and/or dumbness. A child is expected to be receptive to various forms of language use from birth. Whereas language is a method of communication, not all communication is done through language. Other forms of language and communication may include touch, gestures, music, noise and the like. However, it is generally acknowledged that language in the form of verbal communication through conversations plays a significant role in human interactions, language learning and development.

The acquisition and development of linguistic competency begins with the most basic components of communication in the learning of a language. Language acquisition begins with listening and speaking. This means that a child combines both receptive (by listening) and productive (through speaking) aspects of language learning at the formative stage. These skills are further developed through schooling when a child again applies receptive (through reading) and productive (through writing) as the linguistic competency improves and as the speaker develops the ability to comprehend more complex communication discourses that may include elaborate use of diction, metaphor, proverbs and other figures of speech. Oratorical skills were, and are still valued; among Kimeru speaker. According to Fadiman (2012: 132), spokesmen (*agambi*) of the council of elders were usually gifted speakers who represented the group especially when dealing with outsiders. Whereas the traditional spokesmen mediated and canvassed issues through the spoken word, changes wrought by literacy have transformed the modern *agambi* into writers, lawyers, teachers, politicians, clergy, motivational speakers, reporters and other aspects of oratory.

Kenya's education policy has upheld that primary schools use the catchment area's MLs as the language of instruction for the first three years of primary education. Kimeru is supposed to be used in rural schools within the county. However, the language has no standardized dialect. Books used in school are mainly in the Ki-imenti dialect. The first translation of the Bible in Kimeru was done in 1964 in the Ki-imenti dialect. There is a disconnect between the dominant dialect (Ki-imenti) and the other dialect when it comes to writing and literacy. However, this imbalance is mitigated by the fact that all the regional dialects are understood across Meru county. There is no dialect called 'Ki-Meru'. Consequently, Kimeru is an umbrella term that refers to all the regional dialects and, therefore, the spoken language in all regions is usually the spoken dialect r variety of the region.

One can argue that Kimeru dialects are used in social interactions across the county. It is used in homes, churches and schools. It is the language that locals use to communicate with one another in the shopping centers in the course of carrying out various business activities. The same applies within the public transport sector and roadside market places. Some business premises and activities are also named in Kimeru. Kimeru can therefore be said to be actively involved in undertaking commercial activities within the county.

Most inhabitants of Meru county are involved in small-scale farming activities. Agricultural extension and veterinary services and training are usually carried out in Kimeru. These services include the use of both oral and written methods of communication. This mode of communication is also used in imparting messages on health and hygiene in hospitals through the use of brochures which are usually translated from English to Kimeru, and sometimes; into Kiswahili as well. Kimeru within a multilingual set-up navigates between the dialects and the national and official languages that one finds being used in offices, the law courts and in the Meru County parliament.

Kimeru in all its variants is also vibrant during political mobilization during rallies and campaigns. It is during such gatherings that politicians regale audiences with their oratorical skills through the use of metaphors, proverbs and riddles. Moreover, songs are composed for the candidates to mobilize and sensitize people to support or reject opponents and their agenda. During elections, campaign posters are usually designed in Kimeru to solicit for votes. However, there appears to be more use of English and Kiswahili to augment Kimeru during official deliberations such as in cooperative society and public participation meetings. There seems to be an unwritten rule that "serious official matters" be carried out in the official and national languages. This dichotomy is also witnessed in Police Stations, the Sub-county and the County Commissioners' offices where officers are mainly non-Kimeru speakers. Interpretation from Kimeru to Kiswahili or English may suffice because official records are usually in English especially at the Police Stations. This is in contrast to the language used in the sub-chief's and chiefs' offices where Kimeru predominates. These trends are an indication that a fairly large of inhabitants in the region may not be in a position to communicate in either Kiswahili or English as evidenced by data from the Meru County Government's Department of Education indicating that the literacy level in county stood at only 53% in 2012 against a national level of 78.73% (<http://meru.go.ke/department.php?com=2&com2=10&com3=48&com4=&tab=105&item=23>).

The County Government of Meru supports the preservation, maintenance and revitalization of Ameru culture. According to Kinyua (2019), the Meru County Cultural Board is tasked with establishing an Annual Kimeru Cultural Festival and a Cultural Center and Institute. The cultural activities complement other efforts by the county government to promote literacy and expand domains in which Kimeru can be used. This includes the compilation of a bilingual Kimeru-English dictionary (Kimanthi, 2014)

Kimeru is rapidly expanding in other domains of usage especially due to growth in the communication and information technology sector. Enormous growth has been realized in the sector since the late 1990s following the repeal of the Kenyan constitution and the attendant liberalization of the airwaves.

For instance, there are about seven (7) radio stations and four (4) television channels that broadcast in Kimeru with a coverage of Meru, Tharaka Nithi and some parts of Isiolo and Embu counties. This development is evidence that Kimeru is gaining vitality in the area of broadcasting.

Based on their programs including coverage of news in the region, the talk shows on various issues of regional and national concern, entertainment in the form of music and comedy; the channels have strengthened Kimeru language and culture. The stations use all the dialects in their news coverage such that no speakers of any dialect feel linguistically left out or culturally discriminated against. Mass media, especially through radio; has a wide outreach. Kimeru speakers are able to consume information, news and entertainment from all corners of the region whether they are in homes, on motorcycles, or in private or public transport vehicles.

In addition, broadcast media such as radio, television, film, CDs, DVDs transmit their material electronically with the aid of cameras, video consoles and mobile phones. The ease of communication has further resulted in the real-time sharing of material through various blogs and on social media. Some of the popular digital platforms where material in Kimeru is shared include Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. There are profiles by all population categories sharing and discussing all manner of topics in Meru politics, literature, entertainment, foods and farming activities.

Affordable means of acquiring information have contributed immensely in the socio-economic life in Meru with noticeable impacts on various population segments such as women, youth and adults. According to Okoth (2015), radio stations in MLs have had a positive impact on rural livelihoods and economies with great potential to bring sustainable changes among indigents.

Okoth further notes that media has also created employment for the youth by providing employment as journalists, reporters, advertising agents, creative artists, actors, songwriters, comedians and musicians. The scenario that Okoth describes is noticeable in Meru County where the youth are actively involved in all categories. Most notable, however, is an explosion in both secular and gospel music composition in a region that had lagged behind in embracing the music industry as an economic enterprise. The perception that the Meru do not know how to sing, dance or to engage in performing arts has changed with the emergence of performing artists like Kamanu who blends both traditional and modern Meru music (<https://www.ameru.co.ke/kamanu/>).

Namasaka (2012) and Kipoma (2014) both observe that vernacular radio plays a significant role in promoting regional and national cohesion. There are few cases of hate speech or content or defamation that have been filed in courts of law in regard to the radio stations broadcasting in MLs. The same applies to the television stations.

Conclusion

I have provided an overview of language maintenance in Kenya against the backdrop of the revitalization of a ML that is not facing any serious threats nor facing endangerment. The paper has made reference to Kimeru to demonstrate that it is important for communities to proactively use their MLs to ensure that they remain relevant and that they expand their domains of usage.

In my argument, I have adduced evidence that Kimeru is gaining more support especially among the youth who have realized its potential in offering economic gains in the form of employment especially in using the language in mass and social media platforms. This proves that sustained usage of MLs leads to the development of positive attitudes among language user. Consequently, MLs should be harnessed by County governments as vehicles of social-economic empowerment in Kenya.

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Mother Language as Repository of Culture and Identity: A Case of Classic Kiswahili Poetry

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Abstract

This paper seeks to analyze and evaluate selected Kiswahili classic poetry with a view to demonstrate that mother languages serve as repository of a people's culture and identity. Classic Kiswahili poetry has arguably produced some of the greatest and finest pieces of literature that continue to engage literary scholars in debate to date. This paper argues that the Swahili people have used mother languages (dialects) to express and transmit their identity, culture, traditions and customs even before the advent of Standard Kiswahili. I will sample Sayyid Abdalla bin Ali bin Nassir's *Takhmisa ya Liongo* (also known as *Wanjiwanji*) and *Inkishafi*, Mwanakupona binti Mshamu's *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* and Muhammad Kijumwa's *Utenzi wa Fumo_Liyongo*. All the mentioned verses were written in the Kiamu dialect. These poems are chosen using the purposive sampling model and we believe, they will serve the stated objectives.

Keywords: Mother language, Kiswahili classic poetry, repository, culture, identity

Introduction

Kiswahili is spoken in many parts of Eastern and Central Africa. Over the years, it has come to be identified as a *lingua franca* used in the day to day activities of people of diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. The language is spoken in Kenya, Tanzania mainland and its Indian Ocean islands), Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo (DRC and Brazaville), Zambia, Malawi, parts of Northern Mozambique, the Comoro Islands, South Sudan (owing to the fact that for many years, Kenya has hosted its refugees) and South-Eastern Somalia. Mother-tongue speakers of the language are mainly inhabitants of the Kenyan and Tanzanian Coastal area and Kiswahili mother language speakers who have moved to other areas. The language comprises a number

of dialects. No consensus has been arrived as to the exact number of dialects of the language. A number of scholars have put the number between 15 and 20. Polome (1967) says they are 17, Heine (1970) regards them to be 20 while Chiraghdin and Mnyampala (1977) are of the opinion they are 20. Bakari (1985) is the most recent scholar who puts the number of Kenyan coastal dialects at 7. The Encyclopedia Britannica (2016) says currently the number of Kiswahili dialects stands at 15. Some of the most mentioned dialects are Kiunguja, Kipemba, Kimrima, Chichfundi, Kijomvu, Kimvita, Kiamu and Kipate. (Omboga and Musau, 1993: 29-30). Kimvita (spoken mainly in Mvita/ Mombasa and its environs) and Kiamu (spoken in Lamu and its environs) have for long been considered the 'literary dialects' and have been used in some of the most prominent classic verses.

Shariff (1973:69) argues that, despite the existence of these dialects, the Swahili people shared a common culture which made the evolution of a common literature possible. In this sense, he asserts, the Swahili people are not only identified as speakers of one of these dialects but also those who share a common culture. On the other hand, Mazrui and Mazrui (1995) assert that the Swahili people have interacted with peoples from Asia and have greatly been influenced by Islam (as evidenced by lifestyle, religion and terminology in classical verse). Despite the fact that the majority of the Swahili people are Muslim, Islam becomes an attribute accompanying the Waswahili, but not part of the definition. Hence, according to them (Ibid: 21) 'The Waswahili are those people to whom Kiswahili is the mother-tongue and whose culture has been influenced by Islam.' This will be our working definition of the Swahili people.

Identity, on the other hand, is the shared characteristics and aspirations which affirm or deny other characteristics defining an individual or a group sharing historical, biological or sociological factors at any given moment of development (Cabral 1973: 64). Culture will be taken to be the shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization. Hence a people's identity will comprise their culture manifested in their beliefs, norms, food, shelter, attire, ceremonies and artifacts.

The paper analyzes the choice verses with a view of capturing those aspects of the Swahili people's lives and the aspects of their interactions in their day to day life that reveal their traditions, customs and beliefs. The paper will then conclude by reviewing what aspects of these verses reveal the poet's (and by extension, the Swahili people's identity), being a member of this society), and how it is key to reinforcing and maintaining their cultural identity.

Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nassir's *Takhmisa ya Liyongo* and *Inkishafi*

This section analyzes one of the most prominent classic poet's works *Takhmisa ya Liyongo* (*Wanjiwanji*) and *Inkishafi* (*Al-Inkishafi*). Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nassir is believed to have lived in Pate between 1718-1815. He is reputed to have been a great Islamic scholar, jurist and poet and is thought to descend from Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) lineage. Mulokozi (1999: iii) is of the opinion that this and the other poems that will be analyzed, are considered classic as they were written over a century ago and are an important source of the history of the Swahili people and their culture, their language (in their different dialects), other people of the East African coast and the immigrants; and is considered an important reference point for any researcher of Kiswahili literature.

Takhmisa ya Liongo (Wanjiwanji)

This verse is about the Swahili hero Fumo Liyongo. There is debate and controversy as to exactly when Liyongo lived. Some scholars believe he lived in the Ninth Century A.D. (Mbele 1986, Nabhany 1987). Others like Chiraghdin (1977) say he lived between 1160 – 1204, while Knappert (1983) believes he lived around 1600 (A.D.). However, the most accepted date by most Kiswahili literary scholars, is between the 13th and 14th Centuries.

The Fumo Liyongo tradition is derived from Swahili oral poetry and has occupied the same lofty place among the Swahili people that national epics like Sundiata of old Mali, the Kalevala of the Finnish people and other people around the world do. In the same vein, Fumo Liyongo as a national hero of the Swahili people, is a product of both their oral and written traditions (Mbele 1986: 128-9). Sayyid Abdall bin Ali bin Nassir, is reputed to be one of the earliest poets to write about Fumo Liyongo from oral tradition.

In this poem, Nassir adopts the point of view (persona) of Liyongo the Swahili hero in which some of Liyongo's attributes come to the fore as well as solidifying the Swahili people's valiant nature, their perseverance in times of need, their seeking of justice, their meting out revenge in the same measure as meted out to them, their unwavering belief in the will of Allah/ God and above all else, never retreating.

The verse comprises 28 stanzas. Normally, a traditional (or prosodic) verse is divided into three parts: the introduction or preamble, the main body in which the poem delves into the main issues at hand and finally, the conclusion. The preamble normally contains invocations; mention of the name of Allah/ God and salutations to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions.

Then follows the main body of the poem and finally the conclusion in which invocations, the name and lineage of the poet are revealed. This 'formula' is an essential aspect of the Swahili people's customs and beliefs. Being Muslim, any undertaking is almost always preceded by the invocation 'In the name of Allah, Beneficent, Merciful' or any other supplication of the same weight and meaning.

Takhmisa ya Liongo does not follow this tradition in its first stanza but sticks to it in the concluding stanzas 26, 27 and 28. This deviation (or disparity) also finds compensation in a number of stanzas in which Allah's / God's attributes are mentioned either in supplication or to confirm some custom or belief.

The Swahili people (Muslims) not only believe in the Qur'an as Allah's/ God's revelation, but also in the 'Injeel' (Bible) and 'Zabur' (the Psalms). This is contained in stanza 4 in which the poet says:

*Naapa kwa Anjili na Zaburi ili kiapo,
Simkengeufu pindi shari liwagazapo
Nayekeeza moyo katokoza shari lilipo
Mtetea cheo mwenye cheo ateteapo,
Haambiwi ni mawi hatta roho nengakoma (st. 4)*

I do swear by the Bible and the Psalms

For they are worthy of swearing
I do not retreat once evil is widespread
I take heart and combat it headlong
One who fights for his position which he deserves
Will not be held in blame till his breath stops * (This translation and the
consequent ones of the poems, are mine and were confirmed by some
colleagues in the Department of Kiswahili, University of Nairobi.

In stanza 1, Liyongo's attribute is that he is the undisputed Swahili hero. His reputation and character, covers the whole of Swahili land:

*Natunga Kawafi takhamisi kidiriji
Niwadhihishe izagale kama siraji
Ili kufuasa ya Liyongo simba wa miji...*

I hereby compose stanzas of five lines
So it may illuminate like a lantern
In narrating about Liyongo, lion of the cities...

In this verse, the persona is the poet, who speaks in Liyongo, the hero's voice, mimicking his endeavor to fight injustice, fight corruption, and fight for his right. In this sense, the verse provides an image of a real national hero in whom the Swahili people (especially of the Kenya coastal area) identify with and cherish.

The majority of the Swahili are Muslim. This aspect is well captured in the beginning lines of stanzas 8, 9 and 12 in which the hero Liyongo, swears by God that his mission is just and hence, justifiable. Stanza 8 reads;

Naapa kwa Mungu na Mungu ili kiapo...
I do swear by God, God being deserving of my oath....

In stanza 12, the poet refers to the Qur'an as the Holy Book by which Muslims make oath;

Ningashahadize Korani yangu Kalima...
I do swear by the Qur'an, it being my pronouncement (of oath)...

This reinforces the fact that the Swahili people, would not undertake any action unless it is sanctioned by and strictly adheres to God's word and is carried within the specified limits. Images of Liyongo as he fights for his rights and the upholding of justice, present to us some of the weapons the Swahili use in defending themselves. Stanza 11 reads;

*Ningatindangile kwa sayufi na kwa sakini,
Na msu mkali kiupeka juu na tini...*

I would have slaughtered them with my sword and knife,
And using a sharp sword, swinging it up and down....

That a Swahili person would not perpetuate injustice even while seeking revenge, is well captured in stanza 14,

*kama chambilecho chuonimwe altama,
"wa in akabitum, fahakibubi mithli maa..."*

.... Just as the Lord Most high pronounces,
“And when you seek revenge, seek it in equal measure.”

Stanzas 21, 22 and 23, succinctly describe Liyongo’s bravery. This is a universal trait that is celebrated in all traditional heroes. Stanza 21 reads,

Ana ndimi shujaa samba ndole mwondoa ‘ari...

I am, the warrior, the lion with sharp claws who fights evil...

Stanza 22 also tells us about Liyongo’s demeanor and his mission in life,

Ana ndimi samba mfiliya jaha na cheo...

I am the lion, who would die fighting for my repute and status...

Stanza 23 also describes Liyongo’s character as well as pit or compare him with other heroes or warriors,

Ndimi akabiri uteteao wangu murua...

I am the greatest, agitating for my respect...

That the Swahili disregard the temporal life in place of eternal life (‘akhira’ – hereafter) is well-captured in stanza 18,

Bolewe mchayi kufa asofikiria

Na kufa si suna ni farathi ya mkadara...

Woe unto him that fears death without thought,
And death is not a choice but an obligation

The words *suna* and *faradhi* bear great significance in Islamic religious dogma. *Suna* refers to those acts that were carried out by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and God compensates one who carries them out as they reinforce one’s faith. *Faradhi* on the other hand, are obligations, those acts whose omission, is sinful, and their commission leads to compensation.

Stanzas 26, 27 and 287 conclude the poem. The poet’s name and lineage is expressed in stanza 27. This is customary of classic/traditional Kiswahili poetry which set it apart from the poetry of other communities and hence, is an aspect of their customs and identity. It reads,

Na mwenye kutunga mbaarifu yake isimu,

Ni Abdallah Muyuweni mumfahamu,

Ibun Ali bun Nasiri mwenye makamu,

Farii ya Makka, Shimukati la Farimu;

Fungu la Mutharu, Mutalibu na Hashima

And the writer I, will tell you his name,

It is Abdallah, know ye him,

Son of Ali, son of Nassir the glorious

A branch of Makka, sprouting from Farimu: descendants

Of Muthar, Mutalib and Hashim.

From the foregone, it is apparent that *Takhmisa ya Liyongo*, derived from Swahili oral tradition, presents to us some aspects of Swahili culture, customs, traditions and hence, their identity. Though the verse basically celebrates the Swahili people's traditional hero Fumo Liyongo, it is at the same time a window through which we glance at them as a people. Their identity is informed by God-wariness, patience, bravery, justice as well as enumerate some items of their material culture as their weapons, non-material culture like unwavering belief in Allah in all affairs and a strong sense of self-esteem. In this sense, the verse becomes an important source of information about the Swahili people's culture and identity.

Inkishafi (also Al-Inkishafi)

This is one of the most celebrated poems in Kiswahili literature (Mazrui, 1977; Allen 1977, Mlamali, 1980). Mberia (2015), delves into an exploration of the poem's thematic concerns and their relevance in this time and age, its language and the controversies as to whether or not, the poem is complete, and whether it is just a mere piece of religious 'sermon'. Although this paper also explores the themes, it relates them to the Swahili peoples identity and not how relevant they are or may not be, to modern society. Mlamali (1980: xii asserts, it is comparable to the ancient Roman *Aeneid* written by Virgil, the Persians' *Rustom and Sohrab* written by Firdaws and *Yusuf and Zulaykha* by Jami. Mlamali further asserts that *Inkishafi's* greatness is comparable to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Faust* by Goethe. Allen (1977:14) says,

The poem is homiletic. It stands squarely in the didactic tradition, one of the commonest types in Swahili literature, and is designed to instruct its hearers and to secure their moral improvement.

From the onset, we wish to make it clear that though there is controversy and debate as to the actual number of stanzas in *Inkishafi*, this paper will adopt the 77 stanza version. This debate accrues from the fact that all classic/ traditional Kiswahili poems were first transcribed and transliterated (mostly by European scholars) from the original Arabic script to the Roman/Latin and hence, the many discrepancies.

Inkishafi (this being the actual name of the verse as mentioned in stanza 8), is in a dialogue between the poet and his soul. The poet '~~in fact~~, adjuring his soul, his *moyo*, that it, and hence presumably he himself, his body-may be saved from disillusionment and damnation.' (Allen, 1977: 14). The poem derives its driving force from the Qur'an and uses brilliant imagery to paint contrasting portraits of Pate (The poet's hometown); one in the heydays of its glamour and greatness and the other, after its downfall.

Like other traditional Swahili classic poems, the writer reserves the first five stanzas to supplication. The name of Allah/ God and his attributes, prayers upon Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the four (rightly-guided) Caliphs Abu Bakar, Umar, Uthman and Ali. These invocations identify the author as a true Muslim who is well aware of the rules governing any undertaking in life. Stanza 1 reads,

Bismillahi naiqadimu
Hali ya kutunga hino nudhumu
Na Arrahmani kiirasimu
Basi Arahimi nyuma ikae

Foremost, I invoke the name of Allah
As I compose this here verse
First I write the Beneficent, then
The Merciful should follow

His objective for the composition is expressed in stanzas 7 and 8. He asserts that he wished to...*tatunga kifungo kwa kukisafi, nikipange lulu kula tarafi...* 'string a necklace of pearls, to form a valuable pendant'; this he does so that the dark clouds (sin) of ignorance may vanish. In this sense, *Inkishafi* is intended at cleansing the soul with sound counsel, God's word and immediate examples of the temporal nature of the worldly life. To a great extent, the poet uses antithesis pitting Pate in its days of glory and the squalor, after its fall.

The poet uses similes and metaphor to draw images of the temporality of life on earth.

Stanza 13 – *Suu ulimwengu bahari tesi...*

The world is like the sea in a great storm

Stanza 15 – *Au vumbi la mwangaza...*

Or the dust in the sun's light

Stanza 19 – *Dunia ni jifa siikaribu haipendi mtu ila kilabu...*

The world is carrion, do not approach it. It is only the dogs that crave for it...

In stanza 30, the poet admonishes as well as exhort his *moyo*/ soul to prostrate at the grandeur of Allah/ God and ask for forgiveness. This is the peak of a Muslim's humility to the Maker,

Ewe, moyo nenda sijida Yake

Hela tafadhali unabihike

Shetani Rajimi asikuteke

Kesho kakuona kuwa kamaye

My soul! Prostrate yourself (before Allah)

But please follow what is right

Let not the accursed Satan claim you

So he sees you as his own in the Hereafter

After painting these disturbing images of life and all that man craves for in the world, the poet proceeds to make a vivid portrayal of Pate during the days of its glory. But before he does this, he admonishes his *moyo*/ soul thus in stanza 31;

Suu ulimwengu uutakao

Emale ni lipi upendeyao?

Hauna dawamu hudumu nao

Ukimilikishwa wautendaye?

This world you so crave,

Of what good is it (to you?)

It is not eternal, you too won't last

Were it all yours, what would you do with it?

This is the stark reality of life on earth. The poet then proceeds to paint a glorious picture of great prophets of God like Solomon and other greats of Pate who were overtaken by death. Stanza 32 reads,

*Hakuwa Mtumi Suleimani
Maliki wa insi na ajinani
Ulimfutuye ukamukhini
Akawa mwingine wamtendaye?*

Was not Allah's/ God's prophet Solomon, the great
Ruling over men and the jinn's too?
Yet he too, was overtaken (by death) in his turn,
Does anyone else have a chance where he surrendered?

Stanza 34 paints a vivid image of the elite of Pate but they too, succumbed to death – the ultimate equalizer or leveller. We read;

*Uwene wangapi watu wakwasi
Walo wakiwaa kama shamsi
Wamuluku zana za adhursi
Dhahabu na fedha wakhiziniye*

How many wealthy people have you seen?
Who in their splendor, shone like the sun
Owners of expensive items made from ivory
Proud in their stocks of gold and silver?

An antithesis of these nobles/ elites is provided in stanzas 44-55 in which the poet, insists, they were overtaken by death (St. 44), leaving behind all that glory ... *mtanga na fusi ziwafusiye* (...dust and sand covers them).

In stanzas 58, 59 and 60 the poet uses parallelism to paint a grim picture of the final resting place of these rich nobles – the grave; deprived of all their worldly glory and splendor.

St. 58 – *Watiziwe nyumba za jiza jiza...*
They have been thrust in darkened dungeons.
St. 59 – *Walaliye nyumba za vumbi vumbi...*
They now sleep in their dusty abodes....
St. 60 – *Wengiziwe nyumba za tanga tanga...*
They are locked up in jails of sand

Finally, stanzas 66 – 77 tell of the Day of Judgment, when all people will assemble before Allah/ God...*tafakari siku ya kwima kondo, ya kuaridhiwa, kula kitendo* (forget not when multitudes will assemble, every deed to be revealed). For those that will not have good deeds, will they be cast headlong into the deepest pits of Hell. They will be punished in the fires of *Hawiya, Ladha, Hutama, Jahanamu, Sairi and Jahanamu*. It is only *Saqari* that is not mentioned in this poem.

From the foregone analysis, it is apparent the Swahili people can be identified by their deep belief in Allah/ God, that the world is temporary and that life in this world, is a cultivating ground for the Hereafter. Life is philosophized using real-life situations of Pate during its heydays and after its downfall. The poet succeeds in painting a daunting image emanating from his society's environment. It draws from history, religious belief (Islam) and psychology. In this sense, one could argue that the poem presents aspects of Swahili beliefs that inform their identity.

Mwanakupona Binti Mshamu's *Utendi wa Mwanakupona*

Mwanakupona Binti Mshamu, the writer of this poem was born in Pate in 1810 (Werner and Harries, 1934, Harries 1967). Allen (1971) believes she lived between the years 1810-1860 while Chiraghdin (1987) says she lived between 1790 and 1860. However, the most agreed upon date is 1810. She was married to Shee Mataka of Siu in 1836.

They were blessed with two children : a daughter, Mwana Hashima binti Shee (1841-1933) and Muhammad bin Mataka (1856-1858).

This verse is didactic and represents Swahili culture (and especially matters pertaining to marriage) and general counsel given by parents to their children. It is one of the most celebrated cultural pieces amongst the Swahili and is used in their rite of passage known as *Unyago*, where young maidens are secluded and taught about matters pertaining to marriage. Because of this poem's import, other poets have written in Mwanakupona's style especially in thematic thrust. Shaaban Robert (1966) wrote 'Utenzi wa Hati' and 'Utenzi wa Adili', Semghanga (1971) wrote 'Kidani cha Huba', Karama (1983) penned 'Wasia wa Baba' and Zainab bint Humid wrote 'Howani Mwana Howani'(1983). For instance, we find parallels in Shaaban Robert's 'Utenzi wa Hati' and Mwanakupona's *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* thus,

St. 1- *Utendi wa Mwanakupona*

*Negema wangu binti
Mchachefu wa sanati
Upulike wasiati
Asaa ukazingtia*

Come near my daughter
You of young age
Listen to my advice
So that you may heed

St. 1- 'Utenzi wa Hati'

*Leo nataka binti
Ukae juu ya kiti
Ili uandike hati
Ndogo ya wasia*

Today my daughter
Come sit on this chair
So you may write this letter

Though it be brief, it will advice

The greater part of this poem insists on the need to adhere to religious (Islamic) teachings, to conduct oneself well, to love and emulate the prophet, to obey the parents, to love and maintain a harmonious relationship with kin and fellow Muslims and to respect the husband. Stanza 1 exhorts Mwanahashina to be a good Muslim,

La kwanda kamati dini
Faradhi usiikhini
Na sunna ikimkini
Ni wajibu kuitia

Foremost, stick to the religion
Do not shun *faradhi* duty/obligation
And when possible the *sunna*/customs
Must you observe

The poet seems to allude to the fact that, a person becomes whole/ better if they observed religion. That both the obligatory and customary deeds reinforce one's faith. Stanza 13 reads,

Pili uwe na adabu
Na ulimi wa thawabu
Na uwe mtu mahabubu
Kula utakapongia

Secondly maintain good manners
And a tongue that only utters good
So that you may be loved
Wherever you may find yourself

Thirdly, stanza 3 continues in advising on building a good character. It reads,

La tatu uwe sadiqi
Wambiwao ulithiqi
Mtu ashoshika haqi
Sandamane naye ndia

Thirdly be a truthful person
Do whatever you are advised
And any unjust person
Should never accompany you

These three stanzas are founded in religious teachings. A Swahili person's character are founded on faith in Allah, good manners an upright moral character and finally, truthfulness is justice. These are the three tenets upon which a Swahili person should be grounded upon in order to build his/her identity

Werner and Hitchens (1934) dwell on the theme of wifely duty as being the objective of this poem. While it may be true, we may add that it is also bent on creating a morally-upright and God-fearing, faithful spouse/bride in a traditional Swahili society. The advice Mwanakupona

gives to her daughter is still given to young women during the *unyango* rite of passage as they get ready to enter into marriage . This is the reason stanza 23 exhorts thus,

*Nda Mungu na mtumewe
Baba na mama wayuwe
Na ya tano nda mumewe
Mno imekaririwa*

First should be God and his prophet
Then mother and father you should know
And the fifth is your husband
So it has been laid down

Though the poem was written by a woman for her daughter and hence, addresses the duties of a wife in marriage, it is assumed that men are also advised accordingly on matters marriage. Stanza 24-36 advice Mwanahashima of her duties toward the husband. The husband should be satisfied (st.24), she should not argue or deny him anything (st.29), she should bid him farewell whenever he goes out and when he returns, she should welcome him warmly and make sure he has an appropriate place to rest (st.30) and finally , she should make sure he is well-groomed and presentable. Stanza 36 advises Mwanahashima to obey the husband and if he were the source of any ill, then God will surely recompense the wife.

