26

Colonial and post-colonial language policies in Africa: historical and emerging landscapes

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> … ethnic identities and thus the significance of language practices are being shaped continuously, … language use never ceases to undergo change, and … the past is always a present concern – in short history will not stop to allow legislators respite.
>
> (Fardon and Furniss 1994: 24)

Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to evaluate the success or otherwise of Africa's colonial and post-colonial language policies, since, as the epigraph suggests, language policies are a continuous work in progress.

Scholarship on colonialism: implications for language policy in Africa

There are three stages in the scholarship on colonialism in Africa. The earliest stage, in the 1970s, was dominated by the work of Wallerstein (1986). It was framed through political and economic lenses, which focused on the 'structural constraints' of colonial capitalism and how colonialism shaped indigenous economies and reconstructed social class. Constructs such as centre and periphery were important to reflections on what constituted colonialism. In language planning scholarship,

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'linguistic imperialism' fits into the early phases of scholarship in colonial studies in which the centre was framed as a unified entity seeking to promote its interests at the expense of the periphery. It is ironical that although the idea of a centre/periphery and linguistic imperialism are discredited, the expansive involvement of China in Africa and the spread of Mandarin Chinese render the framework relevant and suitable as ways of thinking about language planning.

The second stage is concentrated on European perspectives of Africans and the creation of the African as the 'Other' and conversely how the 'Other' (Said 1978; Todorov 1993; Behadad 1994) paradoxically constructed Europe. In this line of research the interaction and exchange between the 'Other' and Europe was analysed in terms of 'hybridity'. Yet hybridity is one-sided in that it only accounts for how Africans combined their social and linguistic practices with those of the Europeans, and in terms of language, producing Africanized varieties of English. It does not, therefore, account for the Europeanized varieties of African languages that were produced by Europeans such as Tjolotjo for Tsholotsho and Gwelo for Gweru in countries such as Zimbabwe. In this regard, language policy initiatives have to be assessed against actual language practices as opposed to abstract entities. Furthermore, hybridity has limitations as a way of framing language policies in Africa. It assumes that there are 'pure' African languages and European linguistic codes that are subsequently combined albeit in varying degrees to form hybrid forms. As an analytical template of African language practices, hybridity is strongly a monolingual ideology, which it seeks to distance itself from.

In some instances, colonial policies were compromised by the indeterminacy of who the colonizer or colonized was, as demonstrated by the case of Egypt in its relationship with the Sudan. The Egyptians were ambivalent about their status during the Condominium (the period when the Sudan was ruled jointly by the Egyptians and the British from 1899 to 1956). During the Condominium, Egyptians were uncertain whether they were colonizers of the Sudan, or whether, like the Sudanese, they were colonized by Britain, an ambivalence which still affects the nature of the Sudan–Egyptian relationship today (Powell 2003). The ambivalence in the colonial status was not unique to Egypt even though the Egyptian case dramatized the issue. Distinctions between colonized and colonizer need to be explained rather than taken for granted (ibid.).

Another category, which has been used frequently in post-colonial Africa, is the nation-state. Unfortunately in spite of the importance of the nation-state as an analytical heuristic, its significance to language policies has not been rigorously analysed in language planning policies. The nation-state serves as a fulcrum on which language policies are described. For example, policies are now understood in terms of a Nigerian language policy, Eritrean language policy, Tanzanian etc. Even though the analysis of the nation-state is important, its conceptualization

and the evaluation of language policies in Africa will therefore be complicated by the extent to which language planning policies are partially implemented. The extent to which the policies may be successfully implemented is complicated because nation-states vary in size, complexity, resources and the degree to which they are politically stable.

Because nation-states differ, what constitutes a successful policy should therefore be evaluated against the background of the complexity of the nation-state and its political history, turbulent or otherwise. For example, the trajectory of language policies in countries as peaceful as Ghana and Togo may be different from that in conflict ridden countries such as the Sudan, the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. It is reasonable to assume that what would constitute a successful language policy for relatively linguistically less complex or ethnically less complex nation-states, such as Swaziland, and Eritrea, would be different from more multi-ethnic/multi-language countries such as Nigeria, and Egypt, and politically explosive nation-states such as the Sudan. The relatively large number of ethno-linguistic groups that cross political boundaries, i.e., dyads, for example, the Kalanga in Botswana and Zimbabwe, the Shona in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, the Tonga in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa, Ewe in Togo and Kenya, Acholi in the Sudan and Uganda, has created opportunities for successful language practices which are a result of cross-border collaboration.

In fact, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL International), Project for Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), and the Centre for the Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) in Africa based in Cape Town, have also contributed significantly to language planning in Africa. However, while NGOs have played an important role in facilitating the development and implementation of language policies in Africa, they are criticized because they are rarely accountable to the communities they seek to serve. This should not be viewed as a suggestion that NGOs are only accountable to their funders. Strong NGOs funded from many sources are at times not only more or less independent of their funders, but arbitrarily formulate and implement language policies without substantial input from the local communities they are serving. The arbitrariness with which the policies are framed by NGOs is masked under the rubric of local engagement.

Challenges of some sociolinguistics terminology

In describing contemporary Africa, an array of terminology has been used. The terms *Anglophone*, *Francophone* and *Lusophone* are discourses used to describe the geographical areas associated with British, French and Portuguese rule respectively. In essence these descriptive terms do not

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in any way capture the linguistic tapestry of Africa. Instead, the use of these terms underscores the prevalence of former colonial languages at the expense of the complex multilingualism that exists in these regions. *Arabophone*, on the other hand, is applied to an area referred to as North Africa including the Sudan. The inclusion of the Sudan under the category Arabophone is highly contested. The contestation revolves around the fact that only about 38 per cent of the population of the Sudan is Arab speaking and therefore its inclusion in the Arabophone category is a misnomer. This descriptor captures the linguistic realities of the Northern Sudan rather than the whole of the Sudan, which then raises the question of whether or not the sociolinguistic landscape of the Sudan has to be understood in terms of one part of the country or another.

