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6. AFRICANISATION OF THE STUDY OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

INTRODUCTION

Some scholars argue that the developmental challenges faced by African countries are due mostly to the fact that the education systems they inherited from their colonial rulers were not culturally relevant (Prah, 1995). Amongst the flaws in African education systems is the fact that the language of instruction has remained a colonial language such as English, French or Portuguese, which is unfamiliar to the majority of African children when they start formal school. Some African countries still use one of the colonial languages as a language of instruction from the first grade. In other African countries the language of instruction is a familiar local language during the formative phase of education. This period varies between the first three grades in Zimbabwe (Khumalo, 2003), the first four grades in Zambia (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2013) and the first five grades in Namibia (Namibia Ministry of Education, 2014).

The use of colonial languages is not a challenge to the primary school child alone, but also to those in secondary school and tertiary institutions. For example, Zondi (2014) found a correlation between student performance and the medium of instruction in an undergraduate research module that she taught at the University of Zululand, South Africa, from 2012 to 2014. Her students' performance improved when both English and isiZulu were used as the languages of learning and teaching and in the research manual.

The state of affairs in which indigenous African languages are not used in teaching and learning can be attributed to a lack of appropriate status and corpus planning, as well as to the non-existence of proper implementation policies and monitoring thereof. Most African states have simply perpetuated the language policies they inherited from their colonial masters. In some instances, they have even become more committed to promoting the colonial language than their colonial masters did (Prah, 2009).

The main aim of this chapter is to suggest ways in which the study of African languages and linguistics in African universities may be made more Afrocentric and relevant to the socio-economic needs of African people. Specific objectives include the following:

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- To explain the origin of language-in-education policies in selected southern African countries;
- To show how the scientific description and the study of African languages in schools and tertiary institutions were influenced by Christian missionaries from Europe;
- To critically review both the content of African languages and linguistics courses offered in African universities, and the language of instruction used;
- To highlight the role of African languages in upholding human rights and promoting peace and development in African countries;
- To suggest ways in which African languages can be intellectualised.

A historical background is provided in order to understand what has led African states to ignore the study and use of their indigenous languages.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Indigenous African languages have been side-lined, not only with respect to their use in education, but also with regard to other official roles, such as in the administration of justice, the legislature, government administration and the media. This bias against the use of African languages in preference for colonial languages may be ascribed to each country's particular colonial experience. It is therefore crucial to consider the language policies of the colonial powers in selected southern African countries, in order to appreciate the extent to which they have influenced current language policies of these now-independent states.

Colonial Language Policies

Great Britain, Portugal and Belgium were colonial powers that ruled southern African countries and introduced their native languages of English, Portuguese and French respectively. Governments of the now-independent African states have maintained these colonial languages to date as their major official language. For example, English is the official language in former British colonies now Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe whilst Portuguese is the official language of Angola and Mozambique. French is the official language of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a former Belgian colony. Their language policies can thus be attributed to their colonial history. However, the degree of colonial influence varies, depending on the colonial power in question. For example, in some colonies, the British encouraged the study of selected African languages and their use as languages of instruction in the first four years of primary school, whereas the French and the Portuguese preferred a policy of European assimilation for their subjects. British colonial policies were followed in Northern Rhodesia – now Zambia – (Ohannessian, 1978), Southern Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe – (Mumpande, 2006; Magwa, 2010), Nyasaland – now Malawi – (Kamwendo, 2009) and

Bechuanaland – now Botswana – (Mathangwane, 2002). In Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Bechuanaland, the British policy was to teach in selected African languages for the first four grades only. In Southern Rhodesia, the language of instruction was English almost from the first year of schooling. As Magwa (2010) puts it, "… while the language of a child's home could be used in the early stages of instruction, it was supposed to be given up after a period of six months" (p. 117).