The second part of the poem (stanzas 42-50), advises that a wife should be clean ; she should clean herself and house (st.38) ,she should plait her hair and adorn it well with flowers (st.38), she should wear beautiful clothing (cf. the Swahili proverb *Mwanamume ni kazi, mwanamke ni vazi/nguo* ...A man's duty is to work, a woman to adorn herself?) , she should put on earrings , a nose ring ,bracelets as well as use perfume ,she should not be without rings on her fingers and she should apply henna on her legs (st.41), her house should be clean and she should hold her husband in high esteem (st.42).

The above mentioned stanzas are meant to import the message of how a harmonious marriage is cultivated and maintained. It is founded on the wife (and husband) performing their duties to the letter (ideally) by being humane, loving, clean and welcoming.

Stanza 44 to 50 dwell on the need of a wife to be careful of her movements and socialization. Whenever she wishes to go out she should seek the husband's permission and when it is granted, she should hasten to return home (st.44), she should not gossip on the way and should cover her hair, lower her gaze (lest lusty men are attracted to her) (st.56).

In a marriage, satisfaction is crucial. This is why Mwanakupona tells her daughter (st. 49) *akupacho mpokee na moyo ufurahie* (whatever he provides receive it gladly). And this is the formula Mwanahashima's parents used to maintain a happy marriage*alinioa babako tusondoleane mbeko* , (I was married to your farther Never did we disagree).This in essence, means, whatever advice/counsel Mwanakupona gives her daughter, is a tradition, passed from mother to daughter, through time.

Lastly, Mwanakupona advises her daughter to maintain good relations with her kith and kin (st.58), she should love fellow Muslims and shun two-faced people (st.61) and she should always help the less-fortunate (st.64). Stanzas 67-96 are supplications; for Mwanakupona wrote the piece while unwell.

From this analysis, some important aspects of the Swahili people's customs, traditions and beliefs have been brought to the fore. It is apparent that Swahili parents desire their children to be religious/ God fearing, they should love the Prophet, they should behave well with their husband, maintain etiquette and cleanliness, be respectful and be persevering in order to maintain a marriage. In this sense then, these are essential aspects of the Swahili people's non-material culture which also inform their identity.

Muhammad Kijumwa's Utenzi wa Fumo Liyongo

This epic was written by Muhammad Abubakar bin Umar al-Bakry better known as Muhammad Kijumwa in 1913. It is an adoption from Swahili folklore about Fumo Liyongo, the Swahili people's (of the Kenyan coast) national hero. He is both a historical and cultural personality as he has elicited debate and controversy as to when he lived, whether he was a Muslim or a Christian, whether or not he was a poet (see section 2.1).

The story of Liyongo is believed to be hinged on a conflict between him and his elder brother who ruled Pate. In this verse he is not addressed by name but in other sources he is called Daudi Mringwari. The story opens when Liyongo is a young man whose reputation of strength and bravery had reached all corners of Swahili land. His home is in Ungwana wa/ya Mashaha (in Shaka, a region of Ozi). A delegation of the Galla people arrives in Pate to visit the Sultan (Daudi Mringwari).

The Sultan / ruler utters words of praise about Liyongo. The Galla do not believe him. He decides to send Liyongo a letter inviting him to Pate so they may see him. When Liyongo receives the letter, he prepares his luggage and sets off for Pate. It is a four-day journey but Liyongo travels in two. He arrives at the gates of the Pate, blows his horn, it shatters. He blows on a second which also shatters. He blows on a third and the guards lead him to the Sultan's court. By now the entire town is aware of his arrival and gather in groups, eager to glance at him.

He unloads his luggage and they behold it is a houseful! The Galla people are awestruck.

They request the Sultan to ask Liyongo if he was willing to give them his seed / lineage.

Liyongo agrees and is given a Gala girl in marriage and soon after, the wife bears him a baby boy. Liyongo gives the baby boy good upbringing till he becomes a strong young man. Liyongo's fame spreads like wildfire all over Swahili land and so does the Sultan's envy and jealousy intensify. He suspects that Liyongo may remove him from his rule. The Sultan after consultation, decides to kill him. When Liyongo knows about the Sultan's plan, he leaves Pate and goes to live amongst the Sanye and the Dahalo of the surrounding areas. The Sultan convinces the Sanye and Dahalo to kill Liyongo in the woods promising to reward them 100 riyals if they succeed in their mission. The Sanye and the Dahalo befriend Liyongo and convince him to have *kikoa* (eating together) with them. They decide on *kikoa* of doum tree fruit. When it is Liyongo's turn to pick the fruit, of the tall tree they had chosen, they intended to kill him with

arrows. Intuitively, Liyongo becomes aware of the evil scheme and uses arrows to drop the fruits down. Their plan fails. They tell the Sultan that it has become impossible to kill Liyongo. He tells them to return to the mainland and inform Liyongo there was no longer danger, that they should visit Pate town with him. Liyongo trusts them and they and reverts to Pate town together. After a while, the Sultan prepares a *gungu* and *mwao* dance inviting all the great dancers. Liyongo too, is invited. As the dance proceeded, soldiers overpower Liyongo and lock him up in jail. It is decided that he be killed. As the day approaches for the death penalty to be carried out, Liyongo is asked to make a death-wish. He requests for a *Gungu* and *Mwao* dance. As the dance is being prepared, Liyongo sends a message to his mother through their maid-servant Saada, who had been taking food to Liyongo in jail. That day, Liyongo specially requested for coarse wholemeal bread and asked the mother to hide a file therein. The guards take the good bread and allow Saada to take the coarse wholemeal bread to Liyongo. When the *gungu* and *Mwao dance* is at its apex, Liyongo proceeded to file away at his shackles in rhythm with the drums and other musical instruments, breaks down the door and runs away into the woods once again.

Finally the Sultan, after all attempts at killing Liyongo fail, decides to send Liyongo's son to his father in order to find out from him, what was his Achilles' heel. He promises to make him a minister and marry his daughter to him. Liyongo's son travels to Shaka and poses the question to his father. Though Liyongo knows the son has been sent by his enemy, he divulges the secret to him. Liyongo tells him that he would die by a copper needle driven into his navel. The son returns to the Sultan with the news he gives the son the copper needle and instructs him to go kill his father. Liyongo's son returns to Shaka, patiently waits till the father is dead asleep and drives the needle into Liyongo's navel. Liyongo awakens full of pain and rage, picks up his bow and arrows, proceeds to the well, kneels down, puts an arrow into the bow, faces the town and breathes his last. When people see him thus, they think he was still alive and for five days are afraid to draw water from the only communal well. Finally, they send Liyongo's mother to beseech his son to let the people draw water from the well. The mother goes to the well and sweet-talks him for days without success. It's when Liyongo's corpse falls to the ground that the people realize that he had died.

When the news of Liyongo's death reaches the Sultan, he is elated. He gives Liyongo's son the news. The son laughs in glee and shows no remorse whatsoever at the demise of his father. That is when the Sultan gets infuriated and banishes the young man from his palace and Pate. He runs off into the woods in Gala land where he dies from remorse and loneliness.

Utezi wa Fumo Liyongo is a true African epic possessing all the qualities that define epics. It is narrated, it is a poem or bears verse form, it concerns itself with important or great events or societies, it is about a hero (Fumo Liyongo) and finally an epic is related to a particular environment/society and its depiction of that society (Mulokozi, 1999:11).

This epic gives a clearer picture of this Swahili hero than *Takhmisa* (see section 2.1). What aspects of Swahili culture and identity are revealed in this verse? Being a Swahili traditional poem in form, it follows in the formulaic arrangement of preamble (salutations), the story and the conclusion. It comprises 232 stanzas.

Stanzas 27-39, tell us about some items of Swahili material culture like the *panda*/blowhorn (st.27-31), the mortar and pestle (st.37-8), pots and fire stones (st 37-8). It is also apparent that the upper class Swahili (*wangwana*) lived in towns while their neighbours like the Gala, Sanye and Dahalo lived in the harsh, rural environs of the interior woodlands. The town (Pate) was the administrative capital where the Sultan/king had his headquarters.

The Waswahili are also identified by their tradition of *kikoa*, where a group of people decide to be eating in turns (st.57-67). The Sanye and Dahalo try to kill Liyongo when they had *kikoa* of doum palm fruits but he outwits them.

Another important aspect of Swahili culture is the *gungu* and *mwao* dance which the Sultan uses to entice Liyongo into a trap. In stanza 86, weaponry used by the Swahili is enumerated. There is the *mafumo* (spears), *zembe* (bows and arrows), *zigongo* (clubs). These are used to overpower Liyongo and cast him into jail.

In Swahili society, fathers do cook, do household chores as we see Liyongo take care of his son when he visits him. Stanza 131 reads,

Babake kafurahika
Akanena akiteka
Wali mwema kaupika
Maana wale pamoja

The father was happy
Said he laughing
Cooked good rice
So they may eat together

In stanza 232, we are given a glimpse into Swahili architecture –that they built in stone (especially in the towns like Pate). We read,

Mui walioamirika
Nyumba za mawe hakika
Mayiwe waliyoweka
Na misikiti pamoja

Great towns they built
With stones they did
Stone houses were put up
As well as mosques

Thus, it is evident, *Utenzi wa Fumo Liyongo*, is indeed an important source from which Swahili culture and identity is divulged, for it is set against a traditional Swahili background.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed selected Kiswahili classic verses : *Takhmisa ya liyongo*, *Inkishafi*, *Utendi wa Mwanakupona* and *Utenzi wa Fumo Liyongo*, all written in the Kiamu dialect. It has

been found that, a people's culture and identity is intrinsically related to language. Being one of the mother-tongues of the Kiswahili language, Kiamu has been successful in relating some ~~aspects of Swahili~~ cultural aspects i.e their customs and traditions which can be used to define the Swahili people.

In *Takhmisa ya liyongo*, it was possible to find the source of the Swahili people's pride as a community. Their traditional and cultural hero and ~~warrior and~~ warrior Fumo Liyongo, seems to provide that identity of a religious people, valiant, just, peaceful (but not cowardly) and who will not let anyone or anything usurp their freedom since they solely believe in the benevolence of Allah/God. The poem provides an insight into some important aspects of Swahili customs, some of which derive from Islamic teachings. The incumbent duty to fight for one's rights and also to take revenge, are the most important themes discussed in the poem. Aspects of material culture like the weapons used in combat, are also highlighted.

Inkishafi is also a great piece of Swahili classic poetry providing an avenue into understanding and explaining aspects of their beliefs and customs. Though the verse draws its inspiration from religious teachings that man must strive to serve only Allah/God in this life and cultivate good deeds (*thawabu*) for the hereafter, it is a philosophical glimpse into the Swahili people's history, culture and identity. The poem has elucidated and insisted on doing well. That Swahili society was/is stratified, that the Swahili people are contemplative; they can be identified as a people driven by morals and uprightness. This is the sure formula for a good, fulfilling life here on earth and in the Hereafter. The poem highlights the Swahili people's belief in the Hereafter and that a person's good deeds on earth will be compensated likewise with good in the Hereafter, and vice versa. It captures well their religious beliefs.

Utendi wa Mwanakupona, though basically a mother's advice to her daughter, has enabled us to see how the Swahili treat the institution of marriage. It is apparent that Mwanakupona believes a good and successful marriage should be driven by God-wariness, respect and mutual love for spouse, performance of each the spouse's duties and having love and respect for parents, relatives, fellow Muslims and (even non-Muslims) and perseverance. This poem has been an inspiration to the Swahili people for many generations since its message would appear to be relevant at all times. This poem captures in detail a Swahili/ Islamic marriage. Though it concentrates in outlining a wife's duties and obligations in marriage, it is assumed that a husband's duties are subsumed within the wife's. This is because the Swahili believe, good only begets good in an ideal setting; though variations will be the norm rather than the exception in real-life situations.

The story of the Swahili hero/warrior is told in great detail in *Utenzi wa Fumo Liyongo*. It is an important source of information about the Swahili people. That the Swahili people had a ruler (Sultan) whose administration was very developed with ministers, courtiers, guards and that it was housed in a fort-like building. The verse also confirms the Swahili used *mafumo* (spears) *zembe* (bows and arrows), *zigongo* (clubs) to fight. That the Swahili practiced inter-marriages is confirmed when Liyongo marries a Gala girl. The Swahili people also took pride in their *Gungu* and *Mwao* dances, which confirms they too, participated in cultural activities during different occasions. In this regard, one is tempted to use Knappert's (1967:63) words to describe the Swahili people. He says the Swahili are driven and live by '...principals of mercy ,

justice, patience, duty and peace of mind create a type of people that will be gentle and contemplative.' It is was found out that each one of the characteristics mentioned by Knappert above, forms some of the thematic engagements of the poems.

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A Historical Analysis of the Mother Language Crisis in Urban Primary Schools in Uganda 1903-2007

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Abstract

This documentary analysis paper explores debates since colonial times on mother language absence in school environments, specifically, multilingual urban areas in Uganda. Documentary analysis was done on relevant literature about mother language use in educational contexts. This study is significant because it unveils the mother language situation in multilingual urban primary schools of Uganda and makes suggestions as part of efforts to develop a reading culture. A key finding was that since 1903 during the time of British colonialism in Uganda, there has always been a discrepancy between the language of instruction at school (school language) and the mother language at home. Currently, it is common in urban areas where rural-urban migration attracts people of different language backgrounds and the language of instruction at school is not the mother language spoken by the children. Family literacy practices such as intergenerational reading where older members of the household read for /and with, the younger ones, is most likely to exist and be enhanced when the language used at home is the same as that used by the school for instruction. It is then that parents and guardians, only literate in the mother language can engage with their children in intergenerational literacy tasks related to the school, thus increasing the children's school

learning achievements and their own, as adults. When the school language is not the mother language as is the case in Uganda with English use throughout the urban primary school cycle, there is usually a family literacy challenge where most parents/guardians are non-literate in English and literate only in the mother language. The language of instruction and interaction in the urban schools being English throughout the primary cycle creates the mother language crisis. Parents, guardians and older family members not literate in English are inhibited from engaging in reading and writing with their children due to mother language absence in the children's urban schools. The documentary analysis suggests that mother language crisis in multilingual primary school environments can be solved by primary schools using a dominant indigenous language, thereby allowing and strengthening intergenerational literacy in families already literate in the chosen indigenous language.

Key words: Mother tongue, education crisis, family literacy, intergenerational literacy

Introduction

The United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defines mother language as a language that the child can speak fluently before going to school; one in which the child can operate confidently in all domains relevant to the child's life, (Dyken, 1990). The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises that all children have a right to education and to learn and use the language of the family, thereby binding signatory countries to guarantee this right to its citizens. The 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, in particular, goal number four emphasizes the need to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; language can promote inclusion or exclusion, (Sustainable development knowledge platform, 2015).

All over the world, the languages of former colonies have many times, dominated languages of minority ethnic groups. In Africa, colonial languages have historically been institutionalized especially in schools, with languages like English obtaining and maintaining a celebrated status and identity, (Altinyelken, Moorcroft and Draai, 2013; Ouane and Glanz, 2005). In many countries across the world characterized by linguistic and ethnic diversity, the issue of language of instruction (LOI) in education policies is greatly debated, (Altinyelken et al, 2013). Within Sub-Saharan Africa, several authors such as Fafunwa, Macauley and Soyinka (1989); Prah, (2000); Mazrui, (1996) argue that there is a strong relationship between the use of a foreign language and underdevelopment, showing that a colonial language of instruction does not offer grounding in literacy skills, identity and history needed by the learner, community and the nation. Family literacy practices where older members of the household read for / with, the younger ones, is most likely to exist and be enhanced when the language used at home is the same as that used by the school for instruction. It is then that parents and guardians, only literate in the mother language can engage with their children in intergenerational literacy tasks related to the school, thus increasing the children's school learning achievements and their own, as adults, (Hanemann, McCaffery, Newell-Jones, and Scarpino, 2017). Intergenerational literacy promotes meaningfulness of literacy to the children and increases chances of success at school, (Hanemann, 2015). The research question that guided this review paper was 'to explore the situation of mother language use or absence in primary schools in Uganda since colonial times, especially urban primary schools'. This review

paper therefore, offers a historical trace and analysis of the language policy in Uganda with respect to the use/ absence of indigenous languages in primary education.

The method used to collect data for this review paper was Documentary analysis of articles and books focusing on the aspect of language of instruction in schools in Uganda within the period of 1903 to 2007. The period of review was set as 1903 till 2007 to be able to cover the colonial period in addition to the post-colonial times, 2007 being the year when the current language policy guidelines took effect in primary schools in Uganda. The selection criteria equally included the fact that the publication to be used in this review had to be relevant to the research question of exploring mother language use or absence in primary schools in Uganda since the British colonial times in Uganda. Using Google search engine and google scholar in particular, I made the search using the key terms listed above. I then identified publications that had titles indicating closeness to the research question and went ahead to read and use those that I found answering the research question. I equally visited the Library at the College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University, checked on the titles on the shelves and picked for reading those publications whose title, preface and contents appeared relevant to answering the research question.

Mother-Language use during the Colonial Period in Uganda 1903-1962

Since 1903, various leaders in Uganda, right from the colonial governors, to the African presidents always issued policy statements on the adoption and use of an African language for use as a medium of instruction. It is only Governor Sir William Gowers who reigned from 1925-1932, that ever drew up and tried to implement a programme for teaching such a language and developing its use. Governor Sir William Gowers set up measures such as pronouncing that government would withhold grants to all schools that never complied with the Kiswahili policy and he announced a government plan to discourage Luganda in favor of Kiswahili. However, his efforts were frustrated by missionaries who controlled the schools and yet he had not consulted them on the policy before declaring it. Many policy statements have therefore ended up as footnotes in history due to failure by leaders and presidents to lay out and emphasise thorough planning and resource allocation to the policy statements, (Kasozi, 2000; Namyalo and Nakayiza, 2015).

During the earlier years of British colonial rule in Uganda, Kiswahili was the language preferred in the policy statements regarding local languages, while Luganda, the widely spoken and known of Uganda's indigenous languages was found unfavorable due to Buganda's association with the colonial administration that had created immense unpopularity of the Baganda. The first Ugandan leader who formulated a language policy in favor of Kiswahili language was Governor Sadler in 1903 by making the learning of the language compulsory for all senior colonial officers at the time. A few years later in 1919, the conference of provincial commissioners recommended that Kiswahili be taught in the missionary schools at the time even though the same commissioners reversed their position on Kiswahili language in 1922 having neither allocated resources to the task nor developing teaching and learning resources for the language, (Kasozi, 2000). Christian missionaries were strongly opposed to Kiswahili due to the fear that it would promote the spread of Islam. Between 1948 and 1962, the policy supporting Kiswahili was dropped, with the recommendation of the Nuffield Study Group of

1951-1953 that the teaching of Kiswahili in the Ugandan schools be stopped reasoning that it blocked the learning of English. The teaching and learning of English, its use as the LOI in schools, teacher-training and publication of education materials was henceforth institutionalized by the colonial government as the official language of Uganda, modelling the British public-school system with the aim of producing civil servants for the colonial government, (Ssekamwa, 1997; Kasozi, 2000).

Mother-Language absence in Urban Primary Schools in Post-Colonial Uganda 1962-2007

The post-independence era in Uganda started off with the same language policy situation and the dominance of English amidst debates over a national language that was never to be. The post-colonial Ugandan governments never reflected on the colonial experience of promoting Kiswahili because in 1973, for example, Idi Amin, the then President decreed that Kiswahili be the language of instruction and national language. President Idi Amin, however, neither allocated resources nor attempted to overcome the negative social forces that supported the English language. Amin's decree never got implemented at all, (Altinyelken et al, 2013).

There have been several educational reviews, all recommending the use of indigenous languages in primary schooling, but especially so for the schools located in rural areas. The most prominent policy documents on language in Education in Uganda are; the 1992 White paper on Education and the Thematic curriculum, (National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and Ministry of Education and Sports (MoE&S), 2013).

The language policy in primary schools was refocused and re-examined in 2004 in a curriculum review that led to a thematic curriculum for the primary schools. In 2007, the thematic curriculum was launched nationwide, having within it the local language policy that had been recommended in the 1992 Government White Paper, especially in reference to the first three years of lower primary schooling, but also on the other classes of the primary school cycle. The first three years of primary schooling addressed by the thematic curriculum are Primary 1, 2 and 3. The thematic curriculum is based on the use of indigenous languages as the medium of instruction for the first three years of rural primary schooling, followed by a transitional year as primary four in which the medium of instruction transitions towards the English language that is supposed to follow a subject-based curriculum, rather than a thematic curriculum. Urban schools, on the other hand, use English throughout the primary school cycle, (Government of Uganda, 1992; McGregor, 2000; Altinyelken et al, 2013). Uganda is highly multilingual. Its urban areas are multilingual too due to rural-urban migration where people of different ethnicities move from the different regions with their different mother languages, (Namyalo and Nakayiza, 2015). However, for rural primary schools, the move to using indigenous languages was a great step except for the problems relating to inadequate teacher training on how to teach a mother language, shortage of resource books and materials in mother languages. Whereas the 1992 Government Whitepaper gave a lot of importance to Kiswahili language, no enough resources were allocated to its teaching and learning nor effort made to restructure the social forces and practices that favor English, and as such, the effect of the policy on the practice of Kiswahili is almost unnoticeable, (Kasozi, 2000).

Discussion

The colonial administration's choice of languages in schools was carefully made to provide political stability against clashing ethnic rivalries, while towards independence of the colony, the British became more concerned with ensuring that the colonies developed into Afro-Western elite people who spoke English as well, (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998). The post-colonial absence of the mother language in urban primary schools, though explained by the multi-lingual nature of urban communities in Uganda, is not convincing as justification for promoting the use of a foreign language only, while marginalizing indigenous languages and totally blocking their existence in such urban primary schools. This absence of the mother language threatens the survival of the indigenous languages in urban settings among that generation of children, the family and community literacy practices, in general.

Literacy is defined differently depending on the context and as such, there are many forms of literacy. UNESCO argues that literacy involves a continuum of learning that is measured at different levels of proficiency, including the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials in varying contexts, (Montoya, 2018). In this paper, I will use the definition of literacy as a basic form given that primary education in Uganda is largely aimed at enabling learners gain basic literacy skills of reading, writing and using reading and writing to represent numeracy at the minimum level. There is a logical relationship between language and literacy whereby the ability to read and write presupposes language because one becomes literate in a language or languages.

However, basic ability to read and write words is not adequate since critical educators and philosophers such as Freire, for example, argue that only critical literacy has the power to transform individuals and make them desirous of transforming their societies. To be critical, one should be able to engage and question reality beyond the classroom environment and interact with family and society. Literacy learning is not confined to classrooms but is used and developed in different ways across a wide range of life situations at home, at work, in the community and other public and private environments. Language is an important part of the processes of being critical such as dialogue, (Freire, 1982).

Using an indigenous language in school can create and promote opportunities for the use, improvement and retention of literacy skills so as to sustain the acquired skills, (UIL, 2017). As such, the language used at home should be offered space at school and not totally ignored. In Uganda's urban areas, it is unfortunate that there is an apparent lack of choice of which language to use. Effort could be made to teach the most dominant indigenous languages in particular urban areas as opposed to totally focusing on English, while devaluing and marginalising indigenous languages, indigenous knowledge and cultural identities, (Altinyelken et al, 2013). When children start primary education in a foreign language that they do not know, such as English, students are more likely to find learning difficult and overwhelming. When learning new concepts, teachers and pupils are unable to interact naturally and cannot therefore negotiate meaning-symbol relations easily and when children get difficulty in understanding concepts, the teachers cannot easily determine whether the difficulty is about a failure to understand the concept or about the challenges posed by the language of instruction, (Diaz, 1999). In addition, the mother tongue and the respective culture are key sources of identification and self-confidence. Through the use of mother tongue and bilingual literacy education as well as culturally adapted curricula in schools, the knowledge

and communicative practices of the individual and his/her community are valued. Literacy education expands under such conditions, thus increasing the learner's possibilities to shape and participate in social interaction, (Ouane and Glanz, 2005).

Uganda as a country must therefore make far more resources available to enhance the teaching of indigenous languages in primary school, (MacGregor, 2000). Language planning must reconsider the social forces within the country that could block implementation of the policy. In colonial Uganda, for example, the Christian missionaries and the Baganda were the two powerful social groups that had historically been opposed to policies recommending Kiswahili use in education and society generally. Protestant missionaries, for example, had a language policy on their own, different from the government one whereby the protestant missionaries aimed at teaching the gospel in the language of their converts and only use English at higher levels of their teaching, (Kasozi, 2000). Therefore Luganda, a mother language of Baganda, and therefore one of the indigenous languages of Uganda was the one preferred in the protestant missionary schools, while the colonial government preferred Kiswahili, and later, English when the Kiswahili policy failed. Luganda would have probably served better then, had it not been for the fears that it would create dissent from other language communities.

The use of English as the medium of instruction is largely related to the fact that Western education was brought to Africa by the European colonial powers and as such eurocentrism was part of the package that former colonies are still struggling with and largely failing to get rid of.

It is important to note that the use of a non-indigenous language like English in school environments in African schools often results in differential educational treatments between urban and rural areas, leading to maintenance or increasing societal inequalities. The children might hardly attain similar achievements in mother language literacy due to the differentiated exposure to mother language literacy. Indigenous African languages should be greatly emphasised in African schools if education is to contribute to the much needed social, economic and political transformation, (Bunyi, 1999).

It must be emphasised that language is both part of culture and is also the medium through which culture is transmitted. Therefore, serious deliberations about the language policy in Uganda as regards the place of indigenous languages in education in urban areas needs rethinking so that they are not totally ignored as is the case. Indigenous mother languages should be given space in the multilingual urban school environments and not pride in using English at the expense of the mother languages of the children as used at home. It would be great to embrace multi-literacies throughout the school cycle, (Ouane and Glanz, 2005).

The district language boards, provided for in the 1992 Uganda Government White Paper were not given the needed attention and funding by central government and yet if they existed and were functional, they would have used their potential to provide support for local language development and use in primary schools and foster the effective implementation of the thematic curriculum generally. Development of orthographies, texts and instructional materials are largely the responsibility of the district language boards, that unfortunately operate as volunteers, where they actually exist, (Altinyelken et al, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper has focused on secondary data got from previous studies conducted largely on mother language / indigenous language use in education and has therefore highlighted a historical situation of mother language use and absence in primary schools in Uganda. It has equally offered a discussion of the issue of mother language in education showing the importance of indigenous languages use in education, for sustainability of literacy skills but also for cultural identity and belongingness. Whereas it is true that some urban families in Uganda use English at home, leading to children not speaking a mother language, there are also homes where a mother language is spoken and so children from such homes would benefit more if they had found that mother language used or taught at school. Uganda risks having a future with a generation that speaks no indigenous language.

It is therefore the conclusion of this paper that effort should be made to teach some indigenous languages in the urban schools, even if it might be complex to use the indigenous languages as the overall language of instruction due to the multilingual nature of the urban school and home environments. The choice would have to be carefully made and enforced better through the Ministry of Education, as opposed to leaving it to the largely privatized urban schools to make the choice because they might not be able to agree with the parents on which indigenous language to offer. The dominant indigenous language in the location of the urban school environment might be the best choice of language to be taught, given the high language readiness among the children, (Ghee, 2014). Schools should be guided and facilitated by the Ministry of Education to teach any of the dominant indigenous languages in the urban areas where the schools are located. An indigenous language is important for a sense of identity with one's country and as an important part of the society generally, it strengthens family relationships that are bound to weaken due to the lack of a common language of interaction among family members. Language policies should be reflexive regarding the spaces and importance of different languages both economically, politically and socio-culturally; a good language policy should neither sacrifice children's advancement and mastery of the global English language nor impede education that is culturally relevant and significant in the children's everyday lives, (Altinyelken, et al, 2013; Bunyi, 1999).

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The Importance of Learning Materials in Mother Tongue Education in the Kenyan Competency Based Curriculum

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Abstract

The quest for mother tongue instruction has always been at the heart of Kenya's language policy. However, no tangible results have been witnessed thus far. This is mainly due to the fact that the policies on paper and the realities on the ground are miles apart. Children learn better and faster when concepts are introduced and explained in a familiar language (Cummins, 2000). Studies have also consistently underscored the overall values of mother tongue education which include, the growth and preservation of the indigenous languages and, the contribution to national development. The revised and newly implemented Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) recognizes the significance of mother tongue instruction in the early grades and have thus given it prominence in the curriculum. This paper looks at the challenges and threats to the successful implementation of this policy by focusing on the status of the learning materials. The policy requires that mother tongue be taught as a language and more importantly, as a language of instruction in the early grades. Learning materials in the mother tongue or local languages are therefore central in the teaching and learning of the languages. On the contrary, there is high deficiency in the availability of such materials. This article explores the benefits of mother

tongue in development and addresses the status and/or availability of learning materials for successful implementation of mother tongue instruction. It employs a survey design to establish the status of the learning materials and establish comparative practices of similar initiatives in selected African countries. It highlights the pitfalls/threats to the success of MTE and gives recommendations.