Even though terms such as Francophone, Lusophone and Anglophone reflect the nature of political rule, they constitute ways of perceiving the African sociolinguistic landscape from an official perspective. The use of such terminology suggests discrepancies between top- and ground-level practices. In all these countries, multilingualism exists although the official discourse encapsulated in these terms suggests that the language policies are primarily monolingual. It is not surprising that orthodox views about language planning often decry the discrepancy between top-down and bottom-up language practices. This is mainly for two reasons. The first is a practical one. In spite of concerted lobbying of most African governments by language activists, it is unlikely that African governments will change their policies to align them with those proposed by the language activists. Second, there may not be a uniform and consistent stance towards what approach to adopt. Conceptually, even though the discrepancy is a product of an interplay of financial resources and ideological commitments, it provides opportunities for civic engagement and thus acts as an important space for language 'entrepreneurs', local community language activists, to engage actively in local domains where they have influence more readily than at national level, a process which would have been rendered difficult, if not impossible, if there was perfect synchrony between top-down and bottom-up processes. Furthermore, in order for ground-level policies to succeed at local levels they should not be promoted to national language policies. This is because they would thus be delegitimized, in all probability, because of the complexity of colonial, post-colonial and international geopolitics and conflicts, which are perhaps more intense at community levels than at national levels.

Paradoxically, ground-level language practices are likely to be successful if they are restricted to local contexts. Even though the 'local' will thus be important in a model in which there is a discrepancy between top-down and ground-level practices, the term has to be used circumspectly. The use of this term may reproduce a state-ideological understanding of language as a 'bounded codified community code' (Abdelhay

2010). The relationship between top-down and bottom-up processes is further complicated by the tendency for bottom-up processes at times to subvert national priorities. For example, while the British colonial government proscribed the use of Arabic in Southern Sudan (as part of its southern policy) it inadvertently facilitated its spread because Arabic was a lingua franca and most southerners were literate in an Arabic script (*Ajami*) and the Roman script had not successfully replaced the Arabic script. Thus, colonial language policies did not shape local practices and, even in situations in which they had considerable impact, they were not passively accepted but were resisted and appropriated in ways that shaped how they were to be articulated.

Another more recent example is the Zimbabwean government, which recognizes English as one of the official languages of the nation (Makoni *et al*. 2007). The policy has, however, been too successful to the extent that national policies have been subverted from the bottom, because what is spreading widely is not standard English but non-standard local varieties of English, based on endocentric rather than exocentric norms. This is evident in the use of personal names, which are clearly not standard in other English-speaking countries, such as *Sinfree, Godfree, Lordwin* (Makoni *et al*. 2007; 2010) even amongst the highly educated. A comparable process of 'localization' of European languages is also reported in Cameroon, where both local variants of English and French are more widely spread than the official variety promoted through language-in-education policies (Esch 2010). While official language policies may aim to promote English, African speakers of English with a version of African accent approximating Standard English are mocked, and referred to disparagingly as 'coconut' or 'oreo' – black on the outside and white in the inside – and are described as 'biting their tongues' (Dlamini 2006) when they speak English. It is indeed possible that the popularity of Mandarin Chinese in Africa is a consequence of the feeling that English is so local that it is no longer 'hip' or 'cool' to use, unlike Chinese that still has a foreign touch to it.

By and large, the use of terms like Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone is replete with contestations with regard to their efficacy in describing Africa's linguistic tapestry. These categories are nominal and are not accurate descriptors of language practices in each area because of the diversity within and across each one of them. For instance, areas referred to as Anglophone not only make use of local varieties of English but also a multitude of other African languages. In addition, the extensive similarities of language across all the different areas compromise the integrity of each category.

The relevance of each category is also undercut by inconsistencies in language policy, as demonstrated by the case of the British language policy. For example, British colonial language policy in the Sudan promoted Arabic in Eritrea, while in Southern Sudan (Sharkey 2003; Miller 2007;

Abdelhay *et al*. 2010) it actively proscribed its usage and promoted the triumvirate – i.e., the use of English and African languages and Christianity. During the British–Egyptian Condominium the role and status of Arabic, English and African languages varied between the north and the south of the Sudan (Abdelhay *et al*. forthcoming). In the north, Arabic and Islam were encouraged. In the south, English, African languages and Christianity and animism were the key subjects (Sharkey 2003). The British discouraged the use of Arabic in the south, where Arabic was only used in situations in which it served as a lingua franca. Efforts were also made to compel the police and the army to use English and Arabic. Nonetheless, efforts by the British to discourage the use of Arabic in the south failed with the widespread use of an Arabic/African Creole, Juba Arabic, which was to become a marker of Southern Sudanese identity in the north. Even though English was the official language and Christianity the official religion, there was intense conflict between British colonial officers about the desirability of such an approach. Similarly, even though the British encouraged the use of English, individual missionaries made decisions depending on the exigencies of their own context and personal tastes as a justification to revise the language project of their predecessors (Meeuwis 2009). In some contexts, such as the Sudan, the British institutionalized Arabic and Islam as official policies for the northern part as a way of separating it from its southern counterpart (Sharkey 2003; Miller 2003b; Abdelhay 2010). The British mode of colonization attempted to weaken Classical/Modern Standard Arabic by promoting indigenous/local vernaculars.