Surprisingly, upon attaining independence, these countries either reduced the number of African languages taught and used as languages of instruction, or legislated English as the only language of instruction from the first grade. The former was the case in Malawi and Botswana, whilst the latter was the case in Zambia which in 1966 made English the sole language of instruction right from the first grade. When Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, Shona and Ndebele ceased to be examinable subjects at Grade 7 level, a move which effectively downgraded their status (Magwa, 2010). However, the Zimbabwe Education Act of 1987 made Shona and Ndebele languages of instruction in lower primary schools, along with English (Khumalo, 2003; Magwa, 2010). The situation in Malawi changed for the worse in 2013 with the passing of the 2012 Education Bill which stipulated that the medium of instruction in schools and colleges would be English (Kishindo, 2015; Malawi Government, 2012). Prior to this Act, from 1968, Chichewa had been the language of instruction during the first three standards (grades). In contrast, Zambia reverted to the use of seven Zambian languages as languages of learning and teaching from 2014 (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2013).

The British colonial authorities were consistent in their language policies on the continent. For instance, as in southern Africa, their language policy in West Africa was one that encouraged the use of African languages and lingua francas. Similarly, German policy in East Africa supported the promotion and use of African languages (Abdul-Aziz, 2003). In Tanganyika – now Tanzania - both the German colonial administration and the subsequent British rule introduced education through an indigenous language, namely Kiswahili (King'ei, 2009). Unlike other countries, however, even after independence, the Government of Tanzania did not only continue with the policy of using Kiswahili as the language of instruction in lower primary school, but extended its use to the entire primary school system (White, 1980). However, this enthusiasm has not been maintained by successive governments. Following the legalisation of private schools in 1995, English became the language of instruction in the majority of private primary schools, whilst Kiswahili remained the language of instruction in government primary schools (Swilla, 2009). Thus both English and Kiswahili became languages of instruction in Tanzanian primary schools.

Unlike the British, the French and the Portuguese preferred a policy of European assimilation for their subjects. The Portuguese Government in Mozambique followed the assimilationist model of colonisation whose goal included the suppression of the culture of the colonised (Matsinhe, 2005). They ensured that their African subjects acquired near-native competence in the Portuguese language (Abdul-Aziz, 2003).

As a result, at independence, the black government of Mozambique continued with a policy which accorded higher official status to Portuguese than to African languages (Matsinhe, 2005). The same situation persisted in Angola, the other Lusophone country in southern Africa. Vilela (2002) points out that former Portuguese colonies have since started taking steps to ensure the promotion of indigenous languages.

The French discouraged research that would lead to the development of African languages (Abdul-Aziz, 2003). Their policy was that French was to be the sole official language of administration, education and culture. This applied to the former Belgian Congo, now DRC, which was colonised by French-speaking Belgium, and thus became subject to the French influence. Despite the existence of four widely spoken local languages, namely Tshiluba, Kikongo, Lingala and Kiswahili, French has become a major language for many children in the DRC. Although it was decided that learning and teaching should be conducted in local languages up to Grade 3 and that French should be introduced from Grade 4, in practice, French is used as the language of instruction from pre-school to tertiary level (University of Lubumbashi, 2012).

In the Republic of South Africa language has been a hotly contested issue for a long time. From 1652 the original European settlers in South Africa spoke Dutch, which developed into Afrikaans. When the British colonised the country in 1822 they proclaimed English as the language of the courts, of government, of Parliament, of the schools and of newspapers. Afrikaans was to be a language of the home (Alexander, 2013). In education, the British policy tolerated the use of indigenous languages for lower primary schooling and promoted English medium for higher levels. This policy began to change when the Afrikaner National Party came to power in 1948. The apartheid language policy substituted English with Afrikaans as the dominant language wherever possible. Where this would not work, Afrikaans was promoted to be equal to English. Their policy regarding the indigenous languages was linked to their resolve to fragment and subjugate the black people.