Key words: Mother tongue education; Learning materials; Instruction; CBC

Introduction

The policy on Mother Tongue Education (MTE) is not new in the Kenyan school curriculum. There have been several Commissions informing educational reforms from precolonial times to the present. Each of these commissions has had a recommendation on the inclusion of mother tongue in the educational curriculum. The education language policy dates back to the pre-colonial times. Schools in pre-independence Kenya were set up along segregation lines. There were European, Asian and African schools each with a different language policy as Mbaabu, 1996 reports:

English as the medium of Instruction in the European schools...In the Asian primary schools pupils learnt in one of the major languages of the Asian community namely Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu. English was taught as a subject in the first three years after which it became the medium of instruction. In the African schools 20 mother tongues were used as the media of instruction as recommended by the Beecher Report while Kiswahili was used ...where there was heterogeneity. English was taught as a subject from Standard 1 and it became the medium of instruction from standard v. (pp116).

A major impact of this policy was the elevation of European schools hence English to a superior role (the European schools were superior in infrastructure, well trained teachers, upward mobility, etc.) and African schools, hence mother tongue, to an inferior role. Is it possible that the psychological attitude created by this historical background that English is superior has lived with us to date? The African feels educated and fulfilled when they speak English. Therefore, asking them to use mother tongue in school is always deemed retrogressive. Policy planners and educationists ought to come to terms with this psychological reality that requires a positive mind change for all the stakeholders.

Kenya has had several education commissions that have influenced government education policies. As detailed in Wa Mberia (2016), some of the key commissions that have been undertaken to review education include: the Phelps-Stokes Commission (1924), the Beecher report (1949), the Binns Commission (1952), the Ominde report (1963), the Bessey report (1972), the Gachathi report (1976), the Mackay report (1981), the Kamunge report (1988), the Koech report (1999) and the Odhiambo report (2012).

These commissions made numerous recommendations which have had a bearing on the language policy over the years. Specifically, the reports have shown that indigenous languages are crucial vehicles in the acquisition of education. The Phelps Stokes Commission (1924), for example, recognised the great role of indigenous languages in the development of character and acquisition of life skills in agriculture. The Bessey Commission (1972), on the other hand, noted the many benefits that accrue when a child starts formal learning in a language that he or she understands. On a similar note, the post-colonial commissions such as those of Gachathi

(1976), Koech (1999) and Nikiema (2011) recommended the need for a child to be taught using the language of the school's catchment area and for Kiswahili to be used only in schools with a heterogeneous population. The current educational reforms have led to the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) where the language policy for the early years states that the language of instruction (LoI) in pre-primary (PP1 and PP2) and grades 1–3 (G1, G2 and G3) shall be the language of the school's catchment area until Grade 4, after which English shall be the main LoI (KICD, 2017). It is clear that there is no dispute as to whether or not mother tongue should be part of the school curriculum. However, in spite of the good will, implementation of the policy has been and continues to be a challenge. Some of the reasons for these are known but sadly, not addressed. This study, apart from exploring the gains from mother tongue development and use, also endeavours to look at the status and role of learning materials for effective operationalization of the policy on mother tongue education.

Challenges to MTE

Most African countries have challenges with the incorporation of MTE in their language planning policies due to various factors. These arise from the colonization phenomenon that is part of the African history. Although colonization is long gone, the impact lives on.

The intrusion on African cultural values, economic erosion, the psychological brain wash resulting into identity crisis just to mention a few, are evident marks of colonization. The aspect of language choice is a real crisis emanating out of this background. Most African countries have little or no choice but to use the language of their colonizers for official and even national purposes. In Kenya, English remains the dominant official and instructional language with considerable successful attempts to match Kiswahili to this status.

The desire to elevate the status of indigenous languages has always been seriously expressed and demonstrated by the review of language policies spelling the use of mother tongue in schools at least in the lower grades. However, whereas the policies look very brilliant and achievable on paper, the realities on the ground are far much different. The latest curriculum reforms in Kenya resulting into the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) have spelt a very strong and promising case in the application of mother tongues or indigenous languages in school. Nevertheless, the lingering question in the minds of many is, 'will we succeed this time round?' As Mandillah (2017) observes, "The poor performance in the numeracy and literacy skills could also be attributed to the failure of the 8-4-4 system to implement the MTE policy", we are prone to wonder, is there a guarantee that the CBC mother tongue policy will succeed? What is it that will make it succeed or fail and what is being done about it? It is imperative to ask all the hard questions and seek solutions. A look at a few African countries listed below reveals that this is not just a Kenyan problem.

Language Status and Experiments in Selected African Countries

Nigeria: Approximately 500 languages are spoken in Nigeria (Simire, 2004). English is dominant and three local languages, i.e., Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are recommended for national use because of the large population of speakers. Anglo Nigerian pidgin (ANP) and Arabic are neutral codes. One Hundred (100) codes have been standardized and reduced to writing.

This should be an encouragement to Kenya which has a 43 languages (or about 70 on the higher side). It is possible to have them all standardized and to develop literacy

materials. **Botswana:** Setswana is the common mother tongue spoken by 80% of the population but English has the high status. It is the official language while Setswana is the national language (Bagwasi, 2004).

Cameroon: Cameroon has over 250 language varieties (Boulleys, 2014). English and French were adopted as the official languages in 1960 when Cameroon became independent. Cameroon has German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese and Arabic as foreign languages. Cameroon has two systems of education – the English system in the English speaking part of the country and the French system in the French speaking part. In addition, Cameroon has widespread use of Cameroon Pidgin English and “Camfranglais” (a mixed language derived from English, French Pidgin English and some national languages like Duala and used mainly by youths) as contact languages. All the ethnic languages are considered as national languages even though none of them is used in public institutions (Boulleys, 2014).

Zambia: Zambia has more than 73 languages (Matafwali & Adriana, 2014) with English as the medium of instruction. The Zambian Ministry of Education in a bid to address poor literacy levels related to language difficulties introduced a primary reading programme (PRP) that was to be initialized in mother tongue and then transition to English. The initial programme was dubbed New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL).

This was introduced in seven Zambian languages that are considered familiar in different regions of the country. These were: *Siloze, ChiTonga* for Southern Province; *Lunda, Luvale, Kikaonde* for North Western; *ChiNyanja* for Eastern and Lusaka; *Ichibemba* for Northern, Luapula, Central and Copperbelt provinces (Matafwali & Adriana, 2014, pp 132). This could provide a good scenario test case for Kenya in terms of what works well and what mistakes to be avoided. **Uganda:** Uganda has over 40 indigenous languages and English is the official language. Uganda rolled out a new curriculum in 2007 named Thematic Programme that saw the enforcement of mother tongue instruction from P1 to P4 (Baleeta & Aslei, 2014). To achieve this, some measures were put in place at community as well as national level. At community level, there was formation of language boards and promotion of local language writers and translation groups to ensure production of instructional materials. At institutional level, there was development of curricular to promote the teaching of local languages at different educational levels. They were also to ensure training of teachers, formation of the language policy, instructional materials development and research. A report by Piper, Brunettee, Jordan, King, & Nabacwa (2019) gives an evaluation of a literacy programme that Uganda implemented in 2013 dubbed, School Health and Reading Program (SHARP). The program ran trials in 12 language communities in a Clustered Randomized Controlled Trial (CRCT). The program provides textbooks to pupils at a one to one ratio, accompanying teaching guides, teacher training and ongoing support to teachers implementing the program. In their evaluation, Piper et al. (2019) report that SHARP had a statistically positive impact on literacy achievement (reading and comprehension) in 9 of the 12 languages.

We can see an attempt by Zambia and Uganda to institute mother tongue literacy programmes. The Uganda experiment in particular is worth learning from. They have run trials in 12 language communities with concerted effort to do it well. For one, they are covering a small section which can be easily managed. Additionally, they provide adequate textbooks, teachers' guides, teacher training and ongoing support.

What is the implication of this section to your study?

Indigenous Languages and Development

A pertinent statement made by Boulleys (2014) about the Cameroon situation captures well the power of language in the building of a nation. This author states,

“Language has a binding force. It is the link between its speakers and their environments...This link is missing in post-independent Cameroon and many other states in Africa. Thus, the dream of ‘national unity’ is highly jeopardized rather than being fostered because there is little or no sense of belonging to the same nation.” (pp196).

Languages matter for development and there is a correlation between language and thought and more importantly, expression of ideas. Multilingualism has been proven to have advantages hence, all is not lost for African nations. The fight should not be to get rid of foreign languages or of multilingualism but how to harness and exploit the multilingual situation for advancement. The argument is that one way of harnessing multilingualism is by developing and promoting the use of indigenous languages. It is important to tip the equilibrium to bring indigenous languages to the fore and the most effective vehicle to achieve this is through the education system. The language situation in Asia and Europe is a testament to this as countries like China, Japan, Korea, Sweden, and Germany have used their languages to build strong economies.

Their children do not struggle in school to learn a language so as to learn. African children who go to study in their schools have to learn their languages in order to learn Kanana (2013) opines that the use of African languages is essential for development and advocates for the development of regional *linguae francae* on the African Continent. This argument can be scaled down to individual countries such as Kenya where a decision needs to be made whether we need regional languages or all the languages. This is a debate that needs much interrogation and consultation.

Kenya has instituted the CBC that places more emphasis on learners’ mental ability to process issues and proposes a practical framework that nurtures competencies of learners based on their passions and talents. The CBC is aimed at making education responsive to the imperatives of Vision 2030 and the Structural Development Goals (SDGs). It is believed that amongst other factors, MTE as envisaged in the CBC will ensure that learners acquire competencies and skills to meet the human resource aspirations of Kenya’s Vision 2030 blueprint for development (Wa Mberia, 2016). A major consideration for instance is Kenya’s economic base which relies heavily on two sectors: Agriculture and Tourism. Considering that the majority of Kenyans who drive these sectors terminated their schooling (if any) at primary school level, then it is amust to look at what language they transact their business in. Therefore, while considering factors that drive the economy, language should be at the centre.

Developing nations like Kenya should focus on research based solutions on how to harness indigenous knowledge for innovation and production realizing that indigenous knowledge is driven by indigenous languages. Asian countries for example, have stuck to their languages and they are building strong economies. African countries should realize that it is not just a question of instituting MTE that will build the languages. More importantly, it is the status that is given to those languages. Learning a mother tongue in Grade 1 to 3 or even 7 and then dispensing with it altogether will take the nation nowhere. There are several ways to give prominence to indigenous languages. For example, in signages like roads, in hospitals and

business premises situated in the grass root areas..... The use of locally manufactured products for the local market should also be encouraged. If a product emanates from a particular County or region it should bear the local identity, which may include informational leaflets in the local language with a Kiswahili or English translation This can be one way of promoting the use of indigenous languages.

Indigenous languages are also very important in matters of civic education and social issues such as constitutional amendment and referendums. Such issues are so critical that they should be explained in a language that is well understood by the local communities. Similarly, there are many social and environmental issues affecting communities. For instance, the rise in cases of domestic violence, gender based discrimination, alcohol and drug abuse, retrogressive practices like..., road carnage and suicide. In some of the cases, dialogues must be held in mother tongue to touch the core of the problems. When it comes to peace building initiatives in community groups, the language used is critical. Local disputes among local communities are best handled in local languages.

Benefits of Mother Tongue Education (MTE)

Undoubtedly, language is one of, if not the most important resource endowed to humankind. An indisputable fact is that learning starts long before a child starts school. Furthermore, no learning can take place without language whether verbal or nonverbal. However, language planning policies largely do not take cognisance of the family language where communication and learning starts long before a child goes to school. This is left to the whims and discretion of individual families. Nevertheless, any serious/meaningful consideration of mother tongue education must start with the consideration of the home language in spite of the fact that this presents a very diverse and complex situation.

Many studies have demonstrated that children in all leading countries in the world go through their education in their own mother tongue (Grandish, 2009). There are many gains from a mother tongue based instruction particularly in the early years of school. The most acknowledged and attested benefit to mother tongue education is that it creates a smooth transition from home to school, there is a solid learning foundation from familiar to unfamiliar and, children learn better in their mother tongue (Hovens, 2002; UNESCO, 2005; Moses & Wigglesworth, 2008; Adenyinka, 2014). These facts have been stated for a long time. For example, UNESCO (1953) underscored the importance of educating children in their MT because children are more likely to enrol and succeed in school if they are instructed in the language they best understand.

A further proven benefit of mother tongue formational instruction is that children transition better into a second language and perform better than when they start learning in the second/foreign language. According to Buhmann and Trudell (2008), mother tongue has been found to create an enabling foundation such as. sound recognition and word patterns that helps the learner to use the skills in the acquisition of a second language. Moreover, mother tongue instruction reduces the time teachers spend explaining difficult concepts (Cummins, 2000; Muthwii, 2002; Wa Mberia, 2016).

Several other benefits of MTE that have been identified. First, Learners are more confident. They can engage in group discussions, debates, etc., and there is overall better communication. Naturally, people are shy to express themselves in a language they are not competent in leave alone read and write in that language. But we test our learners' competence on the strength of whether they can read in English (UWEZO, 2013). Secondly, Parents can participate in supporting their children's education e.g. with homework (Benson, 2005). There are many parents who are not conversant with English and therefore cannot assist their children with homework when it is in English. The use of MT also minimizes cases of truancy, grade repetition and dropout rate (Pinnock, 2009). When children are confident learners because they are not struggling with language, they will enjoy being in school. Lastly, MTE will preserve indigenous language, knowledge and culture hence, rich national culture, unity, patriotism and development.

Kenya is therefore on the right track in giving prominence to MTE in the new curriculum, CBC. But what are the chances that this time round the policy will succeed? There have been impediments in the past to the enforcement of the mother tongue policy. Notably among these were: negative attitudes towards mother tongue due to its low status and lack of trained teachers as well as learning materials. The study will focus on the latter.

Data on the Status of Learning Materials

This study emphasises the aspect of learning materials as one pillar that will determine the successful implementation of MTE. A survey conducted with KICD yielded the following information on the availability of learning materials as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Status of learning materials available for implementation of CBC

Books Developed	Curriculum	Grade	Publisher	Comment
Kiambu	Old Curriculum	Std. 1-3	KICD	
Gikuyu	Old Curriculum & CBC	Std. 1-3/Grade 1-3	KICD/MORAN/ KLB	Done
Taveta	Old Curriculum	Std. 1-3	KICD	
Dholuo	Old Curriculum	Std. 1-3	KICD/MORAN	
Pokot	Old Curriculum	Std. 1-3	KICD	
Dholuo	CBC	Grade 1-3	EAEP	Done
Kikamba	Old Curriculum & CBC	Std. 1-3/Grade 1-3	EAEP	Done
Maa	Old Curriculum	Std. 1-3	WERK	Pre-primers and primers. They have been evaluated by KICD as

				supplementary materials.
Chidigo, Chiduruma, Pokomo, Kitharaka, Kigiriama	Old Curriculum	Std. 1-3	SIL/WERK/EAT/Reading Kenya	Materials submitted for evaluation Readers for ECDE developed by KICD
Ekegusii	CBC	Literacy grades 1 – 3	EAEP	Done
Kigiryama	CBC	Literacy grades 1 – 3	EAEP	Submitted to KICD for vetting

Source: KICD (2020)

As a starting point, it was noted that, only 23 out of the 43 recognized indigenous languages in Kenya have standardized orthographies. Thus, the remaining 20 need standardizing before school materials can be produced.

From the table it is notable that; only four languages i.e. Dholuo, Gikuyu, Kikamba and Ekegusii have books published for CBC grade 1 – 3. This notwithstanding, the programme is already in motion having been rolled out in January 2020. Only 9 languages have literacy material for the old curriculum, but these are not aligned to CBC therefore cannot be relied on as main texts. These considered against a total of 43 or more languages shows a great disparity. This is a major gap that should be addressed by researchers and other stakeholders.

KICD also reported that, the mother tongue materials available have been developed by KICD and NGOs in the past but these are not aligned to the CBC curriculum and therefore are not suitable. At the moment KICD is developing indigenous language course book for grade 4 in 18 languages as preparation for the Grade 4 roll out.

At the onset of CBC there was need to have course books developed in mother tongue in line with the language policy in education, for the implementation of Language activities at PP1 and PP2 and Literacy activities at grades 1-2-3. This has not been realized since the submissions for these subjects are in English and Kiswahili.

KICD developed the grade 4 materials as a publisher of last resort. However, publishers have since been trained by KICD and it is expected that they will be engaged in the development of materials for implementation of indigenous languages in subsequent years for grades 5-6 and later grades 7-8-9 and senior school. There are quite a number of materials developed in indigenous languages. However, these have not been developed against the current curriculum

and may only be used as reference materials during implementation. It is envisaged that there will be an adequate supply of required course materials as we continue to prepare curriculum support materials for all learning areas in CBC.

There is also a need to prepare teachers for teaching in the learning area. Indigenous languages have been incorporated in the new Diploma in Teacher Education programme expected to start with the 2020 intake for TTCs. As a stop gap measure, KICD and TSC have identified schools in each of the Counties and languages working with the pilot implementation and have selected one teacher from each of these schools to be trained for the implementation of indigenous languages in grade 4.

Discussion

Developing learning materials for MTE is definitely a daunting task. This study suggests three issues that should be tackled in this regard

Attitudes

There is tension between what is viewed as the value of English over indigenous languages with the notion that:

- Learned people speak English
- English is the language for upward mobility (Muthwii 2004)

Parents in particular, believe that their children are learning by how fast they can express themselves in English and some are willing to pay the cost by putting their children in private schools – “Academies” where this is enforced. Schools generally go out of their way to make pupils speak English in the school environment.

The reality is that many of these learners who purport to speak English never really get to master the language mainly due to poor foundation. This is reflected in the poor performance in English in the national examination (KCPE) at the end of primary school. There is need for evidence based research to show that a good foundation in mother tongue will build a bridge for good performance in English.

The belief that English is the language of upward mobility is indisputable. The examinations are set in English, one needs a good grade in English to enrol into certain professional courses and employers require good performance in English in order to employ one, to mention just a few. Language planners therefore have to acknowledge this and give assurance that the policy in the long run reinforces good mastery of English for the learners while enriching their natural linguistic resources. Attitude is the first hurdle to overcome so as to get a buy in by all stakeholders regarding the importance of mother tongue education. The appreciation for the importance of learning materials in the overall success of the implementation will be largely determined by the right attitude.

Cost

Overwhelming responses towards developing materials in the indigenous languages have been for example that, there are too many languages therefore it is too costly (Kioko et al, 2008)

Kenya is often described to have 42 indigenous languages though most scholars count up to 70 languages (Wa Mberia, 2016). The languages have to be standardized and experts engaged to develop the materials not to mention the publication costs. This is not just costly but also a time-consuming venture. Strictly, for effective implementation, there is need for adequate timing with respect to materials development. There is a tendency to want to give up by citing the fact that the languages are too many. There is no doubt that developing material for all the languages is a very costly affair. Nevertheless, when the overall benefits of mother tongue educations are considered and all are convinced, then no cost is too high to pay. Furthermore, standardizing languages for learning materials development is not a recurrent cost and should be considered as one of the investments in education that a nation should make.

Status

Status is an aspect of language planning where languages that are considered prominent are accorded high status as official or national languages while the rest have low or no status at all. Mother tongue or indigenous languages generally have low status for most African countries. They are not used in school as languages of instruction or where they are, they are used mainly in the lower grades and they are not examinable. The fact that they are not examinable makes them periphery and not worth spending much time and effort on. Moreover, these languages do not count for any vocational engagement. All these factors combined contribute to the view held by many that indigenous languages do not add value therefore it is a waste of time and resources (Muthwii, 2004). Both parents and teachers do not see the value of putting energy in a language that is not examinable and that does not guarantee any employment prospects. The issue of status for indigenous languages should therefore not be glossed over.

Infrastructure

In order for the implementation of MTE policy to succeed, the necessary structures must be put in place. These include, teacher training, syllabus design, learning materials and Stakeholder sensitization. Teacher training is paramount for successful implementation of MTE policy. The training involves or requires learning materials. Organs such as Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and their efforts should be encouraged and enhanced. For example, as recorded in section 3 above, there are still many languages that need learning materials developed. This is an area that needs to be enhanced. The success of this policy will therefore require the concerted efforts of all the stake holders - parents, teachers, learners, publishers, community leaders and even employers. This study therefore opines that there is still a lot of ground to be covered for the success of MTE in the newly implemented curriculum (CBC).

Recommendations

From the foregoing arguments, the study makes the following recommendations: There should be language committees for every local language that will work with KICD and MOE to develop the literacy materials. KICD and MOE on the other hand should work with language experts to develop orthographies and standardize all the local languages before embarking on the development of literacy material. They could network with NGOs like the Bible Society of Kenya, WERK, BTL and SIL who have done some groundwork on this. The implementation should start with a few experimental schools where thorough and quality implementation of MTE is well implemented such that the results speak for themselves.

Participation in this programme should be voluntary but the Ministry of Education should conduct effective sensitization and give incentives to the participants (e.g. free books, field trips, etc.).

When MTE is fully implemented, indigenous languages should be taught up to tertiary and university level but this should free choice by the learners from secondary school upwards. Choosing a different language other than one's mother tongue could be encouraged at this level to dispel the fears that are usually raised by some people that promoting mother tongue will lead to ethnicity. There should be deliberate effort to raise the status of indigenous languages. One approach would be to develop some languages for national use. The languages should count for employment in certain sectors like domestic tourism and manufacturing. They can also be used to document and patent indigenous knowledge e.g. on athletic champions, herbal medicine, traditional foods, etc.

We should explore ways of using IT solutions in MTE for example digitalized language apps that can be accessed from computers, android mobile phones. It is possible to record simple interesting stories on these digital platforms. Experts could also translate and upload on such platforms standard materials such as the national anthem, the Lord's Prayer, etc. in all the local languages.

Conclusion

The importance of MTE has been underscored and the efforts made by our educational institution to implement the mother tongue policy in our schools acknowledged. However, the realities explored in this paper indicate that a lot still needs to be done.. There is need to relook at our strategies, borrow where necessary some ideas from those who have succeeded and tread slowly but purposefully for successful MTE implementation. This article has suggested the above recommendations towards this end.

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Social Media and Mother Tongue: An analysis of the use of Dholuo in Facebook

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Abstract

Social media has become an important tool that makes it possible for people to communicate regardless of their geographical area and language. It has enabled people from the same ethnic community to stay in touch with their home country and maintaining their linguistic and cultural identity. Different forms of social media allow people to communicate in various ways such as; blogs, social networks (Facebook) microblogs (Twitter), wikis (Wikipedia), video podcasts, and photos sharing (Instagram and Snapchat). Facebook as one of these media, has been globally ranked as one of the most used social platforms with millions of users. It has come to yield unprecedented opportunities for the use of mother tongue as it offers the possibility of exchanging in limitless numbers of text messages, images and videos. Such options allow mother tongue users to write text and practice new vocabulary through interaction. Facebook groups and pages created by members who speak the same mother tongue allow them to share texts, images, graphics, and videos through their mother tongue. In Facebook, the Luo speaking community has created a group called *True Luo's* that allow them

to interact and share in Dholuo. Therefore, this paper analyzes the use of the Dholuo on Facebook with a view to highlight and interrogate the manifestation of politics of language, ethnicity, and identity in the Facebook group known as *True Luos* as a way of reclaiming and reasserting ethnic identities in the context of overbearing ethno linguistic groups and identities which has been marginalized by the online mainstream digital media and social media. Content analysis was used to analyze posts in the *True Luo* Facebook group by the users, data was collected through content analysis and analyzed quantitatively. The paper demonstrates how Facebook has helped the growth of the Dholuo as most of the posts in the group were done in the Dholuo and some of the topics discussed were Luo cultural values, celebrity gossip, politics, and entertaining videos and photos. Therefore, the rise of social media has enabled the growth of mother tongue language.

Keywords: Mother tongue, Social media, Dholuo, Facebook

Introduction

Africa is one of the regions in the world with extensive linguistic diversity. It is estimated that the world has 6,000 plus languages but among them, it is approximated that Africa has more than 2,000 languages, which represent about a third of the world's languages (Ethnologue and SIL International, 2015). However, many scholars such as Djite (2008), Nettle and Romaine (2001) observe that not much empirical research has been done and this creates more gaps in asserting some needed facts about the linguistic situation in Africa. Kenya is among countries within Africa with multilingual and multiethnic with around 42 languages. The indigenous languages spoken in Kenya belong to the Nilotic, Bantu and Cushitic language families. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000), there are 42 languages in Kenya. Ogechi (2003) states that there are 42 codes in Kenya while Obiero (2008) states that many sources indicate that Kenya has between 30 and 60 languages, while according to Ethnologue and SIL International (2015), there are 68 languages in Kenya which include: *Aweer, Borana, Burji, Chichonyi, Chidzihana-chikauma, Chidigo, Chiduruma, Daasanach, Dahalo, Dawida, Dholuo, Ekegusii, Gichuka, Gikuyu, Kamba, Keiyo, Kiambu, Kigiryama, Kimiiru, Kipfokomo, Kipsigis, Kiswahili, Kitharaka, Kiwiana, Kuria, Lubukusu, Luidakho-luisukha-lutirich, Lukabaras, Lulogooli, Lutachoni, Maasai, Markweeta, Mwimbi-Muthambi, Nandi, Nyala, Okiek, Olukhayo, Olumarachi, Olumarama, Olunyole, Olusamia, Olushisa, Olutsotso, Oluwanga, Orma, Pokoot, Rendile, Sabaot, Sagalla, Samburu, Somali, Suba, Taveta, Terik, Teso, Torgen, Turkana, Waata and Yaaku*. Among the groups in Kenya, the Bantu group has the largest number of speakers. Among the Bantu languages, Kiswahili is the most widely used because it is used both as a first and second language.

According to the latest Kenyan Population Census (2019), the largest community natives speakers are Kikuyu 17%, Luhya 14%, Luo 11%, Kalenjin 13%, Kamba 10%, Kisii 6%, Meru 4% other African 13% and Non- African (Asian European and Arabs) 1%. According to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, both Kiswahili and English are the official languages. This means that the two languages should perform equal roles in the whole country. However, in reality, English, presumably because of its long history as the de facto official language in Kenya, still performs more official roles than Kiswahili. Some conscious effort is needed to make Kiswahili perform the roles it is entitled to by the Constitution of Kenya 2010. The Constitution further states that it promote and protect the diversity of language of the people of Kenya and

promotes the development and use of indigenous languages, Kenya Sign language, Braille and other communication formats and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities.

Mazrui and Mazrui (1998), states that the politics of language and belonging are contentious and delicate matters in most of the African countries, Kenya in particular. He argues that most of the national boundaries of most African countries are not underpinned by linguistic identities. Several ethnic groups speaking diverse languages dwell in the same country and compete for the same public spaces in a single nation-state. In Kenya, the battle for the same public spaces has been between major dominant tribes such as Kikuyu, Luos, and Kalenjins among others. According to Ndhlovu and Gatsheni (2009), contestations revolving around the supremacist positions of certain ethnic groups, their language and cultural identities, and marginalization and exclusion of other ethnolinguistic identities in public spaces, are commonplace in scholarly debates. The contestation is mostly motivated by politics of identity and belonging which include the condemnation of English Language hegemony in the public domain, which includes the media and education.

Even though Kenya is known as a multilingual nation, Kenya's two official languages, namely English and Kiswahili continuous to dominate the media and the education sector. Although English is given preferential treatment and reinforcement in the mainstream media, it remains very difficult to ascertain the percentage of the people who speak, read and write it effectively in Kenya. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) point out that English is yet to develop a large number of native speakers, writers, and readers in Kenya. In contrast, Kenya's local languages are marginalized and viewed as impediments to people's succession education by teachers who serve as government agents. These erroneous views by the school system lead to the stigmatization and DE valorization of Kenya's local languages in favor of English, as is the case in many other African states (Bokamba 2008). However, these erroneous views are not cognizant of the roles indigenous languages play as the people's initial identity markers and as major tools for the politics of language. They also serve as an important role in religious and community development as it's the language that the ethnic group identifies and understand well. Unfortunately, these important roles associated with the indigenous languages are taken for granted and Kenya's local languages continue to be marginalized by the mainstream media in Kenya in online platforms and social media.

Media has a great influence on its citizens as an information disseminating tool. The government of Kenya controls the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) which operates in Kiswahili and English but with most programs broadcasted in English. KBC broadcast in two levels that is television and radio. For the Television programs, it strictly broadcast in Kiswahili and English while it also has two radio station that broadcast in English and Kiswahili. The government has also established regional radio stations that are run in at least 17 major local languages. The languages include; *Kikuyu, Kikamba, Kimaasai Kimeru, Kiembu, Dholuo, Kisii, Teso, Luhya, Kalenjin, Kuria, Teso, Boran, Rendile, Burji and Turkana* (Kiarie 2004). After multiparty in 1992, airwaves were liberalized and this led to the development of more private FM radio stations programming in local languages throughout the day. Some of these stations include; *Mulembe FM in Luyha, Musyi FM in Kamba, Ramogi FM in Dholuo and Kameme FM in Kikuyu* among others. In television, there has been also new stations that broadcast in local languages that include *Inooro TV in Kikuyu, Lolwe Tv in Dholuo and KassTV in Kalenjin* among

others. Though in mainstream media that is leading national television stations still broadcast in English or Kiswahili. In print media, English publications dominate the market. All the leading newspapers in Kenya are all published in English except on privately local daily newspaper in Kiswahili called *Taifa Leo*. In digital media, all digital publications are done in either English or Kiswahili.

Even though mainstream media has tried to cater to the local African language, its presence has not been felt in the online media where the majority of Kenyans are present. The online communities feel that their language and cultural identities are being undermined in social media. Regrettably, online broadcast and print media in Kenya have not done any better in challenging ethnolinguistic hegemonies of whatever form or accommodating marginalized online virtualized community space to speak against their marginalization and exclusion. Instead, they participate in legitimizing discriminatory language choices and cultural representations, and in an extreme case, other minority linguistic and cultural identities are circuitously ridiculed (Mpofu and Mutasa, 2014).