In some situations, too, the British viewed Arabic script as a dangerous nationalist force, hence, they romanized it. In other cases, the script was pluralistic, mixing Arabic and Roman script, which is indicative of the relationship between the languages and the script, and is not iconic. For example, Wolof, Pular and Manyika are written in either Arabic or Roman scripts or a combination of the two. At times Arabic phrases are written in a Roman script or French phrases in an Arabic script. Public language in some African cities draws upon many scripts (e.g. in Tunisia), while in formal contexts one language has a single script, with the majority of African languages being written in the Roman alphabet. Technical shifts from one script to another are significant. For example, in the Sudan the British wrote Arabic in Roman script to reflect symbolically their control of Arabic. After 1957, the Sudanese government as part of its Arabization process adopted the rewriting of indigenous African languages from Roman to Arabic script.

In terms of orthography the shift from pre-colonial Africa to colonial and indeed post-colonial Africa was marked by a shift from an Arabic (*Ajami*) to Roman script. These were symbolic changes that led to a perception of African languages as more European than African and writing as an alien project, even though there are ancient written scripts in the

horn of Africa and Vai in Liberia, which predate colonialism; Ethiopic/Ge'ez and Tifinagh, N'ko, Mende and KiKakui. The shift from one orthographical system to another has not always been complete, to the extent that some African languages have multiple scripts, and the orthographies are in flux, rendering the acquisition of written literacy in local languages more difficult than it should be. Orthography has been a source of controversy because it is both technical and symbolic.

From a critical historical perspective (Cooper and Stoler 1992), policy inconsistencies challenge the view that British or indeed other colonial regimes were uniform and philosophically pre-assembled. Decisions about details of the policies of colonial governments were not always based on clear strategies; there was no 'panopticon imperial project' (ibid.). Colonial language policies were a bricolage, a mix of multiple philosophical orientations such as the Turkish, the French, and the Mahdist imperial experiences. There was also no consensus among the British and the French about the desirability of colonial imperial ventures. In France for example, there was disagreement between the French Assembly and the Republican Party because the latter strongly felt that imperial projects could not be reconciled with the equal rights of men upon which the French Republic was founded.

The implementation of colonial policies was difficult because the policies were partially formulated and inconsistently interpreted. The partial formulation of policies was also accentuated by the ambivalence in the allegiance of middle-level African colonial administrators and the internal dynamics of local communities to colonialism. Colonialism was therefore much messier than is usually recognized, and the effects of these policies varied depending upon whether the affected group was a newly formed community that was relatively homogeneous, or whether it was a well settled one, and upon its diversity and capability to appropriate or resist the policies. Determining the effects of colonial policy is further complicated by the ambivalence of countries such as Egypt, which was not certain whether it was the colonizer of the Sudan or part of the region colonized by the British. Because our knowledge of the colonial past is incomplete, we should be wary of claiming that contemporary post-colonial language policies are necessarily a legacy of the past. It is possible that they might be a legacy of the past but are not necessarily overwhelmed by it. The present cannot be a robust consequence and legacy of the past if our knowledge of the past is partial. Nonetheless, this should not be construed as a denial of the robustness of analytical colonial categories, particularly in epistemological notions such as identifying what constituted languages, dialects, etc. (Errington 2007). This is apparent in the description of African languages, particularly in grammars and dictionaries that were all based on formats which originated from Latin and reached Africa via European rule.

Writing of African grammars: pluralizing singularity and singularizing plurality

The writing of grammars draws attention to a number of issues in language planning. Their writing, a form of corpus planning, was politically motivated. The construction of the grammars was part of colonial rule as European rulers sought to develop a command of language for the purpose of commanding Africans (Cohn 1996).

What constitutes 'colonial languages' refers not to English or French or Portuguese but to missionary variants of African languages (Mufwene 2005; Makoni *et al*. 2007; Meeuwis 2009). What were initially dubbed colonial languages by African elites were standardized varieties of African languages and not English, French, etc. (Errington 2007). The case of colonial language as a construct shows how the meaning attached to a concept varies across geographical and political space and in contemporary international geopolitics. For example, African languages are regarded and defined as local in Africa, but as international in European cultural and musical worlds. Furthermore distinctions that are important officially in some cases are erased in other contexts. Take, for instance, the case of South Africa as an example of language planning discourses. There is an institutional enforcement of the distinction between Xhosa and Zulu as distinct languages each with its dictionary and orthography, yet that distinction is lost in the US census (García 2009).

Colonialism was also important epistemologically as is apparent in the treatment of African ethnic groups as homogeneous and static, while in reality they were always changing and dynamic. This homogeneity and stasis in ethnic groups was also transferred to language. Thus although seeking to influence the future, language planning policies in contemporary Africa draw upon categories of the past. The constructed ethnic groups were mobilized as sites of struggle. For example, the creation of self-contained ethnic and linguistic units such as the Nuba in Sudan or the Xhosa, Zulu and Swazi in South Africa were the basis on which national language policies are framed in post-colonial Africa. Politically, even though the categories did not constitute an integral part of African identity, they were appropriated as natural, masking their historical and cultural contingency. Their validity was taken for granted, thus overlooking the extent to which the construction of the so-called indigenous languages was on the basis of a European template, a process facilitated by two conflicting processes; 'singularization of plurality' and 'pluralization of singularity' (Makoni and Pennycook 2011).