The apartheid government gave the impression that through its policy of separate development, it was doing Africans a favour by affording them the right to live amongst their own people and to use their mother tongues in their day-to-day communication. They encouraged mother-tongue instruction in primary and secondary schools. Whilst this might sound a noble thing to do, it was eventually to work to the disadvantage of Africans, whilst it benefitted Afrikaans and English speaking people. The apartheid government passed the South African Bantu Education Act of 1953 mainly to strengthen the position of Afrikaans as the country's official language (Abdul-Aziz, 2003). To ensure that Afrikaans acquired a high status in the country, the apartheid government made human and financial resources available in order to develop their language into a sophisticated modern language of literature, commerce, technology and administration. In contrast, no similar steps were taken to ensure that African languages reached the same level of sophistication. Learning materials for indigenous languages were inadequate and of inferior quality, and teachers were not well trained.

In some African countries, schools depended on materials that had been produced by early European missionaries. As shown in the following section, some of this literature was not designed for use by mother-tongue speakers of African languages.

The Role of Christian Missionaries in the Development of African Languages

The manner in which African languages and literature have been taught in schools and universities has been influenced not only by colonial masters, but also by various Christian missionaries from Europe who pioneered the description of African languages and developed their written forms (Alexander, 2013). The orthographies and grammatical descriptions of African languages they designed were based on the structure of European languages that they were familiar with. In essence, the works were targeted at European learners of African languages as foreign languages.

Another challenge for the missionaries who described African languages was that they were not trained linguists. Thus, some of them made negative and scientifically inaccurate statements. For example, William Boyce, a Wesleyan missionary, is quoted as having referred to the Khoe and San languages as "uncouth and inharmonious dialects" and that the "dialects abound in those peculiar and barbarous sounds called clicks" (Doke & Cole, 1969, p. 59). In certain instances, the grammatical analyses of the languages were incorrect. In spite of such flaws, the grammars that the missionaries produced were used, not only by European learners of the languages, but also by Africans who were mother-tongue speakers. Examples of such works include *Elements of Southern Sotho* by Paroz (1959), *An Introduction to Chinyanja* by Sanderson and Bithrey (1953) and *Elements of Cinyanja for English-Speaking Students* by Price (1941).

The grammatical descriptions of African languages by missionaries and other European writers were produced in English, French, Portuguese or other colonial languages. This confirms that such works were not meant for African users. Furthermore, it was not only grammars that were written in European languages, but also bilingual or trilingual dictionaries of African languages, such as a bilingual *Kongo-Spanish Dictionary* by Father Antoine de Terveli in 1652; a trilingual *Spanish-Latin-Kongo Dictionary* by Father Georges de Gheel in1652; an *English-Vernacular Dictionary of the Bantu-Botatwe Dialects of Northern Rhodesia* by Father J. Torrend in 1891 (Doke, 1969).

The challenge with grammatical descriptions of African languages written in a non-African language is two-fold. Firstly, since the terminology used in the grammars is technical, most such grammars are best understood only by linguists. Secondly, the descriptions are totally inaccessible to a speaker of the respective African language who has no knowledge of the European language in which the grammar is written. Thus whilst the grammars do serve a purpose, they cannot contribute to the development of Africans who have not learnt any European language. With regard to bilingual dictionaries which provide word lists in an African language with

their equivalents in a European language, the challenge is that such dictionaries are helpful only to persons who can read both the European language and the African language. It is inaccessible to a person who cannot read the European language no matter how literate s/he might be in her/his African language.

The production of grammars and dictionaries of African languages written in European languages has continued into the 21st century. Although the grammars have become more scientific and relatively accurate, they are helpful only to linguists whilst the bilingual dictionaries continue to be inaccessible to an African who cannot read English or any other European language. Bilingual or multilingual dictionaries would benefit Africans who do not know any European language if they included only African languages such as Shona-Zulu-Sotho-Nyanja-Venda dictionary. In some countries, this Eurocentric description of African languages has influenced the manner in which they are taught in schools and in universities. For example, at the University of Zambia, the University of Zimbabwe, the University of Swaziland and the University of Botswana, the language of instruction in the Departments of African languages is English (see for example, Nkolola-Wakumelo, 2011). Furthermore, at all levels of the education system, African languages have been taught in isolation, with little or no link to other disciplines. Nor have they been used as languages of instruction. As shown in the following sections, this has had a negative effect on the production and acquisition of knowledge and change in the African university.