The expansion of digital media technologies that support social media has seen the sprouting and consolidation of active sub-national ethnolinguistic communities in online space. These ethnolinguistic virtual communities are made up of individuals who are connected by them sharing the same language, ethnic identities, history and emotional state of suppressed cultural identities and aspirations. Against the argument that social media are liberating in the sense that they provide platforms and spaces for free participation of people (Chibuwe and Ureke, 2016). In Kenya, the proliferation of internet-enabled mobile devices has led to the rapid development of social networking sites, resulting in the continued reconfiguration of ways in which individuals or groups access social media platforms. Kenya leads the ranking of internet access among other African countries according to data that was released by the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK) which indicated that the total subscribers by 2019 were 45.7 million (CAK 2019). The report further indicates that the majority access the internet via mobile phones. The report also ranked WhatsApp and Facebook as the most commonly used social media sites. Therefore, this paper considers the ethnolinguistic communities that exist in online space which are from time to time, formed and expanding on the leading social media platforms which include Facebook.

This paper discusses the existence of the Dholuo language among the Luo community on Facebook. The focus of the paper is on how a section of the Luo community uses a digital platform on Facebook known as *True Luos*. It highlights and interrogates the manifestation of politics of language, ethnicity, and identity in the Facebook group known as *True Luos* as a way of reclaiming and reasserting ethnic identities in the context of overbearing ethnolinguistic groups and identities which has been marginalized by the online mainstream digital media and social media.

The study focused on social media specifically Facebook known as *True Luos* used to interact among themselves. *True Luos* is a group on Facebook that is open to all luos. According to the group motto, it is an appreciation group for the luos community. Other than that, it aims at promoting unity and encouraging Luo culture, ethnicity, language and pride. The group had about 397,099 members at the time of the study was conducted. It was created on 20th January 2014 and it has remained active since its creation.

Methodology

The paper is an outcome of an ethnographic study of indigenous African languages online communities that exist on social networking platforms. Online social networking sites such as Facebook allows members to create or join various Facebook groups and pages. In the groups and pages, the users have the option to participate in the groups and share ideas. According to Kozinets (2015), Netnography is the branch of ethnography that analyses the free behavior of individuals on the internet that uses online marketing research techniques to provide useful insight. Hine (2000), describe netnography as a virtual ethnography, a new approach of conducting thorough ethnographic research on online communication networks by combining archival work, participation, and observation. That is, it is a process of constructing and conducting an ethnographic study using the virtual (online) environment as the site of research.

I joined the group under study that is *True Luos* as one of the requirements of a netnographic study. I did this in 2018, one year before the study which I conducted in 2019. I participated and observed the posted matters in the group, as well as analyzing the subsequent comments and discussions on the *True Luo* group. Even though the netnography study depends more on computer-based methods of data collection, participant observation and content analysis remained a critical element in the ethnographic study (Miller and Slater, 2000). Apart from observation, the paper also obtained data using content analysis, according to Krippendorff (2004), which is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful) matter to the contexts of their use. Content analysis was conducted on one of the selected Facebook groups for this study that is *True Luo* since it's among the groups that converse in the Dholuo language and has got more active members. The group was studied for a period of three months that is, from October 2019 to December 2019.

The study approach was quantitative and through thematic analysis, the study obtained data from *True Luos*. The paper focused on pinpointing, probing and highlighting patterns that are themes in the posts and discussions which are inclined to language, ethnic and identity politics. According to Kozinets (2015), netnography is immensely useful in revealing interaction styles and personal and group narratives in networked communities and is an archive of life and a window into hidden worlds. Therefore using this approach the paper explores the use of Dholuo language on socially networked societies on Facebook to understand their language politics, ethnicity, and identity narratives and the hidden conceptions of domination, marginalization, and exclusion.

Conceptual Framework

With the emergence of social media, marginalized communities have found an opportunity where they can express themselves without discrimination. Therefore, this paper was grounded in the concepts of hegemony, alternative media, and computer-mediated communication. This concept was suitable for the study since the paper focused on the English language dominating other African languages in the online mainstream media that has led to most of the African languages felt left out in most of the debates. Since they felt left out by the dominant English, some of the speakers of the African languages have resorted to social media

platforms such as Facebook to help them be active. Hegemony is a Gramscian concept which means domination through ideology or discourse (Lash, 2007). According to Wiley (2000), in particular, linguistic or cultural hegemony is realized when dominant groups create a consensus by convincing other linguistic groups to accept their language norms and used as standard.

According to Mhalanga (2013), speaking African language in the mainstream media deliberating of language politics and politics of belonging in African countries is volatile and considered tribalism, retrogressive and divisive to the nation especially in Kenya which has experienced post-election violence caused by ethnicity. Therefore, people belonging to ethnolinguistic communities whose languages and cultural identities are undermined in social media have resorted to what Fuchs (2010) calls alternative or critical media. According to Fuchs (2010), alternative media interrogates domination and articulates standpoints of the oppressed and dominated groups and people, in the process arguing for the existence of an egalitarian society. While Pappacharissi (2002), explains that the emergence of new digital media technologies offers alternative communicative platforms that function as an online public sphere or virtual spheres. In this paper, the concept of hegemony emerges when English dominates other African languages in the social media, therefore, the Luo speaking group has come up with a group known as *True Luos* in Facebook to allow them to share their culture in Dholuo, identify themselves as Luos and discuss their politics in Dholuo.

Interrogating Counter-Discourse of Dholuo as a Minority Language on Facebook

During content analysis, 1026 posts were analyzed and some of the codes that emerged included; the language that was being used in the group, the type of discussion that was coded as political, social and economic. Under the codes, themes were developed from the social, political and social codes that emerged from the Facebook page.

The Number of People in the Groups

The study established that the group has 398,490 members during the time of the study. This is indicated by the screenshot of the group that was taken during the study. *True Luo* group members join the group either by request, approval or invitation by a friend. This process is normally managed by the administrators of the group. The problem associated with the online virtual communities is, they are typified by fragmentation, heterogeneity, and fluidity of association, arising primarily from the case of opting out (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006). The online communities can also be misused since there are no restrictions, there are sexually abusive posts. The numbers shows that the group is active and that's why it's able to attract a large number of members. This is presented by figure 1 which is a screenshot from the group.

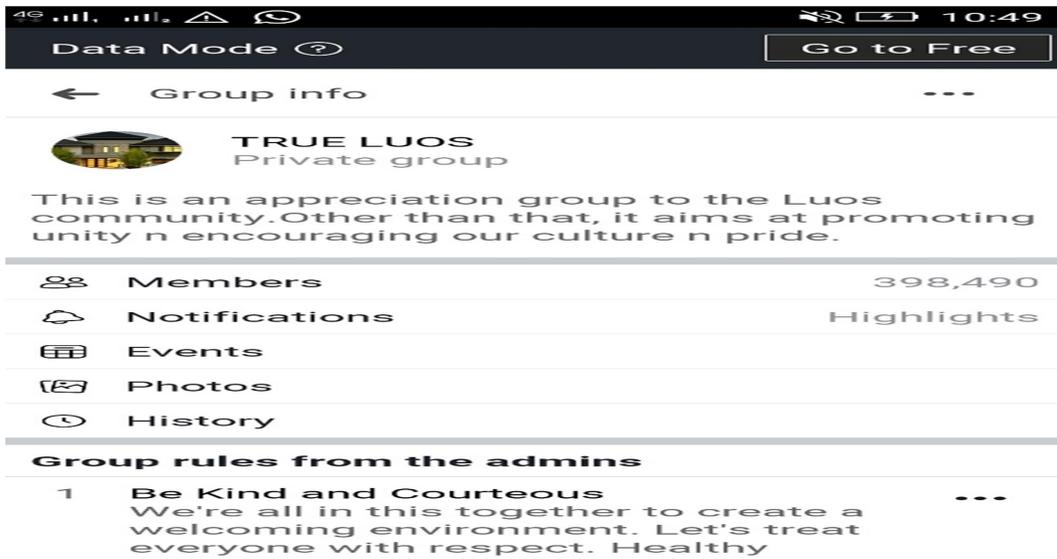


Figure 1 Screenshot from *True Luos* Facebook group

Figure 2 below shows analysis of the languages used by Facebook users in the group. It represents 1026 posts that were analyzed during the study.

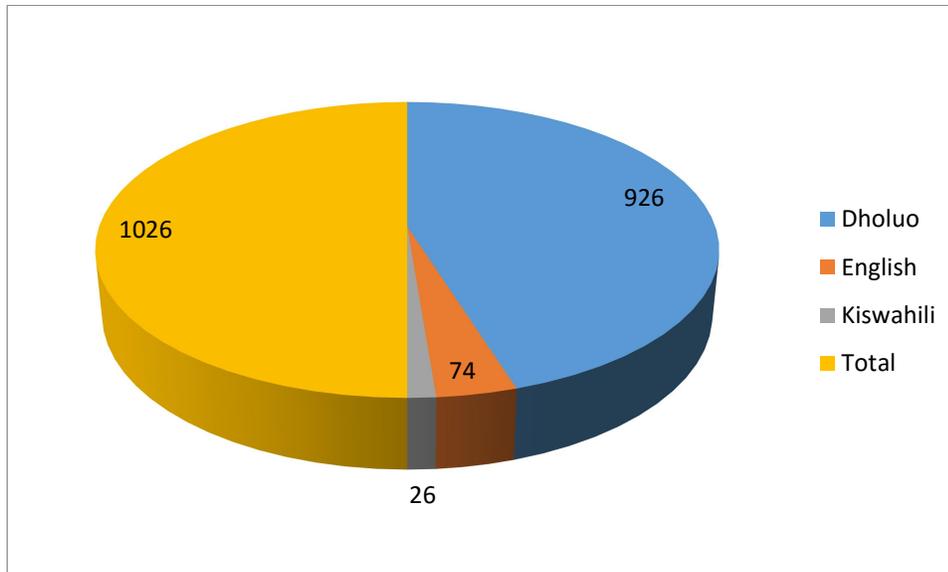


Figure 2: Languages spoken in the group

In the group, from the analyzed posts, it was found out that most of the respondents post in Dholuo as compared to English and Kiswahili. According to the number of posts that were analyzed during the period of study, it was established that out of the 1,026 posts that were analyzed in this study for three months, it was found out that 926 post that is 90% of the total posts was in Dholuo language, 74 posts that are 7% were in English while only 26 of the posts that are 3% were in Kiswahili language. From the study, it was established that *True Luos* that has been formed by the Dholuo speaking community have formed an online space for identification as Luos and also resist other languages dominance such as English among others. The study was in line with Safran and Luis's (2012) submission that speakers of minority languages often attach importance to their languages in the interest of identity maintenance, even if their use of major languages appears to be more practical. Members of the *True luos* community also insisted on the revival and legitimating of their Dholuo language and culture as a sign of Facebook being an alternative media to express themselves. While Macri (2011), in his study noted that the media have been recognized for having the power and ability to form, sustain, reflect and perform identities. In this study, it was also established that Facebook supported by digital media technologies has acted as alternative media for the minority groups in the online media such as the Luo community. This accounts for the dominance of Dholuo posts in the group.

Types of Posts in *True Luos*

The posts in the group that were analyzed were categorized into three namely; social, political and economic to determine which types of posts dominates the group. The results were presented in figure 3 below:

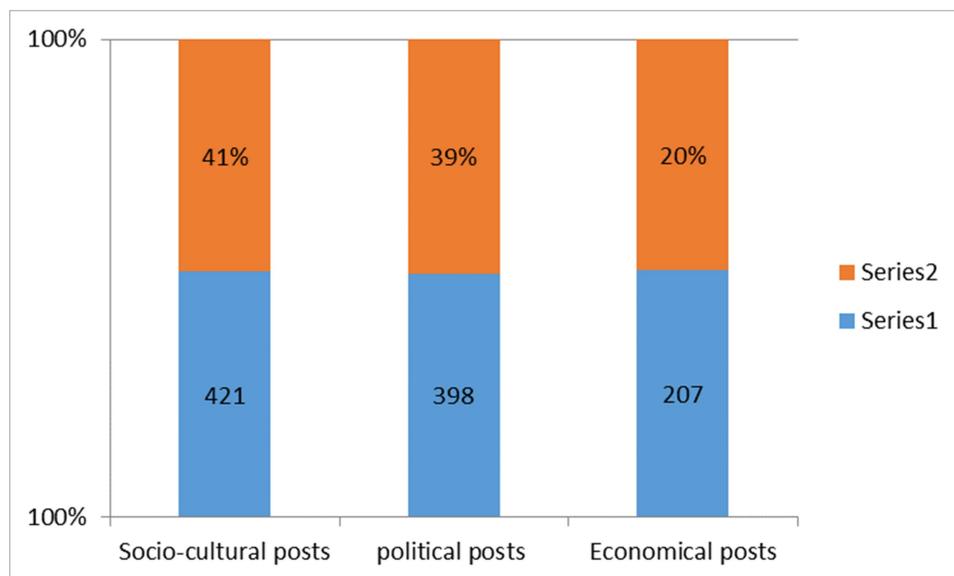


Figure 3 types of posts posted

The study found out that out of the 1026 posts that were analyzed during the study, 421 of the post (41%) were social-cultural posts, 398 posts ((39%) were political posts and 207 (20%) were economical posts . This shows how luos are deeply rooted in cultural aspects followed by politics which in the Kenya, they are key players in the political arena. As suggested by the name of the group *True Luos*, it suggests that the group only belongs to Luos especially those who regard themselves as true luos who understand the Luo culture, socio-economic and political life. The study found out that discourses in the posts and comments are done in the Dholuo language and this has helped to expand the political and socio-cultural freedom of Luos in the virtual media. This shows that there is a strong interest in asserting the perceived and aspired language identity of the group members. It's like the group members in True Luos demonstrating something that they miss in the offline communities in their social, economic and political everyday life.

According to Kietzmann et al (2011), social media are characterized by several mutually exclusive functional blocks that facilitate their functionality. The functional blocks include identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, and groups. Through these functional blocks, *True luos* users, uses the group to share more socio-cultural post than other categories.

4.3.1 Socio-Cultural Posts

Table 1: Social cultural posts in true luos

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Men sending fare to ladies	173	41
Having houses in the village	53	13
Intermarriages	157	37
Others	38	09
Total	421	100

From table 1, it was established that 41% of the posts posted in the group were of men sending fare. On posts about men sending bus fares to a woman to visit them but the woman fails to show up, members share their experience on this topic and providing the way forward by both men and women participating in the reason why this happens. 37% were about intermarriages. Intermarriage also dominated this discussion after one of the Luo celebrities posted condemning Luo women and suggesting women from other tribes were better in marriage compared to Luo women. This received a backlash from women and other women though some of the men agreed that women from other tribes make better wives. Dowry payment and other Luo cultures also dominated the discussion in the *True Luos*. 13% were discussions on having houses in the village. The study found out that some of the cultural topics that dominate are on some of the cultures that have faded and those that have led to the Luo community lag behind in terms of development. For example, during the festive seasons, pictures of those who have houses at home and some thatched grassed houses were circulating in the group with members asking where they are found and other discussions on social cultural forms 9%. This included how the married people are supposed to handle their phones while in the house, for example should you touch your husband's phone, how to make your marriage partner loves you more, wife inheritance, traditional culture like how one is supposed to pay dowry among others.





The above screenshots illustrate some of the social-cultural topics discussed in the group by members, the 1st screenshot above is a member asking if it's now safe to send bus fare to ladies or they will use the money and don't come to visit you. The second screenshot, the member is warning members not to touch their husband's phones. While the last one explains some of the things you can do as a woman if you want your husband to love you.

Political Posts

Most of the political post in the group were either about those who supports Raila Amollo Odinga or those who were against him. Therefore political post were analyzed and presented in the table below.

Table 4.2 political Posts

Political posts	Frequency	Percentage
Supporting Raila	273	69
Against Raila	41	10
Other posts	84	21
Total	398	100

From the table 4.2, 69% of the political posts were about Raila, 10% were posts against Raila while 21% discusses other political aspects which included the county and international politics. According to the latest general election held in 2017 Luos had Raila Odinga as their kingpin according to results that were released by independent electoral and boundaries commission (IEBC) showed that President Uhuru Kenyatta got 54% while Odinga got 44% in 2017 elections in Kenya. Therefore the True Luo is dominated by politics praising Raila and his allies and contrary to that is not allowed, due to the handshake that occurs between President Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga, in the group, the members support the unity of two and this

also dominates the discussion in the group. Those who post against Raila Odinga receive harsh comments condemning them. Members follow stories concerning Raila including posting videos of his whereabouts. The page is also dominated by the discussions of how governors of Luo Nyanza work with ranking and discussing their development records. The study also found out that most of the people don't support deputy president William Ruto in the group as they see him as an enemy to Raila, therefore, most of the posts posted by members in the group always receive a backlash.



From the above screenshots, the first one is a member asking the group members who they will vote in the next election in 2022. In the comment section majority said they will vote for Raila. In the second screenshot is a member claiming there are those who have joined the group and now posting in Kiswahili supporting a politician who is their competing Raila Odinga. From the comments most of them suggested that the Deputy President supporters has joined the group and now posting in Kiswahili to campaign for Deputy President William Ruto. From this, it shows that the Luo community are using the group to discuss Luo politics.

Economic Posts

Table 3: Economic posts

Political posts	Frequency	Percentage
Comparison of Luo counties development	54	26
Job vacancies	21	10
Marketing products	37	18
entertainment	49	24
Other posts	46	22
Total	207	100

From table 3 above, 26% of the posts are post comparing development between the Luo community counties, 10% were posts of job vacancies, 18% were posts of marketing products, entertainment post were 24% and other economic posts were 22%. The group was dominated by post comparing the development in all the four counties that speak Dholuo that is Homabay, Migori, Kisumu and Siaya County. In the group they also share job vacancies in various fields, those who have specialized in various fields also market themselves and it also used to sell products by members. The dominating posts were constructors displaying some of the buildings they have constructed and asking members to contact them for such jobs, others were house jobs among others.

The group was also dominated by entertainment (24%) of the economic posts. The most dominant was topics discussing Gor Football club, this is a club own by Luo community therefore it dominated among the football topics. In music, Luo celebrities dominated, with most of the discussion on who is better than who and members allowed to vote to decide who is better than the other. For example in Luos have a type of music called Ohangla, members always asked which Ohangla artist is the king of Ohangla. The platform also helps the artist to launch and market their songs. It also promotes the comedians in the Luo Nyanza as the comedians share their jokes in the Dholuo language in the group.





From the above screenshots, the first one is asking which county is more developed. In the second post, a member is looking for a job vacancy. While the third and fourth is about entertainment. In the third photo, members are asked to vote on the best Luo artist while on the last photo is one of the Luo artist thanking fans for their support to him.

The posts and comments in True Luo demonstrate why there are reasons for the rise and growth of the use of Dholuo on Facebook. The paper reveals that the rise of this development of *True Luos* is to resist the use of the English language and other cultures in the online space. Since the language has been left out by the majority in the media and education, they use it to obtain and discuss their cultural, social, and political and content in a language that they identify with that is Dholuo.

Conclusion

Kenya is among countries within Africa with multilingual and multiethnic. The indigenous languages spoken in Kenya belong to the Nilotic, Bantu and Cushitic language families. There are 68 languages in Kenya. According to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, both Kiswahili and English are the official languages. This means that the two languages should perform equal roles in the whole country. However, in reality, English, presumably because of its long history as the de facto official language in Kenya, still performs more official roles than Kiswahili. However, it's a struggle to fit all the ethnolinguistic representation in the public spaces, including media and education. Kenyan digital media and the social media has not done much

in challenging existing ethnolinguistic hegemonies of whatever form or in providing marginalized languages with the space to speak against their marginalization in the digital media. Instead, they participate in legitimizing those linguistic and cultural identities. Even though the academic platform provides free space for the deliberation of the volatile language and politics of belonging, the public space in Kenya is a restricted one. Therefore this paper has established that the development of digital media technologies and accessibility of mobile phones that can easily access the internet and support online social networking platforms has seen the propagation and consolidation of active indigenous languages on online groups. The groups are made up of individuals who are connected by sharing the same language, history and emotional state of suppressed languages, identities, and aspirations. The social media has enabled Luos in the *True Luos* to identify themselves as luos, discuss their culture and their politics without the restriction of time-space and restrictions. The paper is, therefore, contributes to the national identity among the ethnic languages, political identity and online media platforms in postcolonial Africa that promotes the indigenous mother tongue languages in Africa, and Kenya in particular. It provides a much-needed examination of the contestation between English language and indigenous African languages in Africa, on online social networking platforms, particularly Facebook.

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Non-Equivalence and the Translatability of English Medical Discourse into Lukabarasi

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Abstract

The concept of translatability is believed to be a central issue in translation although its relevance and applicability within the field of Translation and Interpretation theory have caused heated controversies. The paper tries to answer the question as to whether equivalence is a basic and necessary condition for translatability and if so, if we can translate in the absence of equivalence. This paper argues that if translatability is the essence of translation, then untranslatability constitutes an equally significant concept in the translation of English medical terms into Lukabarasi. The rationale for this position is that the specialized register of medicine in the English language is often characterized with semantic complexity and language specific items and therefore, presents evidence for the possibility of translating the untranslatable terms due to non-equivalence. Furthermore, these terms and expressions have to be skillfully translated and adapted to a level that the consumers from different linguistic backgrounds can relate them to their lexical knowledge and context. In this regard, the communication efficacies of the techniques used by Community Health workers in rendering English medical terminologies into Lukabarasi acceptable forms were evaluated. Data was collected using non-participant observation of community based health sensitization meetings. The Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986) provided a framework for the discussion of the data. The findings indicated that naturalized borrowing techniques were used to render English items into Lukabarasi. Further, it was revealed that translating using equivalence is not necessarily the best strategy in the translation. The findings reveal that non-equivalence is more realistic and applicable than equivalence in rendering culture specific English terms into Lukabarasi in medical discourse.

Keywords: Non-Equivalence, Medical discourse, Naturalized borrowing, Translatability, Lukabarasi

Introduction

Community Health workers are community-based semi-skilled personnel who link the rural communities with the health services by promoting health sensitization and outreach. The information they convey deals with specialized register of medicine which is inaccessible to non-expert and illiterate audiences from rural communities. In this regard, such information must be skillfully rendered to the consumers from different linguistic backgrounds to minimize the distortions in the source language (SL) messages. Furthermore, the specialized register of medicine in the English language is characterized with language specific items that do not have one to one equivalent expressions in Lukabarasi. In this regard, this paper sought to evaluate communication efficacies in rendering such items into Target Language (TL) acceptable forms. As observed by Vameer, (1996), the high pragmatic content of factual prose requires precision and unambiguous expression as far as form and content are concerned. In this regard, medical terms should be skillfully rendered to avoid lexical gaps that may affect the communication efficacy in delivering community based health services. Medical discourse is an informative text type. Reiss (1989), argues that the translation of an informative text must guarantee direct and full access to the conceptual content of the Source Text (ST). Thus, an appropriate informative translation must be used skillfully in order to create texts that would communicate the intended information and produce a desired effect on the audience.

Translation and Translatability

Theoretically, and in practice, the concepts of translatability and untranslatability have been central issues in translation although their definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversies. As noted by Catford, (1965), translatability means the possibility to express the SL's text or language units with another language by translation between two different languages, aiming at letting the users of the two languages understand the same thing. He points out that translatability is a cline rather than a definite dichotomy. Thus, the SL texts are more or less translatable rather than absolutely translatable or absolutely untranslatable. Untranslatability on the other hand is the difficulty to accurately express the meaning of the SL text and language units in another language. Thus, the impossibility of achieving the purpose of enabling the users of two different languages to understand the same thing by means of translation (Catford 1965).

Translatability has also been considered as the essence of equivalence in the translation process. Nevertheless, in translation theory and practice, equivalence has been challenged by many translation scholars from different perspectives. Snell-Hornby (1988, p. 22) for instance, criticized equivalence as "imprecise, ill-defined, and as representing an illusion of symmetry between languages". Similarly, Nord, (1997, p. 44), criticizes the concept of equivalence as "lacking consistency, losing intrinsic interrelationship between situational and linguistic factors of communicative interaction and excluding target language texts which do not satisfy the criterion of equivalence". In this view, the nature of equivalence in translation theory and practice can only be established and analyzed according to its multifaceted dimensions: formal, dynamic, situational and contextual.

This paper argues that translating with nonequivalence constitutes an equally legitimate concept in interlingual translation, a concept that has been given a wide berth in translation studies.

The rationale for this position is that when translating language specialized register of medicine, some words or phrases denoting objects or facts can be so deeply rooted in their source language that they may lack a corresponding one-to-one equivalent in the target language. These words have often been referred to as untranslatable (Santoyo, 1987, García, 1982 and Yifeng, 2012). For this paper however, the argument is that the untranslatables can indeed be translated, a contention that negates the concept of untranslatability due to incompatibilities between languages. The question that guides the paper is; why do we have to chase the illusive concept of equivalence in translation knowing, as Newmark (1988) observes, that there is no exact equivalence between two languages in terms of lexical choices and concepts.

A successful translation according to Nida (1964), is that which caters for the response of the audience for which it is designed. For instance, the English medical terms, can be rendered into Lukabarasi equivalent forms using the strategies for translating the untranslatable terms proposed by Baker (1992) such as; using a cultural equivalent or using a general word. However, such rendering would lead into very lengthy constructions which may distort the flow of discourse and lead to meaning loss of the SL messages. Part of the reason for this "translatability" problem lies in the fact that this word carries meaning not only at the referential level but also at the pragmatic and intralingual level. Therefore, translating such terms solely depending on its TL referential equivalent may not capture its full range of

meaning. In this respect, the deliberate shift in translating the same term using it in its SL form (borrowing and transcription) and ignoring its TL equivalents form can be done because the equivalents product, in this case, may fail to carry the full and complete nuances of meaning of the SL term. In translation practice, using TL equivalent forms as a sole base in translating texts produces TL products that are not equivalent to the SL forms. The proposition, which the researcher puts forth then, is that equivalence is not the only option in translating English-Lukabarasi medical discourse.

The Paradox of Translating using Non-Equivalence

Studies on English-Luhya translations such as (Wangia 2003), have established constraints that translators face when translating culture specific English lexis into Luhya languages. What is revealed points to the fact that these two languages belong to two different cultures and hence, provide good evidence for the possibility of translating what is sometimes referred to as “untranslatable” due to non-equivalence. What motivates this investigation is the fact that, English medical discourse has language-specific terms and concepts that have no one to one equivalent version in Lukabarasi. For this reason, translatability is discussed and substantiated by evidence and examples in the process of translating from English into Lukabarasi, a point that need to adequately discussed in researches dealing with translation of medical discourse. Furthermore, the strategies for dealing with non-equivalence in translation suggested by various scholars such as Baker (1992) are not universal and may not be applicable to all text types. In this regard, the question arises as to whether translating using non-equivalence can produce functionally applicable TL forms. How these terms are translated into Lukabarasi to convey their conceptual and applicable meanings to the Lukabarasi speaking listeners is given prominence.

Furthermore, since English and Lukabarasi embody different language families, non-equivalence issues in translating lexical items and even phrases between these two languages figure out prominently. Moreover, the fact that English medical terms and phrases are translated and recognized as acceptable functional Lukabarasi forms is the empirical evidence to the legitimacy of translating the untranslatable in the translation of English-Lukabarasi medical discourse, a claim made by this paper. In this regard, nonequivalence is the more logical and practical foundation for evaluating such translation and interpretation processes.

This paper underscores the fact that medical discourse – distinguished from other texts – is characterized by language specific lexis, which the essence is expected to be captured and maintained in of medical discourse. For example, unlike in standard language, specific register of medicine is either semantically complex or language specific and may lack a one to one equivalent in the recipients’ language. In addition, communication efficacies in community health sensitization meetings should be underscored. Based on the fact that most of the audiences are semi-literate and non-experts in the medical field, the techniques of rendering English medical terminologies into Lukabarasi acceptable forms were evaluated.

English being one of the main languages of medical prescription has greatly influenced discourse in the Kenyan native languages. Furthermore, as Bassnet (2002) observes, translation involves at least two languages and two cultures. In this connection, translators of English-Lukabarasi medical discourse may be faced with the problem of treating the language specific aspects implicit in the SL and finding the most appropriate technique for conveying

these aspects in the TL in an appropriate way. Hatim and Munday (2004) consider translation as an act of communication which breaks cultural and linguistic boundaries, as an act of communication.

Jakobson, (1959: 238) observes that, “all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing text language”. He argues further that some concepts of one language may not exist in others but that alone cannot make them untranslatable, except when the form of the concepts/words contribute to the overall construction of the meaning/sense of the text. This may emerge in semantically complex terminologies such as those in medical discourse. In such cases, Hatim & Munday, (2004) content that the content can be translated while the form often cannot. However, as form contribute to the sense of the text, that’s when the concept of untranslatability starts to emerge.

The Relevance Theory

Relevance theory is a structure for the study of cognition which was proposed mainly for the sake of providing a psychologically realistic account of communication. It was originally proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986). The main assumptions that relevance theory makes in relation to communication includes the claim that understanding an utterance is a matter of inferring what the speaker intended to convey from what (s)he utters. Another underlying assumption of relevance theory is that there are exactly two speaker’s intentions that are central to communication, namely the informative intention and the communicative intention.

In translation theory and practice, the significance of relevance in translation is based on the communicative principle of relevance and the presumption of optimal relevance is the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, which as Sperber and Wilson (1986) notes, guides the search for the correct (i.e. intended) interpretation of utterances.