In pluralization of singularity, for instance, Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi were taken to be different languages yet these languages, as is evident from the cultural practices of their speakers, reflect common origins or ancestry. Similarly, the Dinka and Nuer in the Sudan were once one single ethnic group. During the Rejav Language Conference held in the Sudan in

the mid-1930s, however, the Dinka and Nuer were separated into two different ethnic groups, reflecting yet again the process of pluralizing singularity. Colonial missionaries standardized the interconnected dialects of Dinka as discrete languages. The Dinka and the Nuer did not exist previously as ethnic identities whose description was language based. Their identity as separate ethnic groups is a colonial construction, as Southall shows:

> Nuer and Dinka were convenient fictions for the early explorers, administrators, missionaries, and, alas, linguists and anthropologists, and so they are still with us, having acquired sufficient vested interests during the colonial period to perpetuate them. (Southall 1976: 464)

The distinction of the ethnic groups as well as the differentiation of the languages has endured in contemporary Africa. Language planning does not need to seek to pluralize singularity, however, but to singularize plurality, by creating a metalanguage which captures singularity while still suggestive of plurality thereby rendering the distinction between monolingualism and multilingualism unnecessary.

Given the colonial lens through which indigenous languages were constructed, contemporary language polices are a continuation of colonial policies. While in colonial language policies languages, in the sense of linguistic codes, were a product of colonial intervention, postcolonial policies work on the assumption that the languages existed prior to colonial rule, while the form they take is a product of colonial interventions. The policies lead us to assume that language existed prior to planning, while language as we know it in colonial and post-colonial Africa was a product of social intervention. Of course this should not be construed to mean that Africans did not communicate prior to the promulgation and implementation of colonial policies, but that language as we understand it did not constitute a key component of communication (Makoni and Pennycook 2011) or, for that matter, play a central role as an identity marker. In order to overcome such problematic issues relating to the ontology of language in Africa, a different orientation is called for in which communication is central and language a secondary variable (Harris 2009). Language planning should therefore seek to facilitate communication more than the promotion of language, which enhances the status of languages more than the users of language.

More interesting is harmonization by Prah (2003), who argues that Africa has fifteen 'core' languages. Prah and his associates have created uniform orthographies for the core languages across Africa. The success of the language policies in terms of harmonization would thus have to be determined not at a national level, but in terms of the degrees to which different national governments adopt common orthographies and implement them as part of their national curriculum. The success of harmonization as a language policy initiative is founded on a different principle

from that which would form the basis of notions about language in the encyclopedic reference work *Ethnologue* produced and compiled by SIL International, an American-funded Christian organization.

In *Ethnologue*, the success of language policies is assessed against the extent to which the promotion of languages facilitates SIL's proselytization. In this regard, what constitutes a successful language policy is assessed against the discourses in which it is situated. The major difference between *Ethnologue* and Prah's majestic project is that the former seeks to pluralize singularity, while Prah aims to reverse the pluralization of singularity by integrating linguistic resources, thus rendering a comparison between the two as language planning projects difficult to make.

Elite schools' language policies

Language-in-education planning in Africa continues to be a site of contestation because educational reform and change in language usage in turn is more than an educational issue (Benrabah 2005; 2007). It is an expression of political ideology (Baker 2003: 101) as is evident in Arabization, Amharicization and Swahilization. The central players in all these processes are the elite.

The emergence of African elites can be traced back to the establishment of colonial schools. The establishment of elite schools such as Gordon College in Sudan, Achimota in Ghana and Lycée Descartes in the Maghreb created Africans articulate in 'foreign' languages. The objective of such schools was to produce African elites subservient and loyal to Europeans. Inadvertently, these schools produced a cadre of nationalists competent enough to challenge European rule but at the same time caught up in two worlds; that of the colonial master and their African ancestry. This was contrary to the intentions of the original founders of the schools. All of Sudan's prime ministers, including military leaders such as Mohamed Ahmed Mahjoob, Ibrahim and Abood were products of Gordon College. Gordon College was subsequently closed after being integrated with the Kitchener Medical School, which formed the basis of Khartoum University (Sharkey 2003). Similarly, most nationalist African leaders were products of these schools. For instance, Nkwame Nkrumah of Ghana was a product of Achimota and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe was a product of Kutama College in Zimbabwe.

Across Africa, members of the political, military and educational leadership practise 'elite closure' (Myers-Scotton 1993: 199). For instance, in the Maghreb, they promoted Arabization, which they used as a strategy to disenfranchize the majority of the population and by so doing reduce any potential competition for their own children, who were sent to French-only schools or educated overseas (Thomas 1999: 26). This

ensured that their children received education in French, essential for careers in business and technology. This practice is also evident in Sub-Saharan Africa, where elite leaders call for the promotion of indigenous African languages and their use as part of the mother tongue education project but at the same time send their children to private schools where English, French and Portuguese are used as languages of instruction.

In contemporary Africa, the prestige of English, French and Portuguese has waned. Urbanization has proceeded at a fast and haphazard pace (Makoni and Pennycook 2010) giving rise to a multitude of African lingua francas (Mufwene 2005; Makoni *et al.* 2007), or urban vernaculars. The spread of urban vernaculars challenges the social value of European languages as well as the theoretical views about language and, by implication, language planning, since the framing of language planning is dependent upon theoretical views of language such as multilingualism. Multilingualism is so deeply embedded in western scholarship that its assumptions are not vigorously challenged, nor is the need to move beyond it explored.