KNOWLEDGE, LANGUAGE AND CHANGE IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

As alluded to in the foregoing sections, the study of African languages and linguistics in African universities has not been relevant to the needs of African people in their respective countries. To start with, courses in African languages and linguistics in some African universities are taught through the medium of English, French or Portuguese. Since even departments of African languages do not use African languages as the medium of learning and teaching, it is not surprising that all other disciplines shy away from doing so. The Africanisation of the study of African languages and linguistics should start with changing the medium of instruction from an unfamiliar language to the African language being offered. In addition to the language of instruction, it is equally important that the content of courses or modules in African languages and linguistics should include topics that are relevant to the socio-economic agenda of Africa. Furthermore, such courses should be inter-disciplinary and not designed for students of African languages and linguistics alone. In this way, universities in Africa will be on the path towards becoming truly African in character. They will be able to contribute to the development of African states by producing graduates equipped with the appropriate knowledge and skills to tackle the social, economic and political challenges that the continent faces.

Language Barriers in Knowledge Acquisition and Production

The use of non-indigenous languages as languages of learning and teaching in African universities acts as a barrier to knowledge acquisition for the majority of African students. With the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, some universities that had been Afrikaans medium, such as the University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University and the University of Johannesburg (formerly Rand Afrikaans University—RAU) became dual-medium institutions by introducing English medium courses in addition to Afrikaans ones. However, this did not help African students for whom neither English nor Afrikaans is a home language. It is not surprising that students are still discontented with the use of Afrikaans in lectures. During 2015 and 2016, language issues continued to cause tension at some South African universities (Mail & Guardian, 28 August 2015; BusinessDay Live, 5 April 2016; News24, 16 June 2016).

A compromise strategy would be to use one or more African languages together with colonial languages. For example, Sibomani (2015) argues that in the case of Rwanda, a multilingual model should be used in which "all the three official languages (Kinyarwanda, English and French) … be taught, learned and used together in schools so as to enhance learners' access to curriculum and to enable proficiency and literacy knowledge and skills to develop in these languages" (p. 143). Even with such a compromise situation, there will still be a challenge with regard to the language of assessment. Moreover, as Brock-Utne (2009) argues, "the concept of bilingual teaching in the African context which seems to be reserved for a situation where one of the languages is an ex-colonial language" (p. 19) does not contribute to the African child's proper acquisition of knowledge. There is a need for a paradigm shift in the use of African languages of instruction, which should take into account the fact that learners come to school or tertiary institutions as polyglots in at least three African languages (Prah & Brock-Utne, 2009). Other models of multilingual education have been proposed, such as trans-languaging and trans-literacy (Makalela, 2015).

It is not only the teaching language that creates impediments to the acquisition of knowledge, but also the fact that textbooks and all other study materials are in colonial languages. Even in those universities where lectures on African languages and linguistics are conducted in a familiar African language, most texts used are not in an African language, but in English. This is a challenge not only for students, but also for the lecturers because the linguistic terminology found in these books was not developed for African languages. It is thus imperative that the process of Africanising the study of African languages and linguistics in African universities should include the intellectualisation of African languages. This topic has been discussed by a number of scholars, including Finlayson and Madiba (2002), Alexander (2005), Maseko (2011), and Kaschula and Maseko (2014). As Kaschula and Maseko (2014) point out, African languages, like all other languages, "are underpinned

by sophisticated, rule-governed and elaborate grammatical and sociolinguistic systems" (pp. 10–11); however, since they have not in the past received any attention with regard to both status and corpus planning, these languages have to be consciously and deliberately developed for them to serve adequately as languages of learning and teaching at tertiary level. Whilst there are currently some challenges in making African languages the media of study for all university disciplines, they should be used at least in the study of African languages, linguistics and literature.