In the translation of English medical terms into Lukabarasi,, the deliberate application of non-equivalence may yield more relevant and applicable TL products rather than sticking on equivalent forms which may distort communication. Non-equivalence becomes more applicable than equivalence. Hence, it is quite legitimate to discuss non-equivalence and its applicability in translating language-specific terms, such as the register of medicine.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), the reason that the presumption of optimal relevance makes it reasonable for interpretation to follow a least effort path is that relevance varies inversely with effort, so an utterance whose intended interpretation is off the least effort path is less relevant than another utterance that the speaker could have managed to produce. Therefore, the reason why the hearer can stop at the first optimally relevant interpretation is that an utterance that has two significantly different interpretations that both produce the expected degree of cognitive effects would fail to be optimally relevant, since the hearer would have to expend effort in choosing between them. Non-equivalence is a fact among languages. Although people constantly translating to and from English using certain words that we assume to be equivalent, they might be surprised to find that they are in fact using non-equivalents. In such cases, they manage to translate and not only to transfer as Catford (1965) suggested when he grouped such cases under the types of untranslatability

Methodology

Since this paper is concerned with the translatability of specific English register of medicine into Lukabarasi, sampled terms collected during non-participant observation of community based health sensitization meetings were selected and critically analyzed. The researcher attended four meetings in Malekha, Sundulo, Kalenda and Mavusi villages in Malava Sub County, Western Kenya. The number of items extracted from the meetings was 63. Subsequently, systematic random sampling was then used to reduce the number of sampled items to 21 items by picking every third on the list using a sampling interval of 3. This was 30 percent (30%) of the total. This was considered a representative sample threshold by Patton (2002) who suggests that a minimum sample representing 30 percent of the study population is considered sufficient to enhance generalizability to the rest of the population.

The collected data provided an empirical basis for discussion of the translatability of English medical terms into Lukabarasi. The relevance Theory by Wilson and Sperber (1986) was used in the process of analyzing the language specific English terms in their medical context and clarify the intended meaning in the SL. The respondents' participation in the discourse was evaluated to determine whether the translations reflected the applicable TL meaning.

Results and Discussion

In this section, various examples of borrowing from the collected data are discussed and highlighted to demonstrate how they were applied in discourse. The samples are randomly drawn from the collected data. The paper begins with the analysis of selected texts to see the strategy in the representation and make deductions from the respondents in terms of communication efficacy of the target text and audience. Furthermore, in order to carry out the analysis as well as the discussion appropriately, a framework of analysis is provided. The framework features two categories generating translatability and these are: word categories and phrasal categories. The analysis of the collected data is done in comparison to the English Version of the SL messages.

Table 1: Application of non-equivalence in the Translation of English Lukabarasi Medical Discourse

Source Language	Target Language	Explanations
Anti-Retro Viral Drugs (ARVs)	<i>Amalesi</i>	The TL product is a general Lukabarasi word for medicine.
Bandaged	<i>Okhuvoya</i>	<i>Okhuvoya</i> literally, 'to tie' in Lukabarasi
Nurse/Doctor	<i>Omuteresa/Omusisita/dakitari</i>	There is discrepancy in the translation. A female nurse is <i>omuteresa/omusisita</i> while male nurse or doctor is <i>dakitari</i> .
HIV AIDS	<i>Ovulwale</i>	<i>Ovulwale</i> translates to disease in general without specifying the particular ailment
Injection	<i>okhupa esindani</i>	English back translation: to beat the needle
Get admitted	<i>okhukonamo</i>	The TL version <i>okhukonamo</i> literally translates as: to sleep in
Operation	<i>Okhwara</i>	The TL version implies to split into two
Miscarriage	<i>Omwana okhurula</i>	
Prescription	<i>Okhwandichila</i>	The translated version implies 'to write for'
In the hospital ward	<i>Mushiteli</i>	<i>Mushiteli</i> in Lukabarasi is: in the bed

From the few examples cited above, some insights the translation of English-Lukabarasi medical terms can be inferred and one can make some deductions and recommendations. First, English medical terms are language-specific. They represent a category of translating non-equivalence because they cannot be appropriately translated by providing their one to one into Lukabarasi equivalents. The Lukabarasi one to one equivalents of these terms may be considered within the framework of Nida's approximation in translation where equivalents are given only to approximate the meaning in general terms and not the details because the content of these terms is highly different from the content of their equivalents. Researchers such as Wangia (2003) attributed most cases of English-Luhya mistranslations to inaccuracies in finding the relevant words in the TL for the SL items. She notes that such mistranslations distorted the original messages leading to meaning loss in the TL forms. Furthermore, one of the major problems that hinders appropriate rendering of the English utterances into the Luhya language group is the word. For the present case, the words in Table 1 above are difficult to translate using the TL equivalence because they refer to specific register of medicine in the SL which does not have lexicalized Lukabarasi equivalent forms. It then follows that the TL equivalents applicable for these terms could be long explanations which would not only constrain the translator but also distort the TL messages

From the data, it can be revealed that the SL is translated not by providing its TL equivalents (Lukabarasi meanings) but by providing a strategy for dealing with non-equivalence. In this case, using nonequivalence was more applicable and acceptable in rendering the full meaning of these terms. For example, the word '**ARV**' can be translated by using explanations or cultural equivalent as many translators do in translating medical discourse to other languages. However, such equivalents would not give the acceptable and applicable meanings in Lukabarasi. ARV can be more adequately translated by using the general term *amalesi* (drugs), which is unambiguously understood by the audience to mean ARVs in this context.

Similarly, the word '**injection**' has literal equivalents in Lukabarasi as "*Okhutsoma*" and "*Okhuwuna*". However, these equivalents do not convey the extra levels of socially acceptable meanings the medical term denotes. The words "*Okhutsoma*" and "*Okhuwuna*" in literal Lukabarasi refer to being pricked or pierced by something accidentally. Therefore, translating the SL items by giving their one to one equivalents is yet again not sufficient. Depending on the context where these words are used, it acceptable to translate them as using the non-equivalence, '*Okhupa esindani*' (to beat the needle), which in this context is unambiguously denoted to mean to receive an injection..

Medical terms are language-specific par excellence. This is because, they represent a category of translation non-equivalence because they cannot be appropriately translated by providing their one to one TL equivalents. The one to one equivalents given for these terms would either long explanation of the concepts or ambiguous terms which would result in communication breakdown. It is convenient to translate such words by using the socially contextual applicable terms to fill the lexical gaps absent in the TL and facilitate communication. Any idea of absolute translatability is dismissed because, "there can be no exactness in translation in any but rare and trivial cases" the notion of translatability therefore has to be considered in relation to each instance of translation as 'a concrete act of performance' and must be linked with the text type of ST, the purpose of translation and the translation principles being followed by the translator" (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1999, p. 180).

It should be noted that these English terms can be translated into Lukabarasi by using what Ghazala (2004) calls explanatory equivalents. However, such long explanations may not give the full referential meaning of the SL terms and may sometimes lead to ambiguity in the TL forms. Based on the explanation above, it is to show that the form both words are equivalent, the words naturalized items are singular just like the SL items. Similarly the word category in the SL with reference to the TL is equivalent. For instance, the items in the SL are categorized as a noun and so are the ones in the TL as well.

For instance, the SL word '**operation**' in medical discourse is semantically complex. It refers to a medical procedure which has no equivalence in the Kabarasi culture, and therefore, can only be translated by using a more neutral and less expressive term, '*Okhwara*' (to split into two). Part of the difficulty in translating such terms lies in the fact that these words require an awareness of the English register of medicine, with specific attention to a complex surgical procedure. The Kabarasi equivalents available for such terms are either long explanation of the concepts or less expressive terms. It is applicable to translate these words by using unrelated

words. For example, “*okhwara*” in Lukabarasi translates to “split into two”, but the native Kabarasi speakers can easily relate the TL product to the surgical operation procedure.

Occupation titles present similar challenges to TL Equivalence. Of specific interest is the word nurse, a popular mention in medical discourse. This term can be translated by giving its Kabarasi equivalent as “*omuntu wulindanga avalale*”. However, this will neither capture the local association of this term nor illustrate the Lukabarasi understanding of the SL terminology. Thus, the non-equivalent rendering of the SL term as *Omuteresa* or *Omsisita* are more acceptable when referring to a female nurse. A male nurse or doctor is simply called ‘*Dakitari*’. In the same light word ‘**bandaged**’ express a concept which is known in Lukabarasi but simply not lexicalized; that is not “allocated” Lukabarasi words to express it. This word is peculiar to the register of medicine and cannot be captured in one-to-one word rendering into the TL. It is therefore rendered as ‘*Okhuvoya*’ (to tie).

Some words difficult to translate because they refer to semantically complex concepts which are not found in Lukabarasi . For example, the word prescribe in English medical register refers to a process of giving instructions to patients on how to use drugs for specific ailments. This process represents a concept related to Kabarasi culture which of giving people medicine, the only difference being that in traditional medicine practice, there was no writing. . Similarly, the word admit in English medical register means. There are no English equivalents to capture the complex concepts associated with these English terms. The best strategy in translating these terms is to.

Conclusion

It should be noted that the register of medicine is language specific and so looking for an equivalent expression in another language can distort the TL meaning and lead to communication breakdown. Non-equivalence in translation can be evidenced through numerous examples in the process of translating from English into Lukabarasi. Terms that lack equivalence due to markedly specific register in the English language can be translated to convey their conceptual and functional meanings to the Lukabarasi speaking audience by using naturalized borrowing strategy. This is because translating using equivalence in such cases may fail to produce a meaningful rendering of the source term into the target term. Rather, purposefully using non-equivalence results in a “better” translation. Non-equivalence becomes more relevant than equivalence.

In other words, “non-equivalence” becomes more equivalent than “equivalence.” Furthermore, translation scholars such as had to move to the looser concept of dynamic equivalence. Even the theorists who defend the concept of equivalence, such as Wilss (1982), based their argument on the merit of its applicability at the text level.

Nevertheless, this modified notion of text-level equivalence has had to come through non-equivalence at the word level. Non-equivalence, then, is a legitimate field of translation theory. These findings of this paper, it should be noted, do not mean that the resultant version can capture all the intended meaning in the SL. The investigation is only meant to provide a more practical way for handling language specific terms and expressions in specific translation.

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Towards Afrocentricism in Africa: Is Afro – Language an Antidote to Africans' Double - Consciousness?

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Abstract

Commonwealth countries were forced to adopt English as language to use in most if not all government engagements with its citizen. This has, together with economic status of its native speakers, propelled it to the status of a global language. The problem of African estrangement dates back to 1884 when Africa was sub-divided into small units by the European capitalists. The units would later become African countries which were colonized by the imperialists to whom they were allocated during the scramble and partition of Africa. The colonisers came in with all their structures including, religion, education, language, and politics and imposed them on Africans. By the time the Europeans were bequeathing the flag independence to their colonies, their culture had been implanted into the minds and souls of the colonized hence making everything European to be accepted with little, if any, contest. Through scholars, Nationalists, and Pan-Africanists such as Franz Fanon, Sedor Senghor, Edward Said among others, Africans later on became conscious of the European cultural burden which they had readily accepted. They have forever found themselves at crossroad, wondering whether they should revert to their Afrocentric values or continue upholding Eurocentricism. Consequently, Africans have forever found themselves in “double-consciousness,” a state that makes them to struggle with two identities. This paper identifies language as a unit of culture and it aims at contributing to the on-going debate with regards to the language that Africans should adopt for their interactions that exonerates them from “othering” their own culture. The unit of analysis cuts across several examples drawn from both creative works and researches. The paper interrogated the texts and arguments within postcolonial framework. Specifically, I aim at enriching the debate on whether using European languages, with specific bias on English for interaction among Africans amounts to promoting Eurocentricism. By so doing, I explore the merits and demerits of using African languages, including Swahili, in an attempt to promote Afrocentricism. I conclude the paper by pointing out at the possibility of strengthening the linguistic middle ground approach so as to benefit from both sides of the divide.

Keywords: Eurocentrism, Afrocentricism, Double Consciousness, Euro – American Language

Introduction

My dear
I have been thinking
That we should name the baby -
Like it used to be in our grandpa’s time -
After somebody in our ethnic line, you know,
Because the child must have some identity
And not just Patrick Johnson,
David Stewberry, Peter Maclizzard, Charles Shoemaker,
Kim Peking, Kennedy Dickson...²

Africa is characterized by double-consciousness resulting from the cross breed of a culture that its citizens were exposed to after the arrival of foreigners, more so the Europeans who painted their own culture as superior to that of Africans hence (mis)leading them to have reservations with theirs, and in some instances abandon it completely. This cultural conflict is reflected in

² “Conversation on African Names” Everett Standa (An Anthology of East African Poetry) p. 72

many spheres of life including but not limited to religion, language, politics, and education. These facets of culture have made Africans to become children of two worlds: trying to practice their own culture while at the same time subconsciously adopting the, arguably, superior culture of the white people.

One of the elements of culture that has put Africans in a major dilemma is language.

Language is a major unifying factor from the smallest to the largest administrative units. Again, African states have established collaborations at regional, continental and global levels hence necessitating a language that would help them communicate with each other. Owing to economic power that European countries exercise over and above African countries, there are rare instances, if any, where European countries have adopted African languages as their major communication tool. Perhaps the exception is missionaries who learnt/learn the indigenous language of the target group with the sole aim of boosting their evangelism. The moment the objective is achieved, they go back to the comfort of their mother language. This skewing of the scale towards European products is what has been christened Eurocentrism.

Africans have become conscious of the need to adopt Afrocentricism (the opposite of Eurocentrism) as a way of demonstrating their self – worth, decolonizing their entire self including language. Consequently, there has been a spirited effort to grow and develop indigenous languages as a means to communicate not only in Africa but also across the globe. Indeed there are institutions of higher learning in Europe that offer, for instance, Kiswahili language as part of their programmes. The question that begs to be answered is: with the Eurocentricism being the norm, how effective can African indigenous languages be in reaching out to the world? Is it possible that an African language with wider usage across the globe will at some point in time manage to challenge the global position that English holds?

This paper first explores the way English was introduced and cemented into the hearts of the African via Eurocentricism, the change of attitude of latter day Africans towards Afrocentric consciousness and finally the standpoint of English as a global language.

Historiography of the Paradigm Shift from Afrocentricism to Eurocentricism

Afrocentricism was encapsulated in oral conversations of Africans and celebrated by all before the coming of the Whiteman. The orate communities that existed in Africa communicated via the various indigenous languages to pass culture and all its facets from one generation to another. As such the pre-literate community was a closed one owing to little interactions with the outside world. Therefore, the formal education was encapsulated in what can be termed as oral literature defined by Nandwa and Bukenya (1983) as:

Those utterances whether spoken, recited or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree the artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expression (p. 9).

Thus orate community was overly oral but their spoken word was not devoid of creativity as captured by the above definition on the part of “artistic nature.” Oral communication can be viewed as the storehouse of African history and culture.

African religious, philosophical, legal and political precepts were, and to a greater extend, are expressed in oral form. It is this kind of a community, a lover of its culture in which language is part, that the Whiteman encountered when they made sojourn to Africa.

The only way the colonisers could make the culture – loving Africans to abandon their culture was to present a narrative that showed the African culture as barbaric, backwards, uncouth and uncivilized. From the beginning they had a (mis)conception that the African was incapable of abstract thinking and that his/her mind was closer to that of an animal than to normal human being. To augment their notion, the white people used evolutionary thinking advanced by Charles Darwin. Evolutionism centres around Darwin's ideas about the origin and survival of biological species. Folklorists who were influenced by these ideas saw in traditional tales remnants of an earlier worldview or a set of ideas about man and his environment. The major viewpoint taken by this theory is that: society's progress develops similar traits even if they are geographically different and that all societies progress from primitivism towards a European like civilization. European scholars such as David Hume, Wilhelm Grimm, Max Muller and James Frazer have used and advanced this viewpoint.

To prove to Africans that they and their culture was lower in the civilization ranking, the Europeans borrowed heavily from the central tenet of Evolutionism that operates around the concept of unilinear and parallel stages of social and cultural evolution through which all societies must pass, concentration on the origins of any institution as being of the first importance; and finally the implicit and evaluative assumption that the direction of evolution was upwards – a progress from the crude communal stage of primitive life towards the civilized and differentiated culture of contemporary Europe.

The evolutionists' interpretation of "primitive" was conceived to mean both early in history and low and undeveloped in the scale of evolution. Viewed this way, they were able to twist the meaning to favour their need: that the stage of development attained by non-literate people could thus be equated and evaluated as the same traversed by the pre-historic ancestors of European nations. Thus Europe was seen as the most developed and civilized region within the scale of evolution with African societies still evolving. In view of this notion, African culture, to which language is part, and which only existed in oral form; was seen as belonging to earlier stage of evolution as compared to the advanced written language of Europe.

It is against this backdrop that Europeans arriving in Africa brought in a prejudiced worldview of "primitive" Africans. H.M Stanley's book – *My Dark Companions and their Strange Tales* (1859) aptly captures the European prejudice towards African culture, specifically about Southern Lesotho:

During the early part of our sojourn among them we often heard them recite, with very dramatic gestures, certain pieces that were not easy of comprehension, and which appeared to be distinguished from the ordinary discourse by the elevation of the sentiment, powerful ellipses; daring metaphors and very accentuated rhythm. The natives called these recitations praises. We soon discovered that they were real poetical effusions (p. 71).

Other books that emerged out of the European prejudiced worldview against Africa include: John Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* (1937) and Elspeth Huxley's *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1959). Though set in different parts of Africa, they all underscore nuances of prejudiced undertones. Their focus on the backwardness of a primitive African in dire need of European brother to save him from the murky waters of primitivity

formed the basis for the European brothers to troop into Africa with the aim of Evangelising to its citizenry to save it from idol worship at the one hand and settle and exploit her raw materials on the other hand. The other core aim was to “civilize” Africa. Later in this paper, I will point out how the so called civilization faired on Africans’ own culture, language included.

Bukenya and Nandwa outlines the strategy employed by the Europeans to achieve the objective of making Africans hate their language. Firstly, the Europeans colonized the minds of the Africans in a systematic way. Firstly, they established their system of instructions hence changing the educational, economic and political structure in Africa leading to social disruption. The replacement of African formal education meant schools were run by teachers who were ignorant of the children’s background. As such, it became easy for their teachers to inculcate the European system that they were familiar with into the minds of the young children.

Secondly, there was the emphasis on linguistic alienation with the Europeans imposing their language into the minds of Africans systematically suppressing African languages. This resulted into an educated lot that did not have confidence in its indigenous language. To crown it all, the European educators carried out an elaborate campaign aimed at brainwashing the Africans with the aim of changing the mind of the native. This they did by intimating to the Africans that there is something wrong with their language, their way of life and even his very person. The African was made to constantly believe that everything about him was savage, uncivilized, primitive, pagan and heathen. The psychological pressure employed here made the African to be ashamed of himself and even the colour of his skin as well as his culture. He thus desperately started trying to embrace and adopt the culture and values of the foreign colonizer.

I have used this approach of historizing the origin of the linguistic confusion inherent in Africans in order to point out the confused position that the Africans found themselves with regards to linguistic independence (or lack of it).

Postcolonial Reaction to Euro – American Languages

Post-colonial critics focus mainly on the ‘cultural colonization’ that took place when the imperial culture invaded local cultures. There was a kind of imposition of culture of the West into the native cultures such that, post-colonial cultures include a merger of and antagonism between the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized. British intrusion into the cultures of her colonies was so intense that it intruded into government, education, cultural values as well as the daily lives of her colonial subjects. That is to say that although the colonizers left their colonies, there has been a serious precipitate of cultural colonization, an inculcation of education system from the West, culture and values that degrade the culture, morals and education systems of formerly colonized peoples.

The natives were left with a ‘psychological inheritance’ of a negative self –image and hatred of their own cultures.

This has in turn led to loss of a substantial material of their original, pre-colonial culture. Therefore, a good deal of post-colonial criticism addresses the problem of cultural identity as represented in post-colonial literature. There are many Africans coming from different

disciplines who have demonstrated consciousness of the fact that self-hatred imposed on the African can be re-imagined and re-constructed. Let me invoke a few examples to demonstrate.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a world renowned creative writer and a literary critic has come out to challenge the notion advanced by the imperialists. Narrowing down to language, wa Thiong'o, in his collection of essays in a book *Decolonizing the Mind (1986)*, he calls upon the Africans whose language component was inevitably consciously or unconsciously colonized by the Whites using the methods already discussed to arise and correct the misdemeanour done by the colonizers. He talks of the:

[...] ceaseless struggles of the African people to liberate their economy, politics and cultures from Euro-American-based stranglehold to usher a new era of true communal self-regulation and self-determination. It is an ever continuing struggle to seize back their creative initiative in history through a real control of all the means of communal self-determination in time and space. The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to people's definition of themselves in relation to the entire universe (p. 4).

Wa Thiong'o's concern regarding the importance of language and self-determination is augmented by Franz Fanon's viewpoint contained in his seminal book *The Wretched of the Earth (1963)*. Fanon satirizes the fascination with the Whiteman's fashion of civilization in a bid to call upon Africans to re-discover their roots. The narrative goes:

The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist's sector is a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession. Every type of possession: of sitting at the colonist's table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife. The colonized man is an envious man. The colonist is aware of this as he catches the furtive glance, and constantly on his guard, realizes bitterly that: "They want to take our place." And it's true there is not one colonized subject who at least once a day does not dream of taking the place of the colonist. (p. 5)

This is a satirized reflection of what goes on in the minds of Africans for which he calls for mentality change in order to rectify the brainwashing done on the blacks. Sardar in the foreword of another book by Fanon - *Black Skins, White Masks (1967)* - captures the same sentiments in trying to summarize Fanon's conceptualization of the alienated African. Sardar avers:

When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self-esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self-motivated person. The entire purpose of his behaviour is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man. It is the dynamic of inferiority that concerns Fanon: and which ultimately he seeks to eliminate (Xiii).

Language forms the major mimicking of the Whiteman that concerns Fanon here. Language is carrier of our identity thus to lose it is tantamount to losing our identity as Africans.

In the realm of creative writing, Okot P'Bitek in his epoch-making *Anthology of Poetry; Song of Lawino* points out the degradation that Africans have undergone in accepting to be alienated. Through Lawino the persona, a seemingly illiterate but a genius in matters indigene, P'Bitek manages to castigate Africans for abandoning their culture in

favour of a foreign one that does not cohere with the teachings and guidelines of their ancestors. In all the thirteen poems (songs) Lawino brings to the fore the failure associated with people abandoning their culture to adopt another one that they don't understand. A brief look at a specific poem entitled "My husband's tongue is Bitter", Lawino decries the attitude that her husband, Ocol has taken towards her just because she cannot use English:

My husband abuses me together with my parents;
He says terrible things about my mother
And I am so ashamed!

He abuses me in English
And he is so ignorant

He says I am primitive
Because I cannot play the guitar,
He says my eyes are dead
And I cannot read,
He says my ears are blocked
And cannot hear a single foreign word (pp. 37 -38).

By using the phrase "he says...", Lawino distances herself together with other Africans from the blatant alienation adopted by the educated elite who shamefacedly start the ignoble practice of looking down upon their language. The sentimentalities presented by the three scholars above show that there has been a kind of a renaissance from the side of Africans after realizing that what was taught to them regarding their culture and language was not the reality. It was just but a strategy used by the Europeans to conquer not only their land but also their minds in order to exploit the Africans' potential holistically.

The Future Space of Euro – American Languages in Africa

The confusion caused by infiltration of Euro – American languages brought in as a package of Western culture has been a major concern for the formerly colonized nations. Governments have come up with policies that recognize the historical fact that the formerly colonized nations will never shake off the fact that there was cultural interference that resulted into incorporation of Euro – American languages into their lives. However, in an attempt to prevent total alienation, most African countries have given prominence to other indigenous languages to work hand in hand with Euro – American languages. For instance, Kenya in the new constitution promulgated in 2010 promoted Kiswahili, an indigenous language, from being a national language to an official language hence giving it the same status as English.

South Africa has eleven official languages, namely; Southern Sotho, Tsonga, Africaans, Tswana, Swati, Zulu, Venda, Ndebele, Xhosa, Northern Sotho and English. In Tanzania, English is basically used as a language of instruction while allowing Kiswahili to enjoy the status of a national language.

Outside Africa, English remains an important language with almost hundred percent use in USA, UK, West Indies, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. These countries hold economic power hence the likelihood to continue imposing their influence on the countries with lesser economic capability. To be able to interact with the economic powerhouses, the lesser endowed countries, in spite of the guilt that goes with betraying one's culture for another person's, will have no otherwise other than continue revering and upholding Euro - American languages.

Achebe, a leading light in African literary arena, admits it is not good for an individual to abandon their own culture for that of other people while at the same time admitting he has no other option other than using the language of the imperialists. This is a testimony to the ambivalence that characterizes Africans as they debate on which language to adopt as their own. Achebe avers:

Is it right that someone should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intent to use it (p. 23)

Thus the adoption of Euro - American languages in place of the indigenous ones does not come naturally. It leaves the individuals with double consciousness as they try to struggle with the possibility of belonging to the two worlds.

Pushed by the double consciousness feeling, Achebe tried to revise his standpoint with regards to use of Euro - American languages (specifically English in his case) in his conversations/writings. He wrote:

I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings (p. 37)

Doesn't taking a language that is not your own and altering it to suit your own needs amount to the proverbial bird, referred to by Achebe in his novel *Arrow of God* (1964, p.231), that hops from the ground and lands on an anthill then considers itself not to be on the ground? Whether this is true or not, it is the situation that Africans have found themselves in as they struggle to unshackle themselves from the effects of language colonization. Achebe is supported by Okara (with a slightly different viewpoint):

Some may regard this way of viewing English as a way of desecrating the language. This is of course not true. Living languages grow like living things, and English is far from a dead language. There are American, West Indian, Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand versions of English. All of them add life and vigour to the cultures while reflecting their own respective cultures. Why shouldn't there be a Nigerian or a West African English which we can use to express our own ideas, thinking and philosophy in our own way? (p. 6)

The two are creative writers and the prospect of a wider audience has pushed them into trying to have an alternative way of approaching the language dilemma imposed on them by the colonizers.

Their idea of modification of a language to suit the philosophies and sensitivities of certain individuals and or region(s) attests to the fact that in as far as Euro - American languages are bound to remain global languages; it is not going to be the original

Standard ones bequeathed to Africans by the colonizers, at least the ones used in Africa.

Already the West Indies and the Caribbean have *creolized* part of them while Nigerians have *pidginized* theirs. Kenyans have the unofficial *sheng* language/slang which combines English with other indigenous languages. The same is popular with the youths who prefer it over the Standard English as learned from the classroom.

Nevertheless, despite all these attempts on the language, Euro – American languages remain to be languages to reckon with globally as they hold a covetable position in ensuring effective inter and intra communication between countries that use them as their native language and their former colonies on whom the language was imposed.

Conclusion

I would wish to conclude this paper by pointing out that indeed Afrocentricism is a concern for elite Africans who feel guilty for having abandoned their culture to adopt that of the foreigners. Nevertheless, there are some of their brothers who swallowed the bait of Eurocentricism daggled to them by the colonizers. The antagonism between these two groups made it difficult for those leaning towards Afrocentricism to wield power over and above their Eurocentric counterparts. The result has been double consciousness for the former Afrocentric individuals with language ambivalence reigning supreme. Introduction and maintenance of indigenous languages meant to counter English influence in former colonies of Britain have not attained much since their education system was infiltrated by use of Euro – American languages. This infiltration, coupled with the economic power that the original Euro – American speaking nations hold, has made the foreign languages to cement themselves as global languages. The versions of a variety of these languages fused with indigenous language(s) such as creole, pidgin and sheng have not managed to offer a significant challenge to the position of Euro – American languages since they are used informally. However, Kiswahili has managed to infiltrate the formerly rigid position held by these foreign languages with its rapid spreading across the globe holding the hope for paradigm shift from the shackles of Eurocentricism, at least on the part of language.

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Abstract

The supremacy of a country's Constitution is an acknowledged universal truth whose legality or validity is not subject to challenge by any court or state organ. Indeed, Chapter One of The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, Article 2(1), is unequivocal that "this Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic and binds all persons and all state organs..." In essence, any law or act of omission or commission that is inconsistent with its provision is void to the extent of the inconsistency. Similarly, in the defence of the Constitution, Article 3 (1) of the same Chapter reiterates that "...every person has an obligation to respect, uphold and defend this constitution". However, in practice, provisions pertaining to mother tongue rights have been liberally and consistently violated contrary to what is contemplated by the Constitution. There are glaring contradictions in the justice system right from legislation to the administration and enforcement of the law on mother language usage in the public space. The purpose of this paper is to examine the contradictions inherent in the legal process in respect to people's inalienable right to mother tongue in the justice system. The data was sourced from surveys, observations and written records of the justice system. Couched within the Forensic Linguistics perspective, it is argued that mother language must be at the center of the administration of justice as envisaged in the Constitution. The privileged status enjoyed by English in our justice system is a travesty of language rights that is in contravention of Article 27 (4) of the Bill of Rights on equality and freedom against discrimination. The right to the use of one's mother language in the legal process is a fundamental pillar of equality and freedom against discrimination. It ensures that all Kenyans are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Therefore, individual persons, state players and organs, have an obligation to uphold and defend mother tongue in the spirit of the Constitution. It is proposed that the contradictions in the current Constitution must be re-examined in the context of legal language reform to put mother tongue in its rightful position in the administration of justice and legal practice in the country.