Furthermore, Makoni and colleagues (2010) point out that it is not the status and spread of English, French or Portuguese which constitutes a threat to indigenous African languages, but urban vernaculars. The value of English, French and Portuguese is severely weakened because of the rapidly dwindling social value of European languages as a result of the limited formal employment opportunities these languages provide. The collapse of African economies has lowered the social value of former colonial languages. Thus, while Esch's argument (Esch 2010) that the formal status and prominence of English and French rendered the knowledge they were associated with as highly valued, the importance of knowledge associated with European languages is currently undercut by the restricted opportunities for formal employment. In addition, due to their disillusionment with the West, most African governments have established a 'look to the East policy', which has led to the introduction of Mandarin Chinese. The increase in the number of Confucius Institutes suggests that the interest in and value of Chinese is comparable to that of English and other European languages (although the decline in the use of indigenous languages is not uniform in the Maghreb, they still retain a considerable viability through anaphorization). Even though the degree and extent of threat varies across different parts of Africa it is reasonable to ask:

> … why do we hold onto the ideas about language and identity which emerged from modernity? Rather than assuming we must save languages, perhaps we should be asking instead who benefits and who loses from understanding languages the way we do, what is at stake for whom, and how and why languages serve as a terrain for competition. (Duchêne and Heller 2007: 11).

Although urban vernaculars are mainly spoken, recently there have been cases of urban vernaculars used in comics and other popular literature, a form of unsystematic standardization. For instance, in Kenya advertisements for brand products are in Sheng, an urban vernacular (Mutonya 2008). Similarly, books are also published in Sheng, suggesting that, to some extent, English and other standard African languages have been relegated to the margins. Ultimately, however, language planning has to adopt a plurilanguaging or polylingual (Miller 2003b) approach, which captures the dynamic and evolving relationships between English, French, Arabic, urban vernaculars, indigenous African languages and multiple semiotic systems, contrary to multilingualism which seems to imply a static relationship between different languages.

Language policy implementation

Language policies in Africa have been formulated and implemented through a number of instruments, the most important of which are schools. There is a lot of literature on mother tongues as medium of instruction. The results are inconclusive because of the following: (1) rarely have follow-up studies demonstrated the benefits of mother tongue instruction,[1] (2) the lack of clarity of what is being referred to as 'mother tongues', (3) the tendency for some students to be taught in what from an official perspective might be categorized as a mother tongue but which is not congruent with their everyday language practices, given the limited relevance of schools in their so-called mother tongues. Mother tongue education creates spatial boundaries around languages 'through its border creating method in which each language is separated and segregated into its own discrete space and time and not permitted to mix with others' (Hadi-Tabassum 2006: 5). Even if education in mother tongues could be successfully carried out, this does not necessarily prevent a sense of epistemic injustice in which knowledge is only legitimate if it flows from the West to Africa. The teaching of African languages is therefore both a linguistic exercise and a subtle way of developing a specific view of language (Harris 2009) and the role of the speaker therein.

Another important instrument in the implementation of language policy is language conferences. Language conferences are important venues at which policies have been formulated, and decisions made about orthographies and languages to be taught and used as medium of instruction. Language conferences were particularly popular during the colonial era for instance, the Rejaf Language Conference in the Sudan and the 1933 conference in Southern Rhodesia, to name just two. Even though the conferences addressed issues relating to African languages and Africans, they excluded people affected by such policies, thus creating the impression that the African languages produced were European artifacts.

Language academies have also been extremely powerful and widely used as instruments in the formulation and implementation of language policies. For example, the 'Arabic language Academy in Khartoum', which was established in 1993, is one such example. In the Sudan, Arabization of university education is also carried out by the Arabic language academy, but most responsibility is delegated to the Supreme Authority of Arabization, which is a governmental body under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. It was established by Ministerial order (21) of 1990 to address issues about curricula, reference books, authoring, and word coinage of scientific terms.[2] Another well-known language academy, which has played a critical role in the promotion of language in South Africa, is the Afrikaans Language Academy. The Afrikaans language academy has been successful in so far as it has contributed substantially to the development of Afrikaans to such an extent that Afrikaans is one of the few non-European languages used as a medium of instruction at tertiary level in South Africa. The success of the Afrikaans language academy also has to be attributed to the massive investment the apartheid government put into the project for the development of the Afrikaans language. It is not clear that contemporary South Africa will find it necessary to make similar investments in either the development of African languages or their promotion because of limited resources. Independent South Africa has a large number of organs of the state that focus on development of national official languages. The Pan-South African Languages Board (PANSALB) focuses on the development of African languages in order to create conditions for their use. It is unclear, at the moment, whether the newly formed Language Research and Development Centres attached to universities will perform this same function or whether they will be independent of the developmental function of PANSALB.

PANSALB also has a language rights mediation function which overlaps with that of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Community Rights (CRL Commission). PANSALB deals with complaints regarding violations of individual language rights, whereas the CRL Commission deals with complaints from groups. However, PANSALB has been described as a 'toothless watchdog' (Perry 2004: 501) because it can only *recommend* to violators of language rights and not *instruct* them to undertake actions to comply with its recommendations.

If language committees are a subgenre of language academies, then there are large numbers of 'language academies', which have recently developed in Africa, such as the Tonga language association in Zimbabwe. Trudell (2007) identifies associations that have played roles in the promotion of minority languages and acted as effective lobbyists for the upgrading of minority languages but have reinforced the ideas of African languages as discrete linguistic objects amenable to linguistic description.

To some extent the language academies/associations have been successful, but the status acquired has not been worth the efforts and material investments put into the projects. The promotion of the minority languages has not gone hand in hand with an improvement in the status of speakers of those minority languages. Paradoxically, in some cases efforts to try to upgrade their status using exactly the same philosophical framework as the dominant languages have had negative effects. For example, the insistence by minority languages in Zimbabwe to be referred to as indigenous on an equivalent footing with Shona and Ndebele, has deprived them of special opportunities for resources because they are framing themselves on the same analytical template (macro-nationalism), which deprived them of their status in the first instance.