The neglect of the development of African languages was not confined to apartheid South Africa. For instance, in Zambia, although the University of Zambia opened in 1966, the study of indigenous Zambian languages started only in 1978.[1] Courses in African languages and linguistics are till today taught through the medium of English. With regard to research, the University of Zambia does not have a separate language research centre or institute, but had a unit within the Centre for African Studies (now the Institute of Economic and Social Research) that undertakes research in Zambian languages. In contrast, the universities of Malawi and Zimbabwe have research centres or institutes dedicated to doing research on African languages - the Centre for Language Studies (CLS), and the African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) respectively.

The need for research on the intellectualisation of African languages is thus crucial in all southern African countries. Ironically, despite the fact that South Africa became a democratic state three decades after other countries in the region had attained independence, it is South Africa that is leading the formulation and enactment of language policies that favour the development and use of indigenous African languages. Some South African universities such as Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town and the University of KwaZulu-Natal are taking steps to intellectualise African languages. For example, Rhodes University is engaged in research on the *Intellectualisation of African Languages*, *Multilingualism and Education*, and *Concept Formation in African Languages* (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014, pp. 20–28). The University was designing "vocation-specific courses in isiXhosa in pharmacy, law, education, journalism and media studies, which aim to provide students with skills that they can use immediately in their practical training and as practitioners in their specific areas upon graduation" (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014, p. 25). The University of Cape Town offers a Xhosa communication skills course for medical students to enable them to communicate with their patients on topics related to their vocation (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014). The University of KwaZulu-Natal has gone a step further by making isiZulu "an essential option for a non-isiZulu speaking student who enters the University of KwaZulu-Natal" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, n.d.). Furthermore, the university was implementing a long-term bilingual language policy, and isiZulu would become one of the languages of teaching and learning at the university.

For all courses in African languages to be meaningful, the intellectualisation of African languages should include the production of relevant knowledge and learning materials through the medium of African languages. It is thus necessary to undertake the following activities:

- developing terminology in African languages for various professions;
- producing monolingual dictionaries in African languages;
- translating crucial documents into major African languages, including national constitutions and those of political parties;
- developing African languages for technology;
- carrying out academic research in various disciplines and publishing research findings in African languages.

Some of these activities have already started in some institutions. The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) based in Cape Town is producing monolingual dictionaries in African languages. Of significant relevance to the intellectualisation of African languages is the research being conducted at selected South African universities, such as the programmes already mentioned at Rhodes University (Kaschula & Maseko, 2014), which include the following:

- designing techniques, methods and approaches for language policy planning and implementation, as well as teaching in multilingual higher education contexts;
- translation, terminology development and lexicography in African languages;
- development of African languages in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs);
- development of new approaches in theoretical linguistics specific to the description of African languages;
- research in African language literary studies.

The intellectualisation of African languages will facilitate and enrich knowledge production in African universities mainly because most aspects of African indigenous knowledge are best described and documented in African languages. The translation project being undertaken at Rhodes University in South Africa deserves special discussion, for this activity has not been fully exploited in the development of African languages.

The Role of Translation in the Development of African Languages

It is important for books and other documents that currently record vital scientific knowledge in economically powerful languages such as English, to be translated into major African languages. In this way, African languages will be empowered and so will those African people who do not know English but speak, read and understand African languages. Similarly, African indigenous knowledge which exists mainly in oral forms needs to be recorded, transcribed and published, in order to disseminate and share such knowledge in multiple forms. It should then be translated into multiple African languages and other non-African languages to enable Africans from different cultural groups to share their indigenous knowledge with others. As Israel (2011) suggests, in this way "the value of indigenous languages and that of English is recognized" (p. 107). For this desirable state to materialise, proper training of

translators is required, so that they are competent in English and indigenous African languages.

Various studies on translation have been done. They include Bassnet (2014), Munday (2015), Toury (2012), Tymoczko (2005) and Alexander (2005). Alexander discusses the potential role of translation in the intellectualisation of African languages. Translation will contribute to the intellectualisation of African languages by making available in these languages some scientific and technological knowledge currently documented only in English and other non-African languages. Likewise, African indigenous knowledge should be available to speakers of African and non-African languages.