Keywords: Constitution, justice, legal, forensic linguistics

Introduction

In the words of Gibbons (2005:1), "The law is an overwhelmingly linguistic institution. Laws are coded in language and concepts that are used to construct the law are accessible only through language". Indeed legal processes that includes court proceedings, police investigations or enforcement and prison administration/management, take place mainly through language. In the same vein, contracts, that typically regulate our relationship with other people, are essentially language documents. In essence, legal documents are basically language documents. Mattila (2006: 6) points out that "Law is necessarily bound to language (notably in matters of legal interpretation), and in that sense legal language has existed as long as the law". On the other hand, Olsson (2016) asserts that, it is rare that a crime is committed without some language evidence, and, Shuy (2005) is of the opinion that crime is often created by language. Gibbons (2005:2) sums up the pervasive nature of language and its problematic

legalese in the justice system thus “It is, therefore, not only the law that permeates our lives, but the language of the law, and it does so in ways that are not always problem free”

In a nutshell, language pervades all spheres of our lives similar to the laws they encode hence our mother tongue is central in legal administration. It follows then that language is a very central and critical factor in the legal system yet one of its key characteristics is its opacity and incomprehensiveness. It is, therefore, important that those who seek justice have access to the language of their choice due to the pertinent role played by language in the judicial and legal processes. It is instructive to note that in the world over, cases are won and lost purely on the basis of language, specifically, legal language mastery and not necessarily on the basis of any substantive evidence in the courtroom. It is apparent that innocent litigants have been condemned to jail terms and sometimes to death while hardcore criminals are set free largely on linguistic evidence. The language of the justice system can both empower and disadvantage justice seekers depending on their linguistic prowess, in particular, their proficiency in the legal language. In the Kenyan justice system, use of mother tongue is not guaranteed, therefore, inflicting undue injustice to Kenyans who lack mastery of the Common Law Legal English. This calls for redress at all levels of justice administration and legal practice in Kenya in an effort to protect the lay justice seekers who lack any formal training in legal English and mastery of the same.

Among the basic human rights acknowledged universally is the right to express oneself in one's mother tongue; a core principle in the legal systems across the world. Similarly, the right to the usage of one's mother language is a constitutional provision that is inalienable neither by state nor state agencies and organs. On this basis, it is assumed that language rights and fundamental freedoms enjoyed by citizens are not granted by state but are part of the inalienable human rights whose observance is meant to preserve human dignity and promote social justice. Among the rights and fundamental freedoms envisaged in the Bill of Rights (BR) is the right to the use of our mother tongue in all spheres of life including in the legal process. The right to the use of mother tongue has for a long time been recognized as fundamental pillar in the protection of civil and personal rights by the United Nations' general assembly. This was espoused in the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' of 1948. Similarly, marginalized and minority groups have had their mother language rights violated by state organs with impunity through forced linguistic assimilation. It is in the light of this that the UN General Assembly adopted the 'Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People' in 2006 to address this injustice.

However, mother language has often been relegated to the periphery in official discourse within the legal practice in many countries in spite of this Declaration. Resistance to language rights for indigenous people in former colonial countries still persists. In these countries, various excuses have been used to sabotage any effort meant to put mother language at the center of social interaction in the public and private domains.

In Kenya, for example, lack of funds to support interpreters in the justice system for the different mother languages has been the excuse. Equally, there are clear inconsistencies in UN's own policy on mother tongue and the people's right to use and promote their mother language. This is apparent in the refusal by the General Assembly to officially adopt the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (The Barcelona Declaration) of 1996 whose central objective

was to ensure protection of linguistic rights of all people especially the minority and marginalized communities.

Countries that are signatories to UN Conventions and Declarations pertaining to language rights have constitutional provisions protecting mother language and attendant laws that actualize these provisions. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 (hereafter, CoK, National Council for Law Reporting, 2013; hereafter, NCLR) provides for the protection and promotion of local languages and diversity of culture for which language is a key component. It states that the state, among other things, shall endeavour to promote and protect the diversity of the languages of the people of Kenya and also, promote the development and use of indigenous languages. However, in actual implementation of the constitutional provisions, there are glaring contradictions. State organs and persons charged with actualization of these provisions into law (Parliament and the Attorney General), interpretation (the Judiciary) and enforcement of the same (Police and Prisons Services), have been a major obstacle. No tangible laws have been enacted to guarantee the rights of Kenyans to the use of their mother language since the promulgation of the Constitution in 2010. Specifically, the justice system has no safeguards that guarantees the right to the use of mother languages in legal and judicial matters.

The justice system has totally failed to live up to the spirit of the constitution as regards people's rights to their mother language in the justice system and the entire legal process. Mother tongue remains subordinate to the dominant English language that enjoys the enviable status of 'a de facto language of the justice system' in the country. It is noteworthy that the Constitution of Kenya 2010 has not been translated into a single indigenous language, not to mention Kiswahili, which is a mother tongue of many Kenyans. The subordinate role played by the mother tongues in Kenyan justice system is one of the many unwelcome constitutional contradictions in the justice system. The justice system has in effect abdicated its role, inadvertently subverting justice as purveyors of language injustice. While there might be alternatives to mother tongue through translation or use of the national language (Kiswahili), these are ad hoc measures that do not guarantee justice to mother tongue users. Legal terminology are often system specific and, therefore, any form of interpretation or translation of mother tongue into the courtroom legal language, may perpetuate injustice to users of mother tongue (De Groot & van Laer, 2006:65).

In view of the foregoing observations, it is imperative that the contradictions inherent in the law on language and in the justice system in particular, are addressed. The constitutional provisions are supreme and no law or statute that stands in contradiction is valid. The CoK unequivocally reiterates in Chapter One, Article 2(1) that "this Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic and binds all persons and all state organs..." In essence, any law or act of omission or commission that is inconsistent with it is void to the extent of the inconsistency. Similarly, in the defence of the Constitution, Article 3 (1) of the same Chapter reiterates that "...every person has an obligation to respect, uphold and defend this constitution."

However, in practice, it is apparent that provisions pertaining to mother tongue rights have been liberally violated with impunity contrary to what is contemplated by the Constitution. Equally, some constitutional provisions are inherently contradictory and have been used by the justice system to subvert Kenyans' right to the use of their mother language as a fundamental human right.

In this paper, we adopt the broader concept of justice system that encompasses the office of the Attorney General, the Legislature, the Judiciary, the Police and the Prisons services. These institutions are directly involved in matters language right from drafting the bills through to the interpretation and enforcement of the law. This is in contrast to the narrow concept of the legal system that is limited to four major elements; the code of laws, the court system, the police and the prison services.

Legal Language and Justice

Legal language is the language of the law and its relation to law and the legal process at large. Legal language unlike ordinary language operates as a functional variant of natural languages having its own domain of use and specific linguistic norms at the level of phraseology, vocabulary, hierarchy of terms and semantics (Mattila, 2006). It possesses specific linguistic features at the morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels as used in particular judicial roles for example, in pleading, claiming, among others. Legal language can be divided into subgenres according to the subgroups of the legal fraternity. Mattila (2006:4) identifies the following subgroupings; legal authors, judges, legislators, administrators and advocates all of whom display some unique linguistic characteristics of vocabulary and style. Typically, the legal author language is less constrained, more liberal with scholarly vocabulary especially of Latin origin. By contrast, the language of judges (courts) is formal, archaic, categorical (judges typically make unreserved declarations and peremptory orders) and at times, very laconic. Legal counsels on the other hand use language that is full of detailed argumentations and rhetorics with lengthy quotations of statutes and precedents. Across these subgenres, there is profuse use of legal terms with legal jargons forming a continuum from the solemn to the more laid back language.

The language of the law may also be divided into two; the codified written language of legislation and other documents that are largely monologic and the spoken interactive dynamic language of the legal process (courtroom language). As a language for specific purpose, the meanings of legal language may vary from one branch of law to another, country to country and even period of usage, all showing distinct characteristics from ordinary language. This often leads to incomprehension on the part of the ordinary public. In spite of this, legal language is a tool for communication beyond the internal legal fraternity, for example, law demands compliance from all the citizens. Unfortunately, legal language has often been described as incomprehensible and overly technical (full of legalese), unintelligible to ordinary readers and barely intelligible to lawyers. This is summed up by the American lawyer and father of modern Forensic Linguistics who puts it candidly 'Legal English is wordy, unclear, pompous and dull' (Mellinkoff, 1963:24). On legal documents, Stygall, (2010:64) concludes "We live in a world of complex documents that are difficult for almost all readers to understand".

Legal language, as a language for special purposes, is characterized as a technical language or 'technolect' (Mattila, 2006:3). Contrary to the ordinary language, a chief characteristic of the legal language is its opaqueness and aloofness (de-contextualized) to the extent that only the initiated legal fraternity may understand it. Typical syntactic features that characterize the legal genre includes; the binomial expressions, complex prepositions and long, complex, multi-

clause sentences with syntactic matching in the subordinate clauses (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007:39). Indeed, Coulthard and Johnson (2010:35-36) point out that the term legal languages has become synonymous with a language that is full of grammatical complexity, sparsely punctuated, over-lexicalized and opaque written texts. They further observe that “legal language has a reputation for archaisms and convoluted syntax... it is simply [*sic*] impenetrable”.

Bhatia (1993: 101) on the same obfuscation puts it that legal written English “... has acquired a certain degree of notoriety rarely equalled by any other variety of English. It has long been criticized for its obscure expressions and circumlocutions, long-winded involved constructions and tortuous syntax, apparently meaningless repetitions and archaisms”. The legal language is thus portrayed as a frightening phenomenon imposed on a society. Coulthard and Johnson (2010:1) concede thus “...we know that the legal world is context-rich. It is peopled by a hierarchical mini-nation of judges, lawyers, police and law-enforcement officers and then the common man and woman, who walk, like Adam and Eve, unknowing, through this strange world”. The above quotation aptly sums up the agony of lay litigants in an alien justice system in which power asymmetry based on some opaque legal language, inhibits their quest for justice.

However, why should this be the case when legal language is meant for communicating issues that are pertinent in securing and promoting justice? For drafters of legal documents, according to Bhatia (1993:102), their justification is based on the view that their profession demands that they “convert legal intentions into unambiguous prose, constructions whose main purpose is to bring precision, clarity, unambiguity and all-inclusiveness”. Similarly, the author is of the view that “the legal drafter is in an unenviable position, striving to use language to do justice to the intent of Parliament and, at the same time, to facilitate comprehension of the unfolding text for ordinary readership”. The author stresses the fact that the drafter must also “...protect the intended interpretation against uncooperative readings by skillful lawyers” (Bhatia 1993: 103). But the author contrasts the foregoing by asserting that “...it may be a ploy to promote solidarity between members of the specialist community and to keep non-specialists at a respectable distance”. Furthermore, observers have argued aptly that such language use in the legal fraternity is meant to preserve professional monopoly and so control legal proceedings to the advantage of the counsels/advocates (the bar) and the judges/magistrates (the bench) (Maley, 1994:12).

Bhatia (2010) further argues that specification in legislative writing is a key requirement to ensure invariable and consistent interpretation and this is corroborated by Seidman et al; (2001:293) who assert that the objective is “... ensuring that courts construe statutes to carry out the legislative purpose”. Bhatia further contents that for negotiation of justice, it is important that precedents and legislative statements are clearly, precisely, unambiguously and adequately specified. According to Halliday (1985) though, the legal language is largely the way it is based on the functions it is meant to do.

For example, in legal settings such as ritual openings of court proceedings, the police caution (the Miranda warnings), beginnings of an interview or the reading of the indictments, use formulaic expressions signaling the start of a formal legal process, among others, are the norm.

However, it is apparent that such language is incomprehensible and may distance and disadvantage the lay participants.

Pursuant to the foregoing, it appears that legal language functions play a role in its complexity and incomprehensibility. Based on the theory of communication, Mattila (2006:31) identifies a number of functions of legal language that may be responsible for its key characteristics that makes it so inaccessible to lay litigants and ordinary readers. Among these are: achieving justice, transmission of legal message, strengthening of the authority of the law, strengthening of the team spirit (solidarity) of the lawyers and preservation of the linguistic cultural heritage of a country. These five functions among those mentioned are more relevant and are discussed below showing why legal language is the way it is (inaccessible, opaque, archaic, convoluted, complex, etcetera) because of each of these functions expected of it.

Achieving justice by the use of legal language is a key function in the sense of producing legal effects by speech acts. Language is used to transmit messages and influence behavior but importantly, acts are realized through it according to the Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1980). Speech acts are important in legal order because law is a metaphysical phenomenon only alive in language when language is used to change legal relationship and thus functioning as an instrument of speech acts with performative role (Mattila, 2006). Theoretically, legal order gives the meaning of a speech act to words expressed orally or to some signed document. Therefore, a judge can make a judicial decision by a speech act and similarly, a valid judgement such as declaring 'this court sentences you to life imprisonment' for instance, has the force of an action. In this case, legal documents (forms) as affirmation of speech acts, are achieved through language either in written form or signature (of parties to a contract, notary or authorities).

Legal transmission of messages is done via language for messages relating to law and matters of legal significance. Through legal language, we are enlightened on the contents of the law, judgements, regulations, administrative decisions, pleadings and indictments, among others. Legal communication, like any human communication, confronts myriad interferences in the form of obstacles, loss, distortions and noise. Obstacles may include mistaken address, disappearance or delay of message and incompetence of receiver. Information loss may include its diminution or impairment or negative attitude of receiver. As for distortion, this may be due to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of information due to ambiguity. Finally, noise in communication is due to impeding elements mixed up with the message. In the context of legal communication, interference involves incomplete, unintelligible (hermetic or closed) and equivocal nature of the message, mutation of information in transmission, impediments of the message by the signals and negative attitude by the recipient.

Strengthening the authority of the law via language is a central feature in legal practice. It is imperative that a law is respected by all citizens and legal language is thus used as an instrument of social management and control. There is need to understand and memorize legal rules and this is achieved through mnemonics: concrete description of specific cases in colourful details and use of a concise and rhythmic legal language that may also be very poetic especially for legal maxims. Our contemporary legislation, due to the complex nature of the modern world, demands rules that are not just precise but complex in details. In fiscal and

social matters, it is common for articles of law to express some mathematical formulas in highly complex language form. Such regulations are totally incomprehensible to the general citizenry. Legal language as the language of power, must be categorical; it conveys the authority of the law and the fear of sanctions.

The fourth function of legal language is the strengthening of lawyers' team spirit and professional solidarity. Legal language strengthens group cohesion, consolidates professional identity and their commitment to values and traditions of their profession. The classical legal language of Latin and legal jargons are very characteristic of the legal fraternity. Latin had been the language of law from medieval times and its prestige has remained; it was associated with the 'educated' and 'learned'. Latin maxims are still used in many legal documents long after the emergency of other legal languages besides legal authors who cultivate Latin in their publications. Legal jargon is the norm as an esoteric language that strengthens their professional affinity. Typically, it is characterized by subjectivity, fantasy and comedy apart from showing 'legal' emotions. Legal language with Latinate terms is thus meant to monopolize information by a special group whose use is basically a distancing strategy. Most of the legal jargons are so hermetic that only few specially initiated within the profession may understand them.

Finally, legal language has an important role to play in linguistic cultural heritage of a country because justice forms part of human culture and consequently, the language of the law forms part of the linguistic culture. It is through legal language that we are able to preserve our linguistic heritage. Language, like any institution ossify (Mattila, 2006:58) and for security, legal language has to hold to its tradition; legislations have to be stable because laws can be in force for generations. This implies that the terms of such laws remain in use in spite of being archaic. This is evident in the archaic character of legal English. This is part of the preservation of the linguistic cultural heritage via the conservative nature of legal language. Part of the linguistic heritage shows the influence of foreign languages (as is the case with legal English). Furthermore, the archaism of legal language has a symbolic value; symbolizes cultural continuity linking the past and present thereby solidifying national feeling of solidarity and identity. These, and the foregoing functions may explain why legal English is often unintelligible to many.

Bhatia, (2010) argues that legal requirements of drafting of law may be responsible for the overly aloof and incomprehension of legal language. He asserts that legislative writing requires specificity for purposes of accessibility, transparency, power and control. All legislative rules are required to have clarity, precision, unambiguity and inclusiveness. Specifically, legislative rules should have clarity of expression so that the legislative intentions are clearly contextualized to avoid any vagueness. Clarity is achieved via use of terminological expressions and complex prepositional phrases instead of simple prepositions. Precision requires the use few words as much as possible achieved through the use of nominalized expressions. The requirement of unambiguity demands, certainty of interpretation and application. This is achieved via insertion of relevant qualification at specific syntactic positions in the sentence. Finally, the author identifies inclusiveness as the final requirement. This demands that legislative language adequately specifies the legal scope of the law.

This requirement directly concerns accessibility of legal language (how comprehensible and interpretable) because a lot of qualifications are required to define the scope of application. The scope of application must be clearly specified so that interpretation is unambiguous.

Due to the mentioned functions (Mattila, 2006:31) and requirements of legal drafting (Bhatia, 2010), legal language has developed legal features that makes it overly incomprehensible. Stygall (2002) argues that with lack of domain knowledge of specialized terms and limitations on working memory, comprehension difficulties arise. This is due to sentence length, retrieval interferences, multiple embeddings and negations, passivization, syntactic or scope ambiguity, and the absence of relative pronouns marking clauses. Similarly, lengthy sentences presented in a bulleted list of no-parallel items, inconsistency in punctuation, largely “impede communication” According to Tiersma (1999: 203), other sources of incomprehension includes technical vocabulary; archaic, formal and unusual words; impersonal constructions; overuse of nominalizations and passives; modal verbs; multiple negation; long and complex sentences; and poor organization (pp. 203–10). Some or all of these may be typical of legal documents detracting comprehension. Stygall (2010) adds that references to inaccessible texts; critical background texts unavailable to lay readers, repetitive use of formal legal names of entities and common words used with a specialized legal meaning add to the opaqueness of legal language.

The reality, however, is that in the justice system, especially in the courtroom discourse, language users construct a social and physical world that is pragmatically related to the social-cultural and physical contexts they inhabit (Gibbons, 2005). The world view of participants is based on some shared knowledge and different perspectives of their social and material world. If indeed we view our world through our language, then this knowledge consists of our communicative ability; the communicative competence. As argued by majority linguists, native speaker competence is all that is required in adequate language use. Legal documents or process coined in a language other than mother language inevitably lacks this knowledge. This is the injustice that those seeking justice suffer when they cannot construct their world view of the material events that are the subject of court proceedings or trial. They can only defend or prosecute their case fairly in their mother tongue which is not available to them.

While the wording of legislation must have a single clear meaning as basis for interpretation and imposition of the law; the ‘plain meaning rule’, in linguistics however, language is not a simple unambiguous means of communication. It is not just about the legal ‘jargon’ per se but the legal view of the social and physical world whose ‘legal’ meaning is at variance with everyday usage. While technical terms are considered ‘shorthand’ in making language efficient and compact, it often leads to lack of clarity. Often, it may portray a different sociocultural view that is different in intent (Gibbons, 2005:14). There is knowledge gap between lawyers and non-lawyers; legal jargon, referring to legal concepts, require technical language because it is not part of everyday knowledge, yet majority of Kenyans lack this knowledge.

As pointed out earlier, a characteristic of legal English language is the use archaic deictics which lawyers prefer for clearer and less ambiguous reference. Yet these only serve to enhance interpersonal power and legal conservatism. Such in-group language is both inclusive and exclusive.

In the legal system, there is the 'two audience dilemma' arising from the legal language in the justice system, that is; language appropriate to the lay witness audience on one hand and to the specialist legal audience, on the other. Specialist English terms such as committal, enforcement, felon, plaintiff, homicide and assault have quite different legal sense from everyday usage, i.e. the latter two may not involve physical contact in the legal semantics.

The pursuit of precision is driven by the desire for legal documents to define and control human behaviour in unambiguous manner' (Gibbons, 2005). However, it is noteworthy that the pursuit of precision when combined with extreme conservatism and archaism, leads to language that is arcane and unintelligible to non-lawyers, producing what observers call 'obfuscation' and Melinkoff (1963) calls it 'pompous'. Difficulties encountered in justice system may, therefore, emanate from two sources; non-lawyers not understanding the legal language and the lawyers not understanding the people who lack mastery of the legal language. It is generally agreed that although the English Law is communicated largely in English, most speakers of the English language are excluded from semiotic group of the law, (Jackson, 1990: 87). This is mainly because they cannot grasp the register of the language in which the law is coded.

One of the glaring contradiction resulting from the unintelligible legal language is the fact that the Common Law (the form adopted in Kenya) presumes that 'ignorance of the law is no defence'. It is difficult for the accused to challenge what he or she does not understand in a courtroom. Similarly, the common citizenry can only observe and respect the law that they understand. In essence, legal language must be intelligible to the people affected by it so that they can understand and protect their own legal and contract rights not to mention their meaningful participation in legal processes in the justice system. As pointed out by (Gibbons, 2005:199) 'without public understanding of the law, it becomes an avenue for oppression rather than order, for injustice rather than justice'. This is the case in Kenya's justice system in which those who do not understand the legal English are denied their right to mother language that could safeguard their constitutionally specified language rights, an avenue of injustice indeed.

Methods and Data

This study is based on a survey and observation of courts, police stations and prison offices focusing on the status and role of mother tongue in those institutions. Specifically, the survey covered three courts in Kitale, Nakuru and Nairobi (Makadara), two police stations in Kitale and Nakuru and two prisons offices in Kitale and Nakuru. Similarly, a review of the Hansard records of parliament formed part of the source of data. In the survey, a magistrate, a judge, a prosecutor, two police officers, two prisons officers, two prisoners, two lawyers and four litigants were interviewed to elicit data for this paper. Finally, a review of The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 provided data on language rights and related Articles that pertains to mother tongue usage.

Findings and Discussion

From the review of CoK, the Hansard, the observations and interviews, relevant findings related to the study are discussed below. The focus is on CoK provisions that touch on language rights and the contradictions identified in the actual implementation of the Constitutional provisions.

The Constitution and Language Rights

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 is clear on the role of mother language and other indigenous languages in the country; they are the pillar for the linguistic diversity of the nation. Pursuant to this, the state is under obligation to protect and promote the said diversity while developing and promoting its usage as set out in Article 7 (3) of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 (NCLR, 2013). Similarly, Kiswahili, an indigenous and mother language of the coastal Kenyan communities, is recognized as both the National Language and Official Language of the Republic of Kenya under Article 7 (2) of CoK. This, in effect, gives due recognition to a local language the status it deserves. On the other hand, Article 10 (2b) on national values and principles of governance makes it explicit that human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized shall be honoured in which mother tongue is arguably a key component in terms of linguistic human rights and diversity of the country.

Chapter Four of CoK focuses on The Bill of Rights (hereafter, BR) in which Article 19 (2) asserts that the purpose in the recognition and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is to preserve the dignity of individuals and communities and to promote social justice, among others. In the application of the BR, Article 20 (1&2) states that these rights applies to all law and binds all state organs and persons, and that every person shall enjoy the rights and fundamental freedoms to the greatest extent consistent with the nature of the right or fundamental freedom. Similarly, clause 5b of the same Article provides that 'the state is obliged to allocate resources giving priority to the widest possible enjoyment of the right or fundamental freedom having regard to prevailing circumstances, including the vulnerability of particular groups or individuals'. Mother tongue is not just part of the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the BR, it symbolizes our humanity and its usage, a manifestation and an assertion of communal dignity.

In the implementation of the BR, Article 21 provides that it is a fundamental duty of the state and every state organ to observe, respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights and fundamental freedoms in the BR. This entails taking legislative, policy and other measures, including the setting of standards, to achieve the progressive realization of these rights. Furthermore, all state organs and public officers have the duty to address the needs of vulnerable groups within society, including but not limited to members of minority or marginalized communities, and members of particular ethnic, religious or cultural communities. In addition, the State shall enact and implement legislation to fulfill its international obligations in respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. On the enforcement of the BR in Article 22, the Constitution guarantees Kenyans the right to institute court proceedings whenever a right or fundamental freedom in the BR has been denied, violated, infringed or is threatened. The Constitution also gives authority to the courts to interpret, uphold and enforce the BR including those relating to language rights.

In this regard, the High Court has jurisdiction, in accordance with Article 165, to hear and determine applications for redress of a denial, violation or infringement of, or threat to a language right or fundamental freedom in the BR. Parliament is expected to enact legislation to give original jurisdiction in appropriate cases to subordinate courts to hear and determine applications for redress of any violation of these fundamental freedoms in the BR. In addition, in any proceedings brought under Article 22, a court may grant appropriate relief, including a declaration of rights, an injunction, a conservatory order, a declaration of invalidity of any law that denies, violates, infringes, or threatens a right or fundamental freedom in the BR and is not justified under Article 24 (that provides for reasonable limitation), an order for compensation and judicial review. The Attorney General, parliament, judiciary, police and prison services are expected to give force to these provisions by enacting laws on mother language, interpreting and enforcing the same as a way of upholding the constitution.

Equality and freedom from discrimination is central in the BR as per Article 27. Specifically, clause 1 and 2 asserts that every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law. Such equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms. The article requires that the state shall not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground, among others; race, ethnic or social origin, culture and language. To ensure compliance to this provision, clause 6 and 7 of the same Article provides that the state shall take legislative and other measures, including affirmative action programmes and policies designed to redress any disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination and such measure shall adequately provide for any benefits to be on the basis of genuine need. Article 28 on human dignity states that every person has inherent dignity and the right to have that dignity respected and protected.

Language and culture are often intertwined and Article 44 (1&2) states that every person has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of his/her choice. A person belonging to a cultural or linguistic community has the right, with other members of that community, to enjoy his/her culture and use his/her language or to form, join and maintain cultural and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society. Clause 2a of this Article is very specific on a person's right to use his/her language. Article 48 on access to justice, provides that the state shall ensure access to justice for all persons and language is an important avenue for this access to justice. The rights of arrested persons are protected by Article 49 of the Constitution. Clause 1 states that Kenyans have a right to be informed promptly, in a language that the person understands, the reason for the arrest, the right to remain silent and the consequences of not remaining silent, among other information.

On fair hearing, Article 50 provides that every accused person has the right to a fair trial, which include the right to be informed of the charge in a language they understand. In addition, the person has the right to choose to remain silent, and not to testify during the proceedings, to have the assistance of an interpreter without payment if the accused person cannot understand the language at the trial. Clause 3 and 4 of the same Article provides that if this Article (50) requires information to be given to a person, the information shall be given in a language that the person understands and evidence obtained in a manner that violates any right or

fundamental freedom in the Bill of Rights shall be excluded if the admission of that evidence would render the trial unfair, or would be detrimental to the administration of justice.

Article 54 (1a&d) on disabilities states that, among other provisions, a person with any disability is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and to be addressed and referred to in a manner that is not demeaning and to use sign language, Braille or other appropriate means of communication. Article 56 (d) on minorities and marginalized groups, the Constitution states that the State shall put in place affirmative action programmes designed to ensure that minorities and marginalized groups develop their cultural values, languages and practices. Article 120 provides for the official languages of Parliament. It states that the official languages of Parliament shall be Kiswahili, English and Kenyan Sign Language (KSL). The business of Parliament may be conducted in English, Kiswahili and Kenyan Sign Language. Yet Article 259 (2) on construing of the Constitution asserts that if there is a conflict between different language versions of this Constitution, the English language version prevails. This is a clear contradiction in negating mother tongue usage by elevating English to the status of a 'constitutional' language!

Constitutional and Legal Contradictions in the Justice System

There are glaring contradictions and inconsistencies in the Constitution itself and the justice system meant to uphold and promote mother language rights. In terms of the Constitution, there are contradictions inherent in it and discrepancies between the Constitution and what is practiced in the justice system. In regard to the constitution, in spite of its acclaimed supremacy as per Article 2 and 3 of Chapter One of CoK, the BR relevant to language rights have not been implemented. Specifically, Article 2(1) which specifies that "this Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic and binds all persons and all state organs..." is yet to be observed in contravention of the provision by an act of omission. This is contrary to the force of the above Article that is explicit in declaring that there can be no law that negates the spirit of the constitution nor any act of omission or commission that is inconsistent with its provisions. The Article binds all persons (the Attorney General) state organs (the legislature, judiciary, police and prisons services). These bodies have not implemented the provisions of the Article in drafting laws to protect mother tongue (the AG and Legislature), interpret the same (the Judiciary) and its enforcement (the Police and Prisons).

Article 7 (2) asserts that the official languages of the Republic are Kiswahili and English while 7(3) provides for the promotion of the linguistic diversity of the country. Clause 2 and 3 three of this Article contradict each other in the sense that mother languages are not given formal legal status as a form of promoting the said diversity. Article 10 (2b) on national values and principles of governance makes it explicit that human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized shall be honoured in which mother tongue is arguably a key component. Mother tongue usage is part of our human dignity, equality and equity before the law and a manifestation of social justice and denial of the same is a violation of this dignity, equality and inevitably, social injustice. Denial of mother tongue usage in official circles is a violation of language rights and social justice for majority Kenyans who have no access to legal English whose elevation to status of legal language negates the spirit of non-discrimination and equality.

While Article 19 (2) makes it clear that that the purpose of recognizing and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms is to preserve the dignity of individuals and communities and promote social justice, mother tongue, a fundamental right, is not guaranteed in the justice system; an affront to individual and communal language rights. State organs in the justice system have routinely violated provisions in Article 20 (1&2) that stipulates BR application by not ensuring individuals are free to use their mother tongue in the justice system. Similarly, the national government has routinely failed to allocate resources for full implementation of these provisions from the time the Constitution was promulgated.

To date (2020), mother tongue use is not guaranteed in the entire justice system. While the fundamental duty of the state and state organs is the implementation of rights and fundamental freedoms by observing, respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling BR, this is not the case in the justice system contrary to Article 20 (1). Failure by the state to take legislative, policy and other measures to achieve progressive realisation of the guaranteed rights contradicts Article 20 (2).