Arabization as language policy

We now turn to Arabic-speaking Africa. In the Maghreb, the Sudan and Egypt, the language situations are characterized by Arabic diglossia. Diglossia in the Maghreb refers to the coexistence of Arabic colloquial/vernaculars (*Darija* or *āmmiyya*) and (written) Classical/Modern Standard Arabic (*Fus'ha*), which is functionally distributed. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is assigned formal domains such as parliamentary speeches, literature, mosque sermons, etc. Varieties of colloquial Arabic are spoken as mother tongues in intimate and informal interactions. For example, in the Sudan, President Omar al-Basher frequently uses Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (Khartoum Arabic) in his political speeches to establish solidarity with the masses and galvanize them into supporting his actions. The majority, if not the totality, of Arabic-speaking groups in these countries believe in the superiority and sacredness of MSA and conversely the inferiority of colloquial Arabic and other languages (Suleiman 2003). Non-Muslims identify Arabic in nationalistic terms, whereas Muslims identify it with Arabic not only in nationalistic terms but also religiously. Ideologically Arab/Arabized groups believe that the *fus'ha* is the sole language of the Qur'an and the Arab literary heritage, influenced by civil conflicts, religion, nationalism, and the need to consolidate transnational alliances in the Arab world.

In the Maghreb Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, Arabic is the sole official language. The Sudan, unlike the Maghreb countries, has recognized English as an official language since 2005, in addition to Arabic. Language policies in the Maghreb are driven by Arabization. Arabization in the Sudan has been resisted not because Africans had any objection to Arabs being Arabs, but they objected to being compelled to be made into Arabs thus generating African nationalism (Prah 2008).

There are three main meanings of 'Arabization' (*ta'rib*) (Bentahila 1983; Nyombe 1997; Miller 2003; Shaaban 2006). First, Arabization is a

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linguistic process in which borrowed words are phonologically and morphologically adopted, and the corpus planning process was carried out by linguists and language nationalists working in language academies (Sawaie 2006). Linguistics in such cases is a state project (William 1998; Biswas 2002). The relationship between corpus planning and language status is circular. The planning and introduction of new words increases the status of Arabic, the status of Arabic renders it necessary to introduce new words. The processes are not sequential, but function in tandem, in which the objective of Arabization is to consolidate the status of Arabic as the only official language of the country. Arabization attributes higher status to native speakers of Arabic than to those who learn Arabic as an additional language.

As part of a process of Arabization, enhanced by language academies, a 'tradition of linguistic complaint' (Milroy and Milroy 1985b: 36) or 'verbal hygiene' (Cameron 1995) was created. The language academies served as guardians of language purity and aim to maintain the public consciousness of MSA as a predominantly codified language. The history of this genre of complaint is significant because there is only one correct way of using Arabic in the standard ideology of the Arab world. In this sense Arabic standardization is justified under the discourse of language endangerment. MSA grammar is a rallying point for Arab unity and anti-colonial discourse. Thus, Arabic discourses of language endangerment are proxies for the reproduction of political unity and difference through MSA textual safeguarding. What is being purified in one context is acceptable in another. For example, while in some Arabic speaking countries it is argued that 'pure' Arabic languages should form the basis of the development of an Arabic corpus, in Egypt the use of a colloquial Egyptian variety is officially encouraged because it is felt Egypt will be able to imagine itself through a colloquial variety of Arabic, thus the need for a locally specific language planning.

In addition to language academies, in Algeria religious thinkers (*'ulama*) influence language policies. They conceptualize Arabization in religious terms and as indivisible from Islamization (Benrabah 2005, 2007; Grand'Henry 2006). The juxtaposition of Arabic with Islam is also evident in the Sudan. At the beginning of the 1990s in Sudan the National Congress Party (the current ruling party) framed Arabic as the appropriate expressive domain of its ideological scheme *al-mashru' al-hadari* (Civilization Project). The main objective of this Islamic nationalist project is to rework the national identity along Islamic and Arabist lines. In this sense Arabic has become a genre of power in and through which political relations of domination and subordination are constructed. It is this strategic juxtaposition of Arabic with Islam that led to a hierarchical stratification of linguistic resources in the Sudan. Arabization consists of a religious and socio-cultural imposition of Arab identity on non-Arab ethnic groups. The policy of Arabization 'erases' linguistic diversity

because it does not recognize the status of other languages. Following the independence of the Maghreb countries Arabization became a state project implemented through the educational system with the objective of creating a 'monolingual nation' (Marley 2004: 25). If one of the primary objectives of Arabization was to produce a monolingual nation, its objective has so far not been realized.

The connection of Arabic, Islam and Arabism has been resisted by non-Arab or/and other Arabized groups, including southerners in the Sudan, Berbers in Morocco and Algeria, and some academics. For example, Yokwe (1984: 155) views Arabization in the Sudan as a 'process of racial, religious and cultural assimilation of indigenous ethnic groups'. Deng (1995), commenting on the northern Sudanese elite's Arabist project of constructing a monocultural identity as a form of 'internal colonialism' argues that;

> Virtually all ethnic groups in the country have their primary roots in the black African tribes. Evidence of this fact is still visible in all the tribes, including those in the north who identify themselves as Arabs. Their identification with Arabism is, however, the result of a process in which races and religions were ranked, with Arabs and Muslims respected as free, superior, and a race of slave masters, while Negroes, blacks, and heathens were viewed as a legitimate target of slavery, if they were not in fact already slaves. Given a situation where non-Arabs were allowed to alter their lot dramatically by converting to Islam, learning to speak the Arabic language, intermarrying with the Arabs, and identifying genealogically with the master race, the move to assimilation was irresistible. (Deng 1995: 4–5)