Besides contributions by individual scholars, a number of institutions have highlighted the importance of translation in the intellectualisation of African languages. The African Academy of Language (ACALAN) based in Bamako, Mali, has made translation and interpretation one of its major projects (African Academy of Language, (n.d.). As stated on their website, the main goal of the project is to make African languages true working languages in a multilingual context. The project has eleven global objectives, three of which have direct relevance to the intellectualisation of African languages and Africanisation of the study of African languages:

- To encourage the culture of reading by making available in the major African languages key texts from all over the world;
- To facilitate the creation and production of bilingual texts;
- To harmonise (to some extent) varieties of some languages for learning/teaching purposes.

A culture of reading in African languages needs to be encouraged, both for those who have mastered non-African languages and for those who have not. The lack of interest in reading in African languages, even by educated people, has led to the demise of newspapers that publish in African languages. As Nkolola-Wakumelo (2010) states, "it may also be the case that some people who are able to read an African language may find it more prestigious to read in English" (p. 254). Due to lack of readership, among other reasons, newspapers published in African languages do not survive. For instance, in Swaziland four different siSwati newspapers started and collapsed between 1934 and 2006. These were: Izwi La maSwazi (1934), Umbiki (1970), Tikhatsi (1990–2006) and Umgijimi (2000) (Mkhonza, 2009, p. 435). In Botswana, Mokgosi used to publish news in seTswana, but closed down in 2005 (Naledi Kgolo, personal communication, 2 December 2015).[2] The causes of its demise were similar to those that terminated the siSwati newspapers in Swaziland. In Zambia, all the major daily newspapers are in English, as are all the electronic ones. Occasionally the Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS) publishes what are meant to be monthly newspapers in eight Zambian languages. However, these papers are irregular (Nkolola-Wakumelo, 2007).

Institutional Collaboration in Advocating and Developing African Languages

It will benefit the cause of the intellectualisation of African languages if organisations and institutions collaborated in a way to properly complement each other's efforts. For instance, advocacy for the development and use of African languages is of interest to rights-based international organisations such as the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). It is also an activity that would sit well at ACALAN which has relatively easy access to member states of the African Union (AU). ACALAN has already identified cross-border languages that need to be developed for use in education and other official domains. In southern Africa, ACALAN has selected seTswana and ciCewa as cross-border languages to be given initial priority.

Corpus development, on the other hand, is an activity that academic institutions and research centres can handle well. For example, since 1997, the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) has been involved in the harmonisation of the orthographies of indigenous African languages across borders on the continent (see CASAS website). Appraisals of the philosophy and methodology of CASAS can be found in Brock-Utne and Mercer (2014) and Banda (2008, 2015). Another southern African research centre concerned with the development of African languages is the Centre for the Promotion of Literacy in sub-Saharan Africa (CAPOLSA), based in the Department of Psychology at the University of Zambia in Lusaka. This centre was established in May 2011 in cooperation with the University of Jyvaskyla, Finland. Their main aim is to promote literacy among early learners in the local languages of Zambia (Maumbi & Serpell, 2012). CAPOLSA's objectives include developing guidelines for the harmonisation of orthographies across Bantu languages as used in various sub-Saharan countries, and promoting support among parents, families, and pre-school teachers for children's acquisition of literacy in Zambian languages (Serpell, 2014).

In addition to newspapers, creative writing in African languages has a huge role to play in the Africanisation of the study of African languages. Until now, African literature has been studied mainly as the writing of African authors on typically African themes, but written in English, French or Portuguese. For literature in African languages to contribute meaningfully to the Africanisation of the study of African languages and to socio-economic development, literary texts studied need to be those written in African languages. Furthermore, academic works of literary criticism should be written and published in African languages. For this to be realised, we need creative writers who are committed to producing works in various genres. Furthermore, there need to be enough people interested in buying and reading these works. However, studies need to be done to determine potential demand for such literature. Above all, publishers must begin to publish books in African languages and booksellers must be willing to stock and sell such works.