Article 24 of the BR identifies the rights and fundamental freedoms that may be legally limited for public good, yet Article 25 does not include language rights or mother tongue among those protected from the said limitations. Furthermore, the grounds for limitations are not specified in clear and unambiguous terms. For example, what is meant by "... the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society..." (A24 (1)). The concepts of 'reasonable, justifiable and democratic' are amenable to multiple and varied interpretations. More so, this limitation is actually in contradiction to the provisions in Article 44 below. Similarly, the CoK provides that the State shall enact and implement legislation to fulfill its international obligations in respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard, parliament has failed to enact water tight laws that guarantee the observance of linguistic rights across the board. Specifically, in our justice system, mother tongue has no visible role and its use is frowned upon by those who wield linguistic power. When mother language is not used in the legal process, it is a violation of fundamental freedoms; a form of discrimination contrary to Articles 27 and 28.

Language is part of our culture, it manifests our ethnicity and race, hence subordination of mother tongue is more than mere discrimination on the basis of language. It is a discrimination of our culture and ethnicity. Note that Article 28 espouses on the sanctity of human dignity stating that every person has inherent dignity and the right to have that dignity respected and protected. This is what is missing in the justice system; recognition of mother language as a person's inherent dignity that demands respect. It is imperative to note that Article 44 (1&2) are unequivocal on a person's right to a language of his/her choice in their cultural life. However, this is at variance with what is practiced in the legal process. Furthermore, Clause 1 of Article 49 of BR states that Kenyans have a right to be informed promptly, in a language that they understand, of the reason for the arrest, the right to remain silent and the consequences of not remaining silent, among other information. However, when the police arrest Kenyans, they typically do not inform them of the reasons and if they do so, they use Kiswahili and courts read charges couched in legal English that is not comprehensible at all. In a nutshell, the right to use mother tongue is routinely violated in the justice system compromising access to justice due to language barrier for lay persons seeking justice. People's linguistic rights are curtailed when English is the *de facto* language of the courts and the entire justice system.

Article (50) of BR requires that if information is to be given to an accused person, the information shall be given in a language that the person understands. Similarly, evidence obtained in a manner that violates any right or fundamental freedom in the BR shall be excluded. That is, if the admission of that evidence would render the trial unfair, or would be detrimental to the administration of justice. To this end, there can never be a fair trial if the charge sheet is read in legal English and the accused is not allowed to use the language he/she understands, nor access to an advocate who understands their mother language when they are not competent in legal English. Besides, evidence given in a language other than the mother language of the accused is a travesty of justice when its interpretation is at variance with that of mother tongue.

Further contradictions are observed with regard to the disabled community in Kenya especially those whose mother tongue is Kenyan Sign Language. Although Article 54 (1a&d) asserts that individuals with disabilities must be provided with appropriate means of communication besides the use of sign language and braille, institutions within the justice system do not guarantee these services to the disabled communities. Legal documents are not available in Braille and the Kenyan Sign Language is only available in a few courts and totally lacking in the Police and Prisons services country-wide. Often, a judge makes a ruling on a case without hearing the individual defence from a person with visual or hearing impairment: a true miscarriage of justice.

It is such a constitutional auto-contradiction when Articles 7(2) and 120 identifies English, and Kiswahili as the official languages of the republic of Kenya, and these two plus Kenyan Sign Language as the official languages of Parliament, respectively.

These Articles are in contradiction with Article 44 (1&2). In fact Article 44(1) states clearly that "Every person has the right to use the language ...of the person's choice". In this scenario, Kenyans have no right to use their mother tongue in the entire justice system in spite of the provisions of the foregoing Article. These are the gaps in the Constitution that have been exploited by those in the justice system to deny Kenyans their right to mother tongue usage. Similar discrepancy in Article 259 of the Constitution has been used to relegate mother languages to the periphery in the justice system by providing a legal 'justification' for the denial of mother tongue in the justice system. Article 259 (2) focuses on the interpretation and construing of the Constitution. It stipulates that if there is a conflict between different language versions of this Constitution, the English language version prevails. This is a clear contradiction in negating mother tongue usage by elevating English to the status of a 'constitutional' language! Mother tongue is thereby legally and constitutionally consigned to the backseat in both the official discourse and specifically in the justice system.

There are worrisome injustices pertaining to Articles 7, 54, 56 and 120. There are contradictions inherent in the Constitution that have given state organs, and in particular, the justice system the licence to subordinate mother languages in the administration of justice. The deaf who need sign language do not have such services while minorities who often have little education in English, the language of the courts, have no redress and there is no affirmative action in the justice system to remedy this injustice. When mother languages of the country are

not recognized constitutionally for use in parliament, it is evident that they cannot be accorded any role outside parliament, for instance, the courts. If English must prevail in case of any conflict in the interpretation of the Constitution, this gives credence to the marginalization of mother languages, an injustice that pervades our justice system because they virtually have no legal backing.

In the Kenyan justice system, poor communication largely arises because of the use of legal language involving the police who are hardly conversant with the legal genre.

The risk is that in the Common Law tradition of the Kenyan courts, much of the power to prosecute is vested in the police officer in most local Magistrate and District courts. In cases involving minor offences, the police present evidence that a suspect is guilty which is accepted without further investigation or argument. In essence, the main concern in such courts is sentencing rather than decisions about guilt or innocence. In Kenya, like other Common Law countries, the police interviews or interrogations contain some 'scripted' cautions informing interviewees of their legal rights and obligations during the interviews or interrogations. Nowhere is there mention of their right to be informed of the charge or to be interviewed in their mother language.

Such scripted cautions may include the fact that a person may have the right to silence, legal representation, to be informed of the purpose of interrogation or arrest, among others. Generally, there is no mention of the right to use one's mother tongue and to decline responding to questions not framed in one's mother tongue or the right to an interpreter. It is at this point that injustice takes root in the entire legal process with no recourse to an alternative avenue in which mother language may be used by the accused. In a typical Kenyan court, the judge or magistrate simply asks the litigants if they understand English or not. In a few cases, they may ask if the litigants understand English or Kiswahili with no provision for mother languages spoken across Kenya. It is, therefore, imperative that these contradictions and discrepancies are addressed to ensure language rights of Kenyans are respected and upheld.

Addressing the Contradictions

The contradictions identified are basically constitutional and legal in nature. This implies that any effort to address these contradictions must be constitutionally and legally driven. Specifically, these contradictions require constitutional amendments, legal language reform, professionalizing legal translation and interpretation, recognition of Forensic Linguists as expert witnesses and Indigenous Disputes Resolution in the justice system. These measures should have as its core objective, putting mother language and language rights of Kenyans at the centre of legal practice and legal administration in Kenya's justice system. Considering the critical role played by language in the entire justice system, it is imperative that the language used within this sphere is accessible to all for fairness and to guarantee justice for those seeking the same.

Constitutional amendments should target those areas that negate the spirit of the Constitution on language rights as a fundamental human right. Article 7 and 120 should be amended to include some mother languages as official languages of the Republic and as languages of parliamentary business. This will in effect promote linguistic diversity as anticipated by Article 7(3). Such amendments will remove the contradictions observed with respect to Article 44.

Similarly, Article 25 that specifies fundamental freedoms and rights that may not be limited, should be amended too so that enjoyment of linguistic rights is included in the list of such protected rights. Finally, Article 259 (2) should equally be amended to give Kiswahili, a language understood by majority of Kenyans, equal status in the interpretation and construing of the Constitution. The Constitution should make it mandatory for Kenyans to choose the language of interaction in the entire justice system especially during the court proceedings

Law reform council in Kenya should include Legal Language Reform having a singular objective; making language comprehensible to ordinary Kenyans without compromising clarity and unambiguous interpretation of legal statutes. Legal language reform should borrow from the Plain Language Movement that originated from England in the form of 'Plain English Campaign' (that spread to USA and Australia), whose sole aim was for a plain English law. This is in recognition of the centrality of language in the legal process having shown that law is basically a language entity. Replacing archaic and Latinate/Greek terms should be key in the reform process to the extent that ordinary English users can understand legal statutes. Legal language reform should also include recognition of mother languages and sign language in the justice system and provision of free legal interpretation services.

There is the need to professionalize legal interpretation and translation. According to Article 49 (a) and 50 (2m & 3), Kenyans have a right to be informed in a language that they understand in their interaction with the government officers within the justice system. Considering the level of illiteracy and the incomprehension of legal English, it is important that the accused, for instance, have access to legal translators as part of their right to fair trial and non-discrimination on the basis of language. Currently, the courts use non-professional translators and interpreters which exposes litigants to a mistrial and possible contestation of court ruling. Professionalization may require targeted training and certification/registration of those who are qualified to offer such services professionally in accord with clear ethical standards. Inclusion of linguists; experts in interpretation and translation practice, should be part of the process.

Kenya, in tandem with other countries, should recognize Forensic Linguists as expert witness in the courts. While legal drafting has often been considered a preserve of the legal fraternity, it makes sense to include linguists in this processes. It has been demonstrated that no crime is committed without there being some language evidence (Gibbons, 2005) and that legal documents are essentially language documents (Olson, 2016). This implies that linguists who are language experts are an important resource for the justice system not only in ensuring veracity of legal evidence, but in the entire legal process. This is evident considering the centrality of language in drafting, interpreting and final enforcement of the law. Specifically, there are many crimes that are reducible to mere language crimes, these requires the input of linguists. In the context of mother tongue rights and usage, linguists understand better the peculiarity of these languages' semantics in upholding human dignity as espoused in the BR. Judiciary Training Institute should include Forensic Linguistics in its syllabus for Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) for judges and magistrates to enhance their linguistic interpretation of the law

Recognition of alternative disputes resolution that provides for mother tongue use is a desirable approach in ameliorating the observed contradictions in the justice system. Indeed, traditional Indigenous Disputes Resolution (IDR) mechanisms puts mother tongue at the core of the administration of justice in the spirit of Article 49 of the Bill of Rights. Fortunately, this option is provided for in the Kenyan judiciary under Alternative Justice Systems. On this basis, adopting IDR in the justice system would provide an avenue for linguistic rights of lay litigants to be observed and promoted as stipulated by specific and relevant Articles in the BR. Lay litigants are familiar with the language use in such traditional legal frameworks. The different mother languages of the country will have a legal space in the justice system that has for a long time been seen as an alien tool of oppression for Kenyans who do not have the basic or rudimentary knowledge of legal English. Similarly, use of IDR brings with it the indigenous legal knowledge that is lacking in the legal English whose legal semiotics remains foreign at best.

Conclusion

It is apparent that there is a discrepancy between constitutional provisions of CoK on linguistic rights and what is practiced in the justice system in Kenya. All Kenyans seeking any form of service or justice in the justice system have had their rights infringed upon and there is need to seek redress. The Constitution is supreme and binds all persons to adhere and implement its provisions. Acts of omission and commission perpetrated by state organs and agencies are an insult and affront to the CoK. There is need for all state organs mandated to actualize the provisions of the Constitution on mother tongue to fully implement these provisions. The right to mother tongue is a universal and fundamental human right that must be unreservedly anchored in the Constitution. Parliament and the Attorney General should address the contradictions identified in the CoK's BR on linguistic rights to ensure unambiguous implementation of mother tongue rights. Legal language reform in the justice system is a must to place mother language at the center of legal practice in the country as a basic constitutional and legal right for all Kenyans. Language is central in the legal process and it follows that legal documents and statutes are coded in a language that can be understood by all. Law is meant for all, therefore, the language in which it is conveyed must be accessible to all.

Yet there are outstanding issues in the way of mitigating the contradictions in the justice system and the quest for language rights of ordinary Kenyans. There are major obstacles, foremost of these is the political will to address the contradictions in the CoK's BR. Unless the political class is committed to human rights, it becomes a daunting task to initiate such amendments. The prestigious status enjoyed by English in the country is major challenge in assigning mother tongue the status of languages of the justice system. Similarly, the linguistic power asymmetry enjoyed by the legal fraternity makes any legal language reform a formidable task. Those who wield the linguistic power and privilege are unlikely to cede such a privilege easily. Although plain language campaigns begun way back in 1940s (Gowers, 1948), more than half a century ago, it has never gained traction due to the influence of those who hold sway over legal language authority. The demands of legal drafting is likely to favour the often maligned legalese English over plain English. On the same note, legal language requirement in terms of legal concepts and terminology to be expressed demands simultaneous developments in mother tongue, an option not available in Kenya currently. The numerous mother tongues in the country adds to the practical challenges of admissibility of

these languages as judicial or official languages of the justice system not to mention the attendant challenges in translation. However, the position of this paper is that mother tongue usage in the justice system is not only possible, it is attainable.

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The Killer Languages of Kenya

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Abstract

The linguistic diversity witnessed in Kenya is impressive not because of the number of languages spoken within her territory but on account of the fact that out of the four language phyla associated with Africa, three are well represented in the country. Some African countries draw all their languages from only one phylum. However, there is a serious problem in the offing; the linguistic diversity is at stake. Some of these languages are endangered as would be speakers are shifting their linguistic loyalty to other languages leaving some of these languages with no speakers at all. While some of the language shift cases are predictable in that they involve languages that are socio-politically and economically asymmetrical, others are perplexing and idiosyncratic because the languages involved may, in many respects, be deemed to be at par. This paper examines Kenyan languages whose speakers have exerted pressure on

speakers of other languages to the point of ‘forcing’ speakers of the latter to relinquish their ancestral language and adopt the language of the former. Interestingly, in all these cases no foreign language is involved, all the languages are considered, by their speakers and those who do not speak them, to be indigenous.

Key words: Endangerment, language shift, indigenous, language death

Introduction

The stunning warning by Michael Edward Krauss issued in 1991 while addressing the Linguistic Society of America has remained indelible in the minds of the linguists who were in attendance as well as many others who read the speech published in 1992. This is what he said, Obviously, we must do some serious rethinking of our priorities, lest linguistics go down in history as the only science that presided over the disappearance of 90% of the very field to which it is dedicated.

The warning was, rightly, interpreted as a clarion call for linguists to ‘take arms’ and do something in the face of the looming language endangerment crisis. Krauss projected that by the end of the 21st Century only 10% of the world’s over 6000 languages would have survived as healthy languages. Based on a survey conducted with a global scope, Krauss pointed out that 50% of the languages were already moribund and the rest (about 40%) would be moribund by the end of the 21st Century. Evidently ‘serious rethinking’ has been done by linguists, anthropologists, sociologists and members of language communities. A number of language revitalization programs have been rolled out and, without appearing to make an evaluation of their success or otherwise, impressive deductions have emerged about salvaging linguistic diversity. In this paper I will not focus on the language revitalisation efforts. However, for a vivid impression of the effort towards language revitalization see Tsunoda (2006); Rob (2014); Hanemann (2017). The overarching aim of this paper is to highlight the language endangerment phenomenon and to demonstrate that it is rife in Kenya. It further aims at illustrating the fact that, unlike what is observed in parts of the Americas, Australia and Asia, the endangerment on indigenous Kenya languages is not posed by a foreign language but by ‘fellow’ indigenous languages owing to prolonged, often friendly, contact between these languages. Before we look at specific languages and their endangerment experience, it would be in order to briefly shed some light on the phenomenon of language contact and its concomitant effect on linguistic diversity.

Language Contact

In the words of Garret (2006:48) language contact occurs: [...] whenever and wherever two or more human groups with different languages- and in most cases, different cultures and worldviews as well- encounter one another and attempt to engage in communication. The encounter may take a variety of shapes and lifespan. To use Garret’s words: [...] these encounters may be intended or unintended; fleeting or enduring; relatively egalitarian or marked by significant asymmetries of power; peaceful and mutually beneficial or coercive, exploitative and otherwise detrimental to one or more of the groups involved (Garret 2006:48).

Studies on language contact have shown that any given instance of language contact can have a wide range of potential outcomes. Thomason (2001:10) observes: The most common results of

language contact is change in some or all of the languages: typically, though not always, at least one of the languages will exert at least some influence on at least one of the languages.

The outcome of such encounters can range from borrowing, to the 'birth' of a new code, through stable bilingualism or multilingualism to the 'death' of one of the languages involved (Ngure 2015:52).

Borrowing

Borrowing as a consequence of language contact entails the adoption of a word from another language. The adopted word may be retained in its 'foreignness' or adapted to conform to the morpho-phonotactics of the language to which it has been adopted. To demonstrate that borrowing does not necessarily occur in a haphazard manner, some scholars have proposed what they refer to as borrowing scales. The scale is used to predict which types of borrowed elements can be expected to appear in increasingly intense contact situations (Thomason 2001: 69). One extreme of the Borrowing Scale envisages a casual contact situation in which the borrowing involved is that of non-basic vocabulary while the structure of the receiving language remains intact.³ The other extreme presents a situation of intense contact characterized by heavy lexical and structural borrowing. The lexical borrowing, at this level, is in all sections of the lexicon (Thomason (2001: 69-71); Thomason and Kauffman (1988:77-107 cited in (Ngure 2015:188). When examining the effect of contact-induced change on the structure of a receiving language, three basic outcomes are likely: a receiving language feature may be lost without replacement; a new feature may be added to the recipient language's inventory of linguistic material; a new feature may replace one of the recipient language's original feature (Thomason 2001: 85 cited in Ngure 2015: 188). While Borrowing is a common phenomenon in contact situations, if left unchecked, it may result in language death. Thomason (2001) points out to a "rare phenomenon of language death' that occurs when there is, [...] complete grammatical and large-scale lexical replacement: speakers of an endangered language borrow more and more linguistic material from a dominant language, structures as well as words, to the point where the heritage language has been entirely absorbed into the dominant language. (Thomason 2001:64)

The birth of a new code

The 'birth' of a new code as a possible outcome of language contact is a rare occurrence. In sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics, new codes that have emerged as result of language contact have been analyzed under various labels. Contact language is one such label. Contact languages are traditionally defined as:

those languages and language varieties of varying degrees of stability and historical depth that are known historically to have emerged from situations of social contact of varying durations and degrees of intensity among speakers of two or more previously existing languages (Garret 2006:48).

³ Basic vocabulary, also known as core vocabulary is the set of [lexical items](#) in a language that are most [resistant](#) to [replacement](#), [referring](#) to the most common and [universal](#) elements of human experience, such as parts of the body (*foot, eye*), universal [features](#) of the [environment](#) (*water, star*), common activities (*eat, sleep*), and the lowest [numerals](#) vs non-basic vocabulary (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/>)

The best known examples of contact languages are pidgins and creoles. Steering clear of the attested controversies among linguists and anthropological linguists regarding the whole subject of pidgins and creoles, there is almost near consensus on the observation that pidgins emerge from extended or repeated (yet limited) social contact between members of two or more groups that have no language in common (Garret 2006:48; Salikoko 2004:202; Thomason and Kaufman 1988:168ff).⁴

Language Death

Language death is a phenomenon whose definition is a subject of interesting healthy debate among scholars. Crystal (2000:1) says that, "Language death occurs when the last speaker of a language dies". It is in light of this that he claims that on 4th November 1995 Kasabe, also known as Luo (a language once spoken in Cameroon) was alive but on 5th November 1995 it was dead. It died on 5th November 1995 because that was the day the last speaker, Bogon, died. There are those who hold the view that the last (native) speaker should not be the sole criterion to be relied upon since there are languages with no living native speakers but the languages exist in written form and, some, are used in such specified domains as religion, law and rituals among others (Brenzinger and Dimmendaal 1992; Thomason 2001). A good example of this is Latin which has been in use in the Roman Catholic for a long time, long after its native speakers died. Seeing that to-date Latinate expressions dominate the legal jargon, do we maintain that Latin is dead? Similar arguments can be advanced regarding Sanskrit and ancient Hebrew⁵. In this paper I do not wish to delve further into the debate on the yardstick(s) that should be used to determine whether a language is dead or otherwise. For the purpose of this paper, however, I will consider a language to be dead if there are no people speaking the language anymore as a home language or in any other communicative domain. The aforementioned debate notwithstanding, there is the general consensus on the fact that language death, when it occurs, may take place abruptly or drag for a long time, even centuries, before it gets completed.

Abrupt Language Death

Abrupt language death is rare and when it happens, it is occasioned by the annihilation of the speakers of a language by catastrophic natural causes such as earthquakes, draught, famines, epidemics or genocide (Ngure 2015:51). Some scholars have used different terms to refer to this type of language death. Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter (1977:5) use the term language murder; Hill (1983:260ff) uses the term biological language death, and; Matisoff (1991:201) uses the word glottocide. Although, as pointed earlier, this route to language death is not a bitten path, literature accounting for extinction of languages through it is available. A number of Mexican Indian languages are on record for having disappeared abruptly following the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. The disappearance of the speakers of the languages was

⁴ I do acknowledge the fact that there are many and varied definitions of pidgin. However, I find the definition by Decamp (1971:16) irresistible. He defines pidgin as "A contact vernacular, normally not the native language of any of its speakers. It is used in trading or in any situation requiring communication between persons who do not speak each other's native languages. It is characterized by a limited vocabulary, an elimination of many grammatical devices such as number and gender, and a drastic reduction of redundant features."

⁵ Hebrew is said to have died as the medium of everyday conversation more than 2000 years ago but has since been revitalized to the point that it is now spoken in the nation of Israel as an official language (Tsonoda 2006:169; Fishman 1991:289-336)

attributed to a combination of factors that included genocide, disease epidemics (small pox, measles and common cold) and loss of will to live (expressed in form of sexual abstinence, abortion, suicide among others) (Tsunoda 2006:22). Tasmania, an Australian language, is another example. The language was first contacted by a Captain Abel Tasman, a Dutch national, in 1642. At some point the speakers of Tasmania had reached a population of 8000 people. However, in the period between 1802 and 1833, disease and genocide by English settlers reduced their population to about 300 people. By 1847 all the 300 had died. Only place and people's names remain of Tasmanian language today (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tasmania_Aborigine).

In South Africa, /xam is a good example of a language that came to an abrupt end as a result of the death of its speakers. A conglomeration of factors ranging from warfare to starvation and disease conspired to bring an end to the language (Traill 2002:37), cited in Karanja (2006:38)).

Gradual Language Death (Language Shift)

When Krauss (1992:4) predicts that in the long run 90% of mankind's languages will become extinct or doomed to extinction, he definitely does not imply that the speakers of these languages will all die and therefore perish with the languages. What he suggests however is that a considerable number of the world's languages will be abandoned by their supposed speakers in favour of other languages. The abandoned languages will have no one to propagate them which will ultimately lead to their death. This type of language death is brought about by shift. Language shift is not a new phenomenon; it has been going on since time immemorial. Whenever there is a close contact between two communities with different languages, shift is often a possibility. Baker (2001) describes language shift as a scenario in which, there is a reduction in the number of speakers of a language, a decreasing saturation of language speakers in the population, a loss in language proficiency, or a decreasing use of that language in different domains (Baker 2001:59).

Language shift is brought about by a variety of factors. The set of factors that create the shift from a given language to another may not be responsible for all other cases of language shift. Brenzinger et al. (2003:10) suggest that in evaluating and measuring the level of endangerment for any language, no single factor should be considered in isolation because a language may appear relatively secure in terms of one factor but require "immediate and urgent attention due to other factors". Different terminologies have been used by different scholars to refer to the languages involved in a language shift situation. There are words to refer to the language that cedes ground to another language and words to refer to the language that encroaches and finally takes over 'the ground' of the other language. The language whose speakers abandon it in favour of the other is variously referred to as the minority language; the dominated language; non-dominant language; abandoned language, and; non-mainstream language (Amery 2000:217; Dorian 1986:80ff). The 'newly' adopted language is variously referred to as majority language, dominant language, superordinate language, glottophagic language or killer language (Amery 2000:217; Abbi 1995: 178; Dorian 1986:72; Fishman 1964:44; Haugen 1972:336; Thomason 2001:225; Thomason and Kauffman 1988:100; Mesthrie 2008; Trudgill 1991: 64).

The rest of the paper I will be examining, on one hand, the languages that endanger others and, those that have been endangered or are being endangered in Kenya, on the other hand. As I will

demonstrate shortly, the endangerment in focus is chiefly through language shift and not catastrophic causes or genocide.

The Linguistic Situation in Kenya

Kenya is situated in the Eastern part of Africa. It has an area of 580,367 km² which accommodates 47.6 million people (KNBS 2019). According to the 23rd Edition of the ethnologue, there are 68 languages spoken in Kenya. The bulk of the indigenous languages spoken in the country are drawn from three language phyla, namely, the Niger- Congo (represented by the Bantu languages); Nilo-Saharan (represented by the Nilotic languages) and; Afro-asiatic (represented by Cushitic and Semitic languages). The Proto-Indo European phylum is represented in Kenya by English, Hindi, Gujarati, Konkani/Goan and Punjabi.

The 2010 Constitution recognizes the linguistic diversity of the country as a valuable heritage. It is however worth pointing out that, other than what it says concerning English, Kiswahili and the Kenya Sign language, the constitution does not make explicit demands on how the indigenous languages are supposed to be used. In article 7, it says:

1. The national language of the Republic is Kiswahili.
2. The official languages of the Republic are Kiswahili and English.

These two languages are categorically assigned functions to facilitate in interethnic engagements requiring communication. The same languages are exalted in Chapter 8 (part 5) as the languages of parliament. The only addition to the two, for use in parliament, is the Kenya Sign language.

Regarding the other languages, the constitution makes a pronouncement that might sound impressive to the ears of the populace. The State shall:

- a. promote and protect the diversity of language of the people of Kenya; and
- b. promote the development and use of indigenous languages, Kenyan Sign language, Braille and other communication formats and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities.

On critically examining the pronouncement, and with the benefit of hindsight, one realizes that the 2010 Constitution does little for the promotion of indigenous languages. The situation remains the same, nearly a decade after the promulgation of the new constitution. Languages are left to their own devices. Perhaps the situation would have been different, if extra caution and deliberate effort were made in the interest of indigenous languages. Talking about deliberate effort, the post-Apartheid South Africa easily pops up. The Post-Apartheid South Africa constitution drafters, in a bid to address the language question, incorporated in the Founding Provisions, a provision on the establishment of a Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB). The board was established by national legislation to; [...] promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of, all official languages; the Khoe Khoe and San languages; and South African Sign language; and promote and ensure respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa. (Founding Provisions, cited in Prah (2006:12)

The drafters of the constitution were alive to the fact that the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages needed some proactive interventions so as to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages (Prah 2006:12). Although presently, barely two

decades later, scholars hold varied opinions regarding the vitality of the languages the constitution sought to promote and whether PANSALB is still on track in executing the mandate bestowed on it at its establishment, there is a general appreciation of the indispensability of the languages spoken in the Rainbow nation. Coming back to the Kenyan scenario, there has never been any government funded institution or board put in place to exclusively address the question of language.⁶ As pointed out earlier, languages, indigenous languages to be precise have been left to jostle for dominance in certain domains in the Kenyan linguistic arena.

The Killer languages of Kenya

The linguistic heterogeneity in Kenya has yielded what in sociolinguistics is referred to as unstable multilingualism. In this type of multilingualism languages are involved in a kind of competition for communicative domains as there are no domains that are exclusively a preserve of any particular language. As Batibo (2005:64) rightly observes, “When two languages of unequal socio-political or economic strength come into contact, a pressure-resistance relationship will arise.” If the degree of pressure from the stronger language is greater than the resistance offered, the weaker language is highly endangered. Often times, the weaker language speakers may not resist at all but abandon their language in favour of the other as a strategy for integration. However, there are instances where the language that is deemed to be less powerful encroaches the domains of a perceived powerful language and eventually takes over all the communicative domains so that the ‘powerful’ language loses speakers. Another scenario is where we have two languages considered to be at par socio-economically and socio-politically but one ends up ‘smothering’ the other. The cases of language endangerment (and by extension, death) in Kenya have involved languages that are more powerful stifling the less powerful on the one hand, and languages deemed to be on the same pedestal endangering one another, on the other hand.

5.1 Borana Oromo

Perhaps the most lethal language in Kenya in terms of its assimilating tendencies is Borana. Not many languages in Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya have managed to stand their ground in a tussle for linguistic dominance with this language. Borana belongs to the Cushitic family of the Afroasiatic phylum of languages. In relation to other languages in Kenya as a whole, Borana is perceived as one of the minority languages, but in Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, it is not a language of the minority. According to the 2019 census, members of the Borana ethnic community in Kenya are 276,236, translating to about 0.6 percent of the Kenyan population (KNBS 2019). The apparent dominance of the community over other communities in Northern Kenya dates back to the sixteenth century, with the start of the Oromo expansion⁷. The Borana community was dreaded for its military prowess which enabled it to conquer a large part of Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya to a point of exercising a hegemonial influence over that region until the 1920s, when the British took over (Ngunjiri 2016:).

⁶ The lackluster treatment of the subject of language is part of the concerns addressed by Okoth Okombo in his inaugural speech titled ‘Language policy: the Forgotten Parameter in African Development and Governance Strategies’ delivered at the University of Nairobi on 4th October 2001

⁷ *Oromo expansion* is a phrase used in history to refer to the spread of the Oromo ethnic group from their homeland in Southern Ethiopia to Northern Kenya and parts of Somalia and Djibouti. In Kenya Oromo is represented by Borana, Orma and Waata.

Long before the decline of the Oromo hegemony, the Gabra language had been ‘swallowed’ and the community shifted to Borana, the language they speak to date^{8,9}. The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed the assimilation of Sakuye and Garreh into Borana (Schlee & Shongolo 2012:5; Schlee 2009:204)¹⁰. Joining the list of linguistic casualties, all trounced by Borana are Konso, Waata and Burji. For these three language communities, the shift is not complete but underway (Ngure 2016:). According to a survey conducted among the members of the Konso and Burji ethnic communities living in Kenya by the present researcher, intergenerational transmission of these two languages is completely broken; youngsters are being socialized into the communal way of life using Borana. The population of the Konso and Burji ethnic communities in Kenya, according to the 2019 census, are 1296 and 36,938 respectively. It should be prudent to point out that these two communities also have their kinsmen across the Kenyan border in Ethiopia. Amborn (2009:89) opines that the Original homeland of the Burji is situated on the eastern side of the Ethiopian Rift Valley in the southern part of the Amarro mountains. Today about two third of them still live there. Nowadays Burji communities can be found at various places along a line reaching from Addis Ababa in the north, through southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, to Nairobi and Mombasa in the south.