Ironically, even though Arabization is resisted, it emerged as a form of cultural and linguistic resistance to the colonial policies of Turkification and the Western tactics of divide and rule. Arabization in Algeria was developed as a strategy to reverse the language policy and legacy of French colonial rule in Algeria. Algeria was under French occupation for 132 years (1830–1930), and worked to undo the effects of the French colonial policies by replacing French with MSA. Similarly, the French colonial system in Morocco (1912–1956) aimed at widening the gulf between the Berbers and Arabs through legislation – *le Dahir Berbere* (the Berber Decree) of 1930 – intended to divide Morocco linguistically, religiously and educationally into two self-sufficient parts; the Arab part and the Berber part. Only French and Berber were taught in the Berber region. Bentahila (1983: 8–9) points out that the aim of this separatist policy was to 'prepare a new generation of Berbers integrated into the French Christian culture instead of the Arabic Islamic one, and thereby to break down the cultural and linguistic solidarity existing between Arabs and Berbers'. Hence, for Moroccan nationalists, 'Arabization represents liberation from colonialism' (ibid.: 123). Although Arabization was

not a source of political tension in Tunisia (controlled by the French for seventy-five years from 1881–1956), since 1999 it has started a process of Arabization of its educational and administrative system. With the exception of Tunisia, where the Berbers constituted a numerical minority, it was the Berbers who challenged the post-independent official policies of Arabization in North Africa.

The intransigence of modern Arab states towards their 'minorities' (whether Arab or non-Arabic) has to be understood as a reaction to former colonial powers' policies which often resorted to the famous 'divide and rule' and which were always keen on 'manipulating their different communities according to their own interests'. (Miller 2003b: 8). Although we have linked Arabization and Islam, there are two important caveats. Miller (2006) points out that Islamization in the Sudan was not the primary force behind the monolithic policy of Arabization. In Morocco, following the Islamic conquest of Morocco, Arabization was only in central urban centres or big cities, while Berber or a Romance language dominated the country (Aguade 2008: 288).

South Africa provides another interesting situation with respect to the discursive means through which Islam spread relevant to language planning. Islam spread to South Africa not through Arabic but through Malay and later Afrikaans. The first generation of Muslims to arrive in the Cape Colony were brought by the Dutch (Hoedemaekers and Versteegh 2009). The Cape Colony, founded in 1652, was a place of exile for political opponents and slaves from the Dutch East Indies and India. This generation of Muslims used Malay as a lingua franca, and later was forced to shift to Afrikaans. Most importantly, it is this group of Muslims who were the first to contribute to the textual creation of Afrikaans in Arabic script. Hoedemaekers and Versteegh (2009: 291) write: 'It is fairly certain that the new Muslims were the first to write Afrikaans down, using the Arabic script, just as they had done for Malay in Southeast Asia'. The writers also note that these Muslims from the East Indies played an essential role along with the Khoisan population in the creolization process that produced Afrikaans, since the first generation of Muslims started to speak Afrikaans as their mother tongue.

The second caveat is that politically peripheralized groups in the Arab world of Africa are not against Arabic (the majority of them are polylingual in Arabic). Rather, they are opposed to the symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991) of Arabic which shapes and determines the structure of political power. They are antagonistic to the broad political trends that orientate their countries towards pan-Arabism or exclusively towards pan-Africanism. Wai (1979: 74) argues that 'the southern Sudanese have no crisis of identity: they know they are African and feel so racially and culturally. They have no objection to the Northern Sudanese identifying themselves as Arabs, but they resent being included in this category'. Secular southern Sudanese parties and movements such as the SPLA/M

(Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement) call for a practical inscription of the socio-cultural diversity in the political unity. That is, they endorse a Sudan with a multiplicity of cultural nationalisms within a single civic-territorial state (i.e., cultural federalism). Non-Arabized bilingual speakers have no conflict with Arabic as an instrument of mediated communication of information, devoid of any particularizing cultural symbolism. Some mediated services of public communication located in southern Sudan feature Arabic (both fus'ha and ammiyah) in the list of its languages. For example, the Sudan Radio Service (SRS) operating from Nairobi and Kenya with branches in Juba and Khartoum, broadcasts in ten languages; English, Arabic, simple (Juba) Arabic, Dinka, Zande, Moru, Nuer, Bari, Shilluk and Toposa.[3] Further, Arabic in its connotational dimension is not the monopoly of Arabized/Arab groups; non-Arabized groups can use it to mark their own identity. Miller (2003) found that Equatorial southern Sudanese mobilize Juba Arabic as an identification marker.

The symbolic meaning of the Arabic language in Eritrea is different from that of the Sudan, and language planning has to be sensitive to both the instrumental and symbolic meanings of the language. The British converted the Eritrean *Rashāyida* into a nationality as part of their language policy. For example, between 1941 and 1952 they robustly promoted Tigrinya and Arabic as languages of instruction. Contrary to the policy they adopted in the southern Sudan, the British felt Tigrinya would serve the Christians as a language of culture while Arabic would serve the Muslims. Amharic subsequently replaced Tigrinya and Arabic as the medium of instruction. The imposition of Amharic was part of a process of Amharicization, a process analogous to Swahilization, and to some degree Arabization. The use of Arabic as a medium of instruction for children with limited proficiency adversely affected the academic performance of native speakers of Tigrinya or Tigre. In 1991, the Eritrean nationalist responses to Ethiopian policies were the immediate causes of the war between Eriteria and Ethiopia. As part of its army language policy the Eritrean Liberation Front taught its combatants to be literate in Tigrinya. In order to consolidate their language policies, they promoted Arabic and Tigrinya as working languages in education and journalism, but not 'official' languages. Arabic was recognized as the language of literature, used by native speakers of Afar, Nara, Bilin, etc.