To assist advocates for publishing in African languages, scientific investigations into reasons why publishers are not keen to publish works in African languages are required. Nkolola-Wakumelo (2010), for example, highlighted some challenges

to scholarly publishing in African languages. With regard to readers, one of the challenges to be addressed is the lack of a reading culture in general, and a lack of interest in reading works in African languages in particular. Alexander (2003) makes this point clearly and strongly, as reproduced below:

> The intellectualisation of languages has to do in the first instance with their written or printed forms. No amount of investment in making languages more visible through the printed word will help unless a culture of reading takes root in these languages. This means that a heavy responsibility devolves on to pre- and primary-school as well as adult educators in both using the indigenous languages as languages of tuition and in encouraging their learners to read and write their home languages. (p. 31)

Besides encouraging and facilitating the production of written literature in African languages, the Africanisation of the study of African languages will benefit greatly from the translation of novels and other literary genres published in European and other non-African languages that have a longer literary history. Moreover, such translations should include novels on African themes which were published in English by renowned African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka. It is gratifying that some works by these writers have already been translated into African languages, such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which has been translated into Chichewa (or ciNyanja as the language is called in Zambia and Mozambique) by Malunga (2004).

Africanising the study of African languages, linguistics and literature in African universities is worthwhile, not only for academic purposes, but also for the socio-economic development of Africa in general. The use of African languages can have a positive influence on human rights, democracy and peace, both intra-nationally and internationally, as explained in the following section.

AFRICAN LANGUAGES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the pedagogical and moral merits of Africanising the study of African languages and linguistics in African universities, there are socio-economic benefits, since language has the power to include some people and exclude others from participating fully in the social, political and economic development of their countries (Miti, 2008a). In this instance, language is a human rights issue— although the word 'language' is directly mentioned in only one article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, i.e. Article 2 (United Nations, 1949, p. 2), language rights can be inferred in other articles. Let us consider, for example, the rights to education, health, fair trial, freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to participate in political affairs and economic discourses, as discussed by Miti (2008b).

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, because education is a right, it ought to be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. However, even if it is made free and compulsory, where learning

and teaching are carried out in an unfamiliar language, it is not possible to achieve universal primary education, let alone Education for All (EFA) goals. The right to health is contained in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To ensure that their citizens enjoy good health, governments must not only provide hospitals, medicines and health personnel, but should also ensure that their citizens are given crucial information that will help them prevent ill health. Such information must be made available in languages that the majority of the people understand and prefer. This should include information on HIV/AIDS, cholera, Ebola, TB, malaria, diabetes, cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

In the justice system, a person's fair trial cannot be guaranteed if it is conducted wholly in a language with which s/he is unfamiliar. It is thus imperative that where an accused person does not speak or understand the language used in court, competent interpreters should be provided. Courts should not rely merely on untrained, bilingual people who have a flair for interpretation; properly trained court interpreters are necessary. In universities, departments of African languages should offer interpretation courses at certificate, diploma and degree levels. They can do so in collaboration with relevant departments in their Law schools.

Another article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which the role of language can be inferred is Article 19. This article states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (United Nations, 1949, p. 4). It goes without saying that for anyone to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas", one inevitably needs to use a language. The language, which may be spoken, written or signed, should be one that is familiar to those imparting information and those receiving it. The current situation is exacerbated by the fact that people who do not know the official colonial language are denied the right to participate fully in the political affairs of their own country. In some African countries, national constitutions and those of their political parties are published solely in the official colonial language. Furthermore, parliamentary debates are conducted in colonial languages which are unfamiliar to the majority of the electorate. The same citizens are excluded from participating in economic discourses or debates, because crucial information on their country's economic situation exists mainly in languages that they do not comprehend.

The foregoing situation leads to citizens being generally discriminated against in their own countries, which is a violation of Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 7 states that: "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination" (United Nations, 1949, p. 3). With regard to intra- and international integration and peace, respect for multilingualism in Africa has an important role to play. The use of cross-border or regional languages, for example, can be a useful bridge between people who speak the same language, or related languages in two or more countries. Thus multilingualism is extremely important for democracy,

peace and development, both intra- and internationally. For this reason, in addition to all the research regarding the intellectualisation of African languages, consideration should be given to designing inter-disciplinary courses in universities to empower graduates to contribute to the strengthening of democracy, peace and development from a human rights point of view. What form, then, should such inter-disciplinary courses take?