Elizabeth Watson, who conducted some fieldwork among the Konso in Ethiopia, observed that in 2009 the Konso people living around the Konso highlands in south-west Ethiopia numbered about 215,000 and were using their language as one of the basis for constructing the Konso identity (Watson 2009:173). The Waata in Marsabit and Isiolo Counties speak Borana¹¹. However, as we shall explain shortly, the Waata in coastal Kenya although faced with similar predicament of linguistic assimilation, the influence is not from a fellow Oromo language, as is the case among those in Marsabit and Isiolo Counties, but from a totally unrelated language.

⁸ According to Schlee (2008:2) the vast majority of the Gabra spoke a Somaloid language (closely related to Somali and Rendille) before shifting to Oromo. Some are also said to have had Samburu (Maa speakers) connections or to have yet other origins (Schlee 1989: 166, 170).

⁹ It is important at this point to take cognizance of the fact that there are some scholars who subscribe to the view that Gabra was never a Somaloid language but has all along been Oromo. Aneesa Kassam(1986:193) claims, “The Gabra are most closely related to the Booran of northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia, with whom they share strong economic, social and cultural bonds, emanating from their links in the past, which are often expressed in ritual terms. However, in Kenya a number of factors have led to the evolution of the Gabra and Booran as two interrelated but distinct ethnic groups”

¹⁰ Gunther Schlee, who studied extensively how the clans of ethnic groups in Southern Ethiopia, Northern Kenya, Somali and Djibouti are interwoven, says, “ The Boran managed to incorporate many non-Boran groups in a network of ritual dependence on their two high priests, the qallu of the Sabbo moiety and the qallu of the Gona moiety, and to unite them into an internally peaceful military alliance..” Schlee & Shonkolo 2012:5)

¹¹The Waata ethnonym has lately been a subject of intense debate threatening to split the community into two. A considerable portion of the community in Marsabit and Isiolo Counties do not subscribe to the Waata ethnonym since they regard it as offensive, a sort of ethnophaulism and, for that reason, advocate for its substitution with Wayyu. The move to adopt Wayyu seem to have been endorsed by the government of Kenya culminating in awarding an ethnocode and inclusion of the name in the census enumeration tools (the 2019 census indicate that the Wayyu in the country are 3761). There are those Waata who did not endorse the change of ethnonym to Wayyu and so opted to retain their traditional name Waata, the bulk of this live in Kilifi, Kwale and Tana River Counties (Ngure, in print). In the 2019 Census the Waata were lumped together with the Aweer, a move that elicited discontent among the members of the two groups on the grounds that the two are distinct ethnic communities that deserve separate entry in the census records (according to the 2019 census the Aweer/Waata were 20,103 in number)

One other group grappling with linguistic assimilation occasioned by intense contact with Borana is the Sidama-Amhara group living in Marsabit County¹². This is a group comprising of immigrants who moved to the country in the early seventies following the fall of the reign of Haile Selassie and the assumption of leadership by the Derg. The Amhara and Sidama who sought asylum in Kenya did so for security reasons since they were perceived to be sympathizers of Haile Selassie's rule (the Amhara shared the same ethnicity with the Emperor). In Kenya, the asylum seekers were allocated a section within the arable part of Marsabit County where they have lived to-date subsisting on farming. Two related factors could have contributed to the linguistic shift now underway among this group. The first one is the fact that the hosting community is statistically, economically and socio-politically superior and at the same time accommodative. There appears to be no animosity between the immigrants and the hosting community. Matters would have probably been different if the hosting community was repressive and hostile. As Ngure (2015:166) observes, "when the speakers of a language are confronted by circumstances that threaten their ethnic identity and liberty, an instinctive resolve to safeguard their identity is...awakened". One of the manifestations of this resolve is expressed through loyalty to one's language. So language becomes a wall to safeguard the group's interests from hostile intruders.

The second factor has to do with the way members of these groups moved into Kenya and to their present location. Following an interview with members of the alliance, the researcher established that a sizable number of immigrants came into the country in small groups, others as individuals. Upon crossing the border, they forfeited their Sidama/Amhara names and assumed Oromo names.¹³ With an Oromo name and a functional Oromo vocabulary, it was not difficult to get to Marsabit.

Maa language

The second most 'dangerous' language in Kenya by virtue of its tendency to 'maul' other languages is the Maa language. The word Maa is used as a collective term to refer to the language spoken by the Maasai, Samburu and Ilchamus¹⁴. Speakers of Maa, a nilotic language, have practiced nomadic pastoralisms on the plains of Kenya and Tanzania for ages. This type of subsistence strategy has predisposed them to contact with speakers of other groups. This contact has had an impoverishing effect on linguistic diversity in the region.

Yaaku

Yaaku, once spoken in parts of what is today's Laikipia County, is considered an extinct language. The language was a Lowland East Cushitic language in the same branch with Rendille

¹² Sidama and Amhara belong to the same language phyla, Afro-asiatic. However, while Sidama is Cushitic, Amhara is Semitic. Linguistically, the Sidama are closer to Borana than they are to Amhara. The Sidama-Amhara alliance was formed as a platform to enable the members to engage with the county government (of Marsabit), and by extension the national government (Kenya), for certain services. Members of these ethnic communities are not issued with the Republic of Kenya identity cards; they use asylum cards, which are quite limiting in terms of the services one can access from the county and national governments (Mohammed Ordofa, personal communication).

¹³ The Kenya-Ethiopia border is highly porous and the ethnic groups living either sides are highly interwoven ethnolinguistically.

¹⁴ Maasai, Samburu and Ilchamus are treated as distinct ethnic communities in Kenya but the varieties of the Maa language they speak exhibit a high degree of mutual intelligibility to the point that they may be regarded as dialects of one language.

and Dassenach (Mous 2005)¹⁵. The speakers of Yaaku (Yakunte is the selfname used by the community) subsisted on hunting and gathering majorly in Mukogodo forest. Their interaction with the Maasai resulted in the Yaaku adopting the pastoral culture before adopting the Maasai language.

After the intrusion by the Maasai, Maasai became the dominant language of the area. A change in economy towards cattle keeping was accompanied by a shift in language towards Maasai (Mous 2005).

Bernd Heine notes that by 1969, when he visited Mukogodo territory, all Yaaku people spoke Maa, while very few (28 per cent) had even a basic grasp of Yaaku (Heine 1974; Carrier 2011:250)

Cronk (2004), examines the factors that may have contributed to the shift from Yaaku (Mukogodo) to Maasai. He summarises this as,

First, the number of people who could speak Yaaku was quite small, necessitating that everyone be at least bilingual [given the interaction with more numerous Maa speakers]. Second, Yaaku was a language well suited to hunting and beekeeping, with, for example, five different words for beehive, while Maa may have been better suited to their new pastoralist economy. Third, the retention of a language other than Maa and an inability to speak perfect Maa would have been significant impediments to Mukogodo efforts to claim Maasai status. (Cronk 2004:84)

Elmolo

The Elmolo people are a small fishing community living near Lake Turkana, in Marsabit and Turkana Counties. For a long time they have borne the label of “the smallest tribe of Kenya” and on the verge of extinction (Tosco 2015:101). Interestingly, available statistics indicate that the Elmolo community has actually been increasing in number in recent years. Spencer (1973) indicated that in the early seventies they were less than 100, Heine (1980) gave their number as approximately 200 while Omondi (2008: 5), after conducting a headcount, found that they were 613. The 2019 census revealed that people who identified with the Elmolo ethnonym were 1,104. The increase in the number of the people notwithstanding, the observation that Elmolo language is no longer being passed on to children is not contestable. According to Tosco (2015:103),

The Elmolo today speak Samburu (ISO 639 code: saq) as their first language, a northern Maa variety (Nilo-Saharan, Eastern Nilotic branch) especially close to Camus (or Il-Chamus) and very similar to the Maa spoken by the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania. As a second language, most of the Elmolo know Swahili, and a few speak at least some English.

While the language is deemed, for all practical purposes, extinct, the community seems not to have followed the route used by Yaaku to extinction. The Elmolo people did not dispense with their traditional subsistence strategy; fishing remains their primary means of eking out a living. According to the community, the last “good” speaker, Kaayo, died in 1999 (Tosco 2015:104).

¹⁵ There exists some controversies regarding the branch that Yaaku belongs to and the sister languages in that branch. Greenberg (1966) posits Yaaku to be in the East Cushitic Branch together with Rendille and Elmolo. Tosco (2000) proposes a branch consisting of Yaaku and Dullay. The Dullay languages are spoken in Southern Ethiopia.

The community has embarked on a language revitalization program under the Gura Pau Community Based Organisation (see Omondi 2013; Omondi 2008 and Tosco 2015).

Rendille

Rendille belongs to the East branch of Omo-Tana, a branch of the Cushitic family. The Rendille community is grappling with cultural and linguistic influence from Samburu.

The relationship between Samburu and Rendille has been referred to as symbiotic and, therefore, non-competitive and is suspected to date back in the early Seventeenth Century (Schlee 1989:41; Spencer 1973).

The close association between the two communities has resulted in the “birth” of a distinct subgroup of the Rendille community known as Ariaal Rendille (Sobania 1980:155; Spencer 1973:134; Fratkin 1987:55; Swanepoel and Pillinger 1985:1; Ngure 2015:66).

Spencer (1973:134) claims that Ariaal is made up of a mixture of people who descended from Rendille proper and Samburu (Spencer 1973:130).

Nick and Lynn Swanepoel (1983:2), linguists from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, describe Ariaal as:

Rendille who claim to have left Rendille proper clans to form six new clans. Five of the six clans speak Rendille while one... speaks only Samburu. They have all adopted some Samburu customs, mainly with regard to the circumcision ceremony. Whereas the Rendille are by and large camel herders, the Ariaal have now become predominantly cattle keepers.

Following a research conducted in 2010 to investigate the vitality of Rendille, it was established that out of six settlements sampled from what was regarded as the Rendille territory, inter-generational transmission of Rendille was noticeable in only two. In the rest of the settlements loyalty to Rendille was grossly compromised. The study revealed that children are being socialised into the Rendille custom using Samburu. For more on the Rendille –Samburu shift see Ngure (2015).

Brenzinger (1992:219) gives a list of more ethnic groups that were assimilated by the Maasai. They lost their original languages and adopted Maasai. These are:

Ng’wesi; they were a hunting and gathering group who spoke a Bantu language closely related to Meru.

Tikirri-also a hunter gatherer group. They spoke a dialect of Kalenjin.

Lewaso. A hunter-gatherer group that spoke a dialect of Kalenjin.

Omotik, once considered a dialect of Ogiek, though missing in Brenzinger’s list, was also replaced by Maasai after their speakers interacted with the Maasai in Narok District. Their ‘original’ home was on Mount Ngulot on the southern fringes of Mau Forest (Heine and Mohlig 1980:76).

Mijikenda

The word Mijikenda is used to refer to a cluster of related coastal Bantu languages.¹⁶ According to the 2019 census report, members of the Mijikenda community in Kenya were 2,488,691. Mijikenda gets into the same league with Borana and Maasai because of the impact it has had on some 'smaller' languages in the coastal region of Kenya. Degere is one of them. The Degere community was a hunter-gatherer group whose territory encompassed both sides of the Kenya-Tanzania border in the immediate hinterland of the Kenyan coast. In the Kenyan side, members of the community are found in Kwale County. The Degere language is extinct since the community shifted their linguistic allegiance to Duruma and Digo. [...]many, if not all, Degere have abandoned their former way of life and become sedentary cultivators. Through intermarriage they have adopted the customs, language, and to a large extent the identity of their Mijikenda neighbours (Walsh 1990:69).

Another language struggling in the grip of the Mijikenda is the Waata whose speakers are found in Kilifi and Kwale Counties. Unlike their kinsmen, in Isiolo and Marsabit Counties who were assimilated into a fellow Oromo-speaking group, the Waata of Kwale and Kilifi are being absorbed into the culture and language of the dominant coastal Bantus. An interview with the members of the community revealed that the Waata community is deeply concerned about the loss of their cultural heritage, including language, as a result of the influence of the dominant Mijikenda community. Consequently, the community has formed an association by the name of Friends of the Waata Association (FOWA) to help in articulating for their rights and kick start language revitalization efforts.

Other dangerous languages

In the immediately preceding sections, the languages that were discussed are those that threaten multiple languages. There are other 'dangerous' languages only that their assimilating scope has been limited to one language.

Dholuo versus Suba

The Luo (whose language is Dholuo) and the Suba (their language being Olusuba) are said to have come into contact somewhere around the middle of the 19th century when the Luo expanded southwards towards the Suba (Ogot 1967; Ogone 2008:251). The contact was largely asymmetrical since the Luo surpassed the Suba numerically and also the fact that the missionaries and the colonial government had a 'soft spot' for Dholuo. Prolonged contact between the two led to the Suba acquiring Luo customs and practices, and thus later became known as Luo-Suba (Ogone 2008:251). Rottland and Okombo (1992:278), giving part of the findings in a survey conducted in the Islands occupied by the Suba observe, "Crosstabilization by generation...revealed a steady decrease in the acquisition of Suba as a first language." They noted that there was a remarkable decrease of Suba usage and the corresponding increase of Dholuo usage, starting with the family domain and proceeding to other areas of wider communication (Rottland and Okombo 1992:278).

¹⁶ "Mijikenda" literally means **nine homes or nine homesteads (in Swahili)**, referring to the common ancestry of the Mijikenda people. The nine Mijikenda sub-tribes are believed to be nine different homes of the same tribe. Each sub-tribe speaks its own dialect of the **Mijikenda language**. The subtribes are **Giriama, Digo, Chonyi, Rabai, Jibana, Kambe, Kauma, Duruma and Ribe**. (<http://www.kenya-information-guide.com/mijikenda-tribe.html>)

Kinare versus Gikuyu

Kinare, once a dialect of Ogiek, was spoken in some places on the eastern slope of the Rift Valley by a hunter-gatherer community living in the eastern slope of the Rift Valley. The speakers were integrated into the Kikuyu culture and adopted Gikuyu (Rottland 1982:24-25; Dimmendaal 1989).

Terik versus Nandi

The Terik are reckoned to be a subset of the Kalenjin dialect cluster. Rottland (1982) posits the dialect to be in the Elgon branch of Kalenjin, along with Bong'om, Sapiny, Kony and Pok. Heine (1992) observes that a dialect shift is underway as the Terik dialect is becoming more and more like Nandi.

...for many Terik the ongoing Nandi-zation process appears to take place unnoticed, there are others who are aware of it, or at least of some aspects of it (Heine 1992:264).

Kiswahili; an emerging Killer language

Kiswahili and English are the two joint official languages in Kenya and also, together with the Kenya sign language, the languages of the national and county assemblies. This places Kiswahili at a higher rung relative to the other indigenous Kenyan language. It is also worth pointing out that besides being an official language, Kiswahili is also the sole national language, a function it has performed since May 1970. The language is also taught as a compulsory subject and examined in Primary and Secondary Schools throughout the Republic of Kenya. With such an elevated position, one would expect Kiswahili to exercise some influence over other indigenous languages in the country. However, while incidences of borrowing Kiswahili lexical items into the other indigenous languages have been common, Kiswahili has not for a long time been viewed as a threat to other languages in Kenya. There is, nevertheless, one notable exception; the case of Dahalo. Dahalo is a Cushitic language treated by some scholars as belonging to the Southern branch of the Cushitic family while others consider it part of the Eastern Cushitic group (Ehret 1980; Tosco 1992). Dahalo, the only Kenyan language with a click sound, is considered extinct as speakers shifted to Kiswahili. Regarding the shift to Kiswahili, Tosco claims that the economic shift to a semi-agricultural life following the ban on hunting by the government played a significant role in the shift to Kiswahili. This was further aided by the establishment of a settlement scheme around the area traditionally inhabited by the Dahalo speakers attracting many people, especially Bantu communities, from other parts of the country. This entrenched Kiswahili as the language of interethnic communication in the area.

Although Kiswahili has been perceived as not posing threat to other indigenous languages except, of course the Dahalo case, tell-tale signs indicating that the language is no longer 'harmless' but on a trajectory to being one of the lethal killer languages are now perspicuous. A study conducted nationally by the National Assessment on Measurement of Learning Achievement (NASMLA) revealed that Kiswahili is increasing replacing other indigenous languages in the home domain. In the study, one of the research questions was on the language of use at home. Out of a sample of 5256 grade 3 pupils, 32.1% indicated that the language used at home is Kiswahili. Those who indicated that they used mother tongue at home were 60.5 % (KNEC 2018). In a country that has nearly 70 languages, the 32.1 % in favour of Kiswahili as the language of use at home is an alarmingly high incidence given that the domain in question is the home domain. The home domain is critical when it comes to assessment of

intergenerational transmission of a language; a language's vitality is bolstered if it is being passed on at home (Ngure 2016: 86). It is because of the centrality of the home domain in relation to a language's vitality that Nettle and Romaine (2000) sound the warning. Without safeguards for language use at home sufficient to ensure transmission, attempts to prop the language up outside the home will be like blowing air into a punctured tyre (Nettle and Romaine 2000:178).

What the forgoing statistics reveal is that Kiswahili is no longer the benign coastal language whose native speakers were demographically frivolous in relation to speakers of other indigenous languages. The language has asserted itself over the years and it appears that it is just a matter of time before it takes its seat in the league of the killer languages, among which it is poised to be king.

Conclusion

The preceding sections have shown that language endangerment is a process that has been going on dating from pre-colonial times to the present. While the paper was not primarily concerned with the factors that contribute to endangerment of a language, it is apparent that a considerable number of languages that are now extinct and others greatly endangered were spoken by people who were hunter-gatherers. For such language shift was preceded by a shift to the subsistence strategies of the dominant ethnic group. Others did not dispense with their traditional economic strategies but relinquished their ancestral language in favour of the language of a 'powerful' neighbour. The paper ends by unveiling lurking character of Kiswahili as a killer language which, unlike the other killer languages discussed, enjoys immense constitutional support.

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Abstract

Africa is still trapped in serious socio-economic and political problems that have placed her among the 'underdeveloped' Continents for decades. The problems range from poverty, diseases, political unrest, lack of moral values, among other problems. Among the mentioned problems, the Continent continues to be faced with the challenge of establishing peace and development. Numerous peace initiatives have been launched on the Continent. Vast amounts of resources have also been utilized to craft peace agreements which have often collapsed under the weight of competing interests. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether there are other peace building strategies that can be adopted to complement existing efforts in promoting peace and justice on the Continent. Little attention has been given to the role of African indigenous languages and culture in an attempt to build peace and promote social solidarity. It is against this background that this paper examines the invaluable nexus between African indigenous languages, culture and development with particular emphasis on how African oral traditions could be used as vehicles of peace building for development in the 21st Century. The paper is based on literature review of some African oral traditions such as proverbs, songs, taboos, totems and narratives whose subject matter is centred on the theme of truth, justice and peace. The paper argues for and demonstrates that African indigenous languages are an important resource for development and should be fully enshrined within the curriculum at all levels of learning, the Constitution and the language policies in order to develop, promote and preserve them.

Keywords: Africa's Agenda 2063; African oral traditions; Education: Culture; Semantics; Indigenous languages; SDGs

Introduction

Africa is still trapped in serious socio-economic and political problems that have placed her among the 'underdeveloped' Continents for decades. The problems range from poverty, diseases, political unrest, lack of moral values, among other problems. Among the mentioned problems, the Continent continues to be faced with the challenge of establishing peace and development. Numerous peace initiatives have been launched on the Continent. Vast amounts of resources have also been utilized to craft peace agreements which have often collapsed under the weight of competing interests.

The achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets and 304 indicators would create long-term economic benefits for the Continent and beyond. Consequently, the United Nations has adopted the view that "development is simultaneously economic, social, ecological and cultural" (Bartoli, 2000). However, the recognition that African indigenous languages are one of the major drivers and enablers for achieving SDGs has not been fully emphasized (Batibo 2000 ; Bamgbose 2011). Indigenous languages in African countries are restricted to a few domains of use and the less formal ones which undermine their use and survival. As a result, development in Africa has slowed down because important

communication relies on foreign languages such as English, French and German. Ogunsiji (2001) posits that, no other language can effectively displace one's mother tongue for development. According to him, development can only take place within the social reality with which language is the sole determinant. For example, a nation like China has attained a development feat with the use of her indigenous culture, tradition and language.

Other linguistic researchers such as Wa Mberia (2004, 2009, 2015); Kanana (2011) ; Muhochi, (2015) ; Engholm (1994) ; Sapir E (1963) ; Ogunsiji (2001) and Wallnock, J. (1969) have laid emphasis on the use of indigenous language in achieving development. The thrust of their work lies in the fact that language is the hallmark of a people's identity, needed in boosting their self-confidence, motivation and innovation that drive development.

According to Sapir (1963), language does not exist independent of culture. The relationship between language and culture is dual in nature in the sense that language is part of culture as well as a vehicle through which culture is expressed. It is interesting to note that Africa is one of the regions in the world with an extensive linguistic and cultural diversity of thirty percent (30%) of the world languages which translates to an average of 50 African languages in each country, (UNESCO (2003). This represents about a third of the world's estimated 6,000 plus languages as illustrated in table 1 below:

Table 1: Distribution of World languages

Region	Number of Languages	% Total
Europe	230	3%
The Americans (South, Central, North)	1,013	15%
Africa	2,058	30%
Asia	2197	33%
Pacific	1311	19%

Source: UNESCO (2003)

In this view, researchers like Abdalla (1984) argue that "third world countries must see development based on the assertion of their cultural identity. Similarly, Ozumba (2004) advocates for the need of African countries to maintain their cultural heritages by striving to develop without complete westernization.

Consequently, it is necessary to examine whether there are other peace building strategies that can be adopted to complement existing efforts in promoting peace and justice on the Continent for development. In this regard, little attention has been given to the role of African indigenous languages and culture in an attempt to build peace and promote social solidarity.

It is against this background that this paper examines the invaluable nexus between African indigenous languages, culture and development with particular emphasis on how African oral traditions could be used as vehicles of peace building for development in the 21st Century.

As aforementioned, language and culture are prismatic paradigms for development, yet, they are being played down for the exclusivist employment of foreign languages, culture and value system. This article argues for a radical need to revive the use of indigenous languages and culture in a variety of contexts. Thus, indigenous African languages contain information on aspects of life such as people's philosophy and worldview, peace and conflict resolution and social values. Such information is embedded in oral traditions such as songs, narratives, legends, sayings, riddles, proverbs, puns, similes and metaphors. There is need for such information and knowledge to be retrieved, preserved and used for the good of African societies towards the attainment of SDGs and Africa's Agenda 2063. This would enable Africans to remain focused and committed to the ideals envisaged in the context of a rapidly changing world.

Materials and Methods

The paper is based on literature review of some African oral traditions such as proverbs, songs, taboos, totems and narratives whose subject matter is centred on the theme of truth, justice and peace. The secondary sources used included books, journal articles, daily newspapers, government reports, articles, seminar papers, MA and PhD theses. Data was qualitatively analyzed and presented thematically.

The place of African oral Traditions for Truth, justice and peace

Sustainable development is anchored on three pillars: Social, Economic and Environmental dimensions. It is upon these three pillars that the results of this paper are based.

Conflict Resolution for Sustainable Development

Maintenance and restoration of peace and security is a hallmark to sustainable development that is enshrined in the social and economic pillars of SD. The SDG 16 calls for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This could be achieved through the proverbs and oral narrative below:

Proverbs

(1) Agbajo owo ni a nfi so aya (Yoruba, Nigeria)

Translation: Unity is strength.

(2) Ajeji owo kan ko gberu dori Eni kan kii je awa de (Yoruba, Nigeria)

Translation: A single hand cannot lift a luggage to the head. An individual does not make a community.

(3) Ai kowo rin ejo ni n fi iku pa won (Yoruba, Nigeria)

Translation: Lack of unity in the community makes it susceptible to danger

(4) Kekur lala olgejep. (Samburu, Kenya)

Translation: Members of the same family are open to each other and can discuss anything

(5) Abaguma bobalwa amatumu. (Mashi, Congo)

Translation: Brothers who get along will always defeat the enemy

(6) Amalasiile namasiro okhuvira amaachi (Tachoni, Kenya)

Translation: Blood is thicker than water

(7) Botbeupeukbo be teunyen ban a boromevo'o. (Eton, Cameroon)

Translation: Major problems have solution with the old men.

(8) Akabiiya kakasiribungwa mumasika (Kabras, Kenya)

Translation: A funeral avails the opportunity for reconciliation

(9) Ametsulila keeranga olwikho (Wanga, Kenya)

Translation: When by-gones are revisited they kill relationships (Reconciliation, peace)

(10) Agba kii wa loja ki ori omo titun o wo (Yuruba, Nigeria)

Translation: The elders cannot be present in the market place and still experience a Phenomenon of wrong child birth.

(11) Enu agba ni obi tin gbo (Yoruba, Nigeria)

Translation: It is on the mouth of the elderly that the kola gets ripe.

The legend of Gipir & Labongo

(12) Legend (Luo oral narrative)

Long time ago, two sons of the King (Rwoot) had a quarrel over the spear and bead. Their inability to resolve the quarrel peacefully culminated in the death of Labongo's child in an effort to recover the bead and the subsequent separation of the brothers, Gipir & Labongo, one going North of the Nile and the other North East.

Discussion

Language is a double-edged sword. Whereas languages can be the cause of conflict, quite often, it is used for conflict prevention and resolution. Conflict management in traditional African society and even today is centred around traditional laws and customs expressed through oral traditions such as rituals, taboos, songs, proverbs, legends among others. The logic underlying the choice of oral traditions for conflict resolution is that indigenous languages enjoy an emotive dimension with their speakers than other languages (Wa Mberia (2009). Such oral traditions are considered with awe and obeyed by those they apply to.

By examining the legend of *Gipir & Labongo* (12) and proverbs (1-11), people can learn virtues such as unity (1-6), reconciliation/forgiveness (7-11), the importance of kin ship ties (4, 5 &6) and the need for conflict resolution by elders (7 &10). The *Yoruba* proverbs “*Ajeji owo kan ko gberu dori Eni kan kii je awa de*” (a single hand cannot lift a luggage to the head) and “*Ai kowo rin ejo ni n fi iku pa won*” (lack of unity in the community makes it susceptible to danger) stresses the need for unity among people for peaceful co-existence.

On the other hand, a proverb from *Congo*, “*Abaguma bobalwa amatumu*” (brothers who get along will always defeat the enemy) and “*Amalasiile namasiro okhuvira amaachi*” (blood is thicker than water) underscores the importance of keeping strong kinship ties for peace and harmony.

On a similar note, proverbs such as “*Botbeupeukbo be teunyen ban a boromevo'o*” (major problems have solution with the old men) among the Eton tribe in Cameroon and “*akabiiya kakasiribungwa mumasika*” (a funeral avails the opportunity for reconciliation” among the *Kabras* in Kenya stresses the need for reconciliation and forgiveness which are also key aspects in peace and conflict resolution. Similarly, the *Gipir & Labongo* legend demonstrates the side effects of conflicts such as displacement. The legend stresses the need for peaceful resolutions of the same. The legend can also be used to educate members of a community on responsive leadership qualities. Responsive leadership is one of the key aspect of conflict resolution.

Chinyowa (2001) is in support that, oral traditions within the African culture is a way of passing on traditions, codes, values of acceptable behaviour, as well as upholding and preserving good social order. Far from being a mere source of entertainment, the oral traditions help to shape the people's behavior, train their intellect and to regulate their emotions.

The identified legend and proverbs are still applicable in the 21st Century when Africa's main challenge for the next 50 years is the realization of the African Vision of "building an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens representing a dynamic force in the international arena". Within the context of Agenda 2063, the African citizenry expects that by 2023 a peaceful, stable and secure Africa would be realized. Thus, during conflicts, victims cannot productively contribute to development leading to economic, material and socio-political exclusions and estrangement such as unemployment, poverty, diseases, death, lack of education, alienation, displacement, rape and marginalization.

Some of the indicative implementation strategies to achieve the above target is to develop and/or implement mechanisms for prevention and resolution of conflicts at the local and national levels, including the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The use of oral traditions can be incorporated as an implementation strategy to help mitigate bloody conflicts such as those that were witnessed during the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007/2008, actual genocide in Rwanda, tribal and ethnic clashes that are still being witnessed now. This would also be a strategy towards the achievement of Aspiration 2 of agenda 2063 which calls for an integrated continent based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision for Africa's Renaissance.

Furthermore, African indigenous languages are an important resource for development and should be fully enshrined within the curriculum at all levels of learning, the Constitution and the language policies in order to develop, promote and preserve them. Nakashima (2012) posits that the loss of indigenous knowledge has severe consequences for younger generations as it weakens their social capital, which may reduce their ability to respond to ecological and socio-economic challenges.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of oral traditions to sustainable development. The findings from this paper have shown that the reverence of oral traditions by tribes in traditional African society was significant in enhancing peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation. The paper has drawn upon both literal and metaphoric meanings of proverbs and a legend a cross African tribes in Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Congo and their teachings as a way to highlight their developmental implications in the 21st Century. The paper argues for the adoption of African oral traditions as one of the implementation Plan for the 10-year Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024).The implementation of STISA 2024 is integral to achieving the AU Agenda 2063 and SDGs, based on the Continental aspirations for inclusive growth, sustainable development and social integration, drawing upon the potential of African people, for its delivery.

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