Chinese language policy in Africa

The African landscape is continuously changing, for instance, with the introduction of Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language in schools and universities. Chinese is playing a prominent role in Africa's sociolinguistic landscape; a role that used to be previously played by English, French

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and Portuguese speakers. This raises the question of the impact of Chinese on language policy in Africa. Specifically, will Chinese be Africa's next lingua franca? The introduction of Chinese has to be understood in the context of its economic role in Africa. China's engagement with Africa is extensive as it relies heavily on the importation of oil and minerals from countries such as Angola, Gabon, Equitorial Guinea, Nigeria and the Sudan (Prah 2007). About 10 per cent of China's oil comes from the Muglad regions of the Sudan. Politically, China has diplomatic relations with forty-eight African countries.

China's international language policy on Africa is inextricably intertwined with its economic and political role. Chinese has been introduced across political regions in a milieu shaped by the former colonial powers. At the same time, it is also carving its own niche as a prestigious language in the twenty-first century. Confucius Institutes are a powerful instrument used in the promotion of Chinese interests and the development of its international language policy. While the Chinese government's programme of promoting Chinese language and culture is global, the West generally views its adoption in Africa with anxiety and scepticism, as it is viewed as 'China's venturing into the traditional sphere of influence on the dominant powers…' (Ampiah and Naidu 2008: 3).

The Chinese government has invested heavily in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language globally. In a standard Memorandum of Agreement with African countries through Confucius Institutes, the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) commits itself to three obligations attractive to Africa: the provision of start-up funds for the setting up of new Confucius Institutes, the training and deployment of Chinese teachers and/or volunteers to Confucius Institutes, the payment of teachers' salaries and allowances and the provision of language teaching materials. The production of language teaching materials is centralized with very little adaptation to local contexts.

The Confucius Headquarters is involved in the training of Chinese teachers and volunteers, the development of computer-aided programmes and audio-visual materials. In order to ensure the sustainability of the teaching of Chinese in Africa, as in other regions, Hanban established a manpower development plan through the provision of Chinese language teaching scholarships for foreigners in 2009.

Another objective of the Chinese international language policy is to build a critical mass of local Africans to train as teachers of Chinese. In its ten-year development plan (2010–2020), the Confucius Institute Headquarters plans to cooperate with educational institutions overseas in setting up institutes for training Chinese language teachers. Confucius Institutes also prioritize regional and international exchange. Thus, Confucius conferences are arranged to promote exchange of ideas, and a sharing of best practices.

In Africa, as in other parts of the world, Confucius Institutes are established through cooperation between individual universities. There are Confucius Institutes in Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, the Sudan, Togo, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Notably, all the countries have no *de jure* national policy on the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture, suggesting that a formal language policy including Chinese may very well be developed as part of the bilateral relationship between China and the respective countries.

Chinese is popular in African universities. For example, college level courses in Chinese are offered at the Universities of Zimbabwe, Nairobi, Stellenbosch Yaoundé II and Khartoum. The University of Zimbabwe offers Chinese up to degree level. In Zimbabwe, Chinese has been introduced as a foreign language in secondary schools. For example, Chinese has been introduced in two elite former white secondary schools among students who may have English as a mother tongue with limited if any demonstrable proficiency in an African language. Chinese teachers are recruited on a short-term contract basis and not for the long term because, in order for the recruitment of Chinese teachers on a long-term basis, it would be necessary to have a bilateral relationship between Zimbabwe and China, which explicitly included the teaching of Chinese. In turn, Zimbabwe would also need to expand its language policy to include the teaching of Chinese.

In Zimbabwe, young children from local Chinese communities are also attending language courses in Chinese. Chinese children, unlike their African counterparts, have some knowledge of Chinese, albeit elementary, and are thus able to draw upon their parents' knowledge of Chinese in learning the language. If most Africans are learning Chinese for instrumental purposes, ethnic Chinese students are doing so in order to enhance their sense of self-identity as they play with their identities exploiting linguistic resources available to them.

Conclusion

An assessment of the success of colonial and post-colonial language policies is elusive because, as stated in the epigraph, the analysis is carried out *media res*, as the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea aptly demonstrates. Yet, in spite of the differences between the various language policies most of them conceptualize language and language learning, and bilingualism in similar ways. Language policies are faced with such diversity between individuals that, in complex multilingual communities, systematicity across individuals is an illusion. Language policy, particularly when it is top down, assumes that ethnic groups are monolithic and static and that variation across individuals is systematic. Furthermore, the complex

multilingual situations in Africa have merged some of the African languages to such an extent that it is plausible to argue that separating them is not easy. The neat situation in which the goal of language management is transitional, and bilingualism involves learning one language after another, has to give way to a more complex situation in which its objective is to enhance language learning in which language users constantly adapt their languages and exploit the affordances with which they are provided to articulate and express meaning.

Even if it is assumed that languages in Africa are separable, and discrete terms such as additive bilingualism and transitional bilingualism are expressed literally as adding one language to another, this requires time and is a development complicated by the unpredictability of history, and the recalcitrant nature of the past. Language planning in Africa is impatient with history and expects immediate results. The success or otherwise of language planning in Africa therefore is assessed against unrealistic time frames. Nicolai (2008: 377) illustrates the problematic nature of overcoming contemporary situations in order to realize expected outcomes when commenting thus: '[t]he present is not a pure isolated instant, a place of transit. It preserves the participation of the past and introduces our immediate future in projection'.