SUGGESTED INTER-DISCIPLINARY COURSES

In order to equip university graduates with knowledge and skills to contribute to the socio-economic development of their countries, universities should offer inter-disciplinary courses such as the following:

- African Languages in Development: for students of African languages and linguistics, development studies, political science, economics;
- Vocation-specific Communication skills in an African language: for students in social work, nursing, medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, public health, law, international relations;
- African Languages in the Media: for students of African languages and linguistics, journalism and media studies, public relations;
- African Languages in Education: should include subject-specific teaching methodologies such as teaching science and mathematics in an African language;
- Translation and Interpretation Studies: for students of African languages and linguistics, those studying other languages such as English, Afrikaans, French and Portuguese, as well as for students of international relations and diplomacy;
- African Languages and Power: for students of gender studies, political and administrative studies;
- African Languages and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Development: for students of education, sociology and anthropology and development studies.

The suggestions listed above are possible topics, and not necessarily module titles. Some of them could be combined into a single module. We acknowledge that some of these themes are already being offered, particularly in some South African universities. Other universities on the continent and in southern Africa in particular may consider designing courses along these lines.

It is worth mentioning that the introduction of such courses is not intended to eliminate theoretical linguistics courses that are currently being offered in universities across Africa. However, as the study of theoretical linguistics continues, departments of African languages and linguistics need to review their linguistic approaches in order to apply the discipline of linguistic science to the African situation. This is not the first time that the Eurocentric approach to linguistic science and the description of African languages has been questioned. Katupha (1991) asked fellow linguists in southern Africa to reflect on this matter and offered the following invitation:

> This paper questions the fact that the linguists of the 'South' are greatly dependent on what is done in the 'North' on the one hand, and that the South

> is being used as a pool for experiments of the linguistic theories produced in the North. In this contest languages turn into a battlefield in which linguists, armed with theories they espouse, contend, often with aims that have nothing or little to do with the promotion and effective use of the languages being used, to illustrate the epistemological and heuristic values of the contesting theories. This state of affairs justifies this paper, the aim of which is to spark a reflection on how we, the linguists of the 'South', rather than Linguistics itself, are doing our job in compromising or contributing towards the promotion and effective use of our national languages. (pp. 7–8)

Perhaps katupha's provocation of thought cited above should make linguists and other language practitioners ask themselves to what extent knowledge of various linguistic theoretical models alone can help empower linguistic minorities in Africa and consequently save lives.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter set out to explore ways in which the study of African languages and linguistics in African universities may be reviewed to make them more relevant to the socio-economic situation of the continent. We have shown that the scientific description of African languages is based on ways in which the languages were initially described and recorded by European Christian missionaries and other European writers. Such descriptions were not only written in Indo-European languages, but the linguistic analyses and orthographies were also based on the language structures that the writers were familiar with.

This tradition has continued into the 21st century even by modern African linguists who, as Katupha (1991) claims, strive to learn and apply linguistic theories developed in the West to international levels of sophistication. We noted that despite having achieved democracy and freedom later than other southern African countries, South Africa is spearheading research that aims at intellectualising African languages and advancing multilingualism in education. The chapter has suggested some topics for inter-disciplinary courses aimed at empowering university graduates to contribute to solving the continent's socio-economic ills. It is also hoped that Africanising the study of African languages and linguistics may contribute to the transformation of African universities through the introduction of inter-disciplinary courses in which African languages will play a significant role.

NOTES

[1] The present writer was the first lecturer recruited to teach African languages and linguistics within the Department of Literature and Languages which comprised English language and literature, French language and literature, and Zambian languages and literature.

[2] Dr Naledi Kgolo is a lecturer in the Department of English, University of Botswana, and formerly coordinator of the Tomela ya Puo Foundation.

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