

SAFARA

**REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE
LANGUES, LITTÉRATURES ET CULTURES**



**N°11 janvier 2012
ISSN 0851-4119**

**UFR de Lettres & Sciences Humaines,
Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, BP 234, Sénégal**

SAFARA

REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE LANGUES, LITTÉRATURES ET CULTURES

UFR de Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université Gaston Berger,
BP 234 Saint Louis, Sénégal
Tel +221 33 961 23 56 Fax +221 .. 961 1884
E-Mail : safara@ugb.sn

Directeur de Publication : Omar SOUGOU
Université Gaston Berger

COMITÉ SCIENTIFIQUE

Omofolabo	A-SOYINKA (Kansas, USA)	Baydallaye	KANE (Sénégal)
Flora	ALEXANDER (Royaume-Uni)	Edris	MAKWARD (Wisc., USA)
Chima	ANYADIKE (Nigeria)	Maweja	MBAYA (Sénégal)
Mwamba	CABAKULU (Sénégal)	Mustapha	MUHAMMAD (Nigeria)
Mamadou	CAMARA (Sénégal)	Molara	OGUNDIPE (Ghana)
Ernest	EMENYONU (N. Carol., USA)	Fiona	MCLAUGHLIN (Kans., USA)
Graham	FURNESS (Royaume-Uni)	Ndiawar	SARR (Sénégal)
Simon	GIKANDI (Princeton, USA)	Harold	SCHUEB (Wisc., USA)
Mamadou	KANDJI (Sénégal)	Marième	SY (Sénégal)

COMITE DE RÉDACTION

Rédacteur en Chef	Badara SALL, UGB
Co-Rédacteur en Chef	Obododimma OHA, Ibadan, Nigeria
Secrétaire de Rédactions	Babacar DIENG, UGB Mamadou Ba, UGB
Assistante de rédaction	Khadidiatou Diallo, UGB
Administrateur et trésorier	Abdoulaye BARRY
Relations extérieures	Baydallaye KANE

Membres

Oumar FALL, UGB	Olusegun ADEKOYA, Nigeria
Fallou NGOM, Washington	Lawan SHUAIB, Nigeria

© Université Gaston Berger de Saint Louis, 2011
ISSN 0851-4119

SOMMAIRE

Revisiting African Education For African Development Through Indigenous African Languages	5
Pierre GOMEZ	
Francophonie in Africa South of Sahara: Specificity, Challenges and Perspectives	17
Chaibou Elhadji OUMAROU	
Transtextuality in South African Fiction: The Novels of Alex La Guma and André Brink	37
Khadidiatou DIALLO	
“Cane is Bitter”: The “Epigraph” of Caribbean History	69
Julia UDOFIA	
<i>.Il pleut des oiseaux</i> de Jocelyn Saucier : Les replis d’un texte	83
Boubacar CAMARA	
Meurtre sacré et mort profane. Enjeux des tableaux narrativisés dans <i>A Rebours</i> de Joris-Karl Huysmans	101
Issa NDIAYE	
Lenrie Peters: The eagle-eyed socio-political Observer	121
Pierre GOMEZ	

**Safara, UFR de Lettres & Sciences Humaines, Université
Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, Sénégal, n°11, janvier 2012**

*Revisiting African Education for African Development
through Indigenous African Languages*

*Pierre Gomez**

Moving into the 21st century, and the world becoming more globalised than never before, the African has a responsibility to create a developmental paradigm to pave the way for socio-economic progress. In this process, Africans must begin to decide and design a development strategy that is African, one which is based on African education through African languages and one which is responsive to the needs of the African as the Africans response to globalization. How can this be achieved? There is an urgent need for us to re-conceptualize our education, re-connect to our culture and languages and most critically design an indigenous educational paradigm that is linked to African languages and realities. This debate has captured the interest of many high-profile scholars such as Wali (1963), Ngugi (1986), Mafeje (1994), Menang (2001) among others. The theme of language in African educational systems continues to be a contentious issue in post-Independence African countries. The importance of using the child's mother-tongue as the medium of instruction at school was underscored by UNESCO (UNESCO: 1953). Moreover, this organization continues to uphold the view that the choice of an instructional language and policies concerning language in schools are critical for any meaningful teaching and learning to take place (UNESCO: 2005). The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) also clearly maintains that language is an important determinant for quality education (ADEA: 2004).

* Senior Lecturer Ag. Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, the University of The Gambia.

6 P. Gomez: African Languages for Education & Development

It is also necessary to take note of the above especially when one considers the fact that in most African educational systems, the medium continues to be the language of the colonial masters. Children continue to start school using a foreign language (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010). Thus the need to integrate indigenous African languages in African schools as mediums of communication cannot be overemphasized. This is necessary in order to make the education that African children continue to receive more relevant to their needs and aspirations. There should be a call to use African languages in acquiring and disseminating knowledge for the purpose of sustainable education.

Most African societies – if not all – are multilingual. This is to say that learners in African schools would have gained some degree of proficiency in their L1s even before starting to learn a foreign language. The only difference is in the syntactic and morphological structures between the mother-tongue and the foreign language they are obliged to acquire. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in its 2010 report aptly states: “...the choice of languages, their recognition and sequencing in the education system, the development of their expressive potential, and their accessibility to a wider audience should [...] be gradual, concentric and be done in an all-inclusive approach”.

It is therefore imperative to note that a step-by-step integration of African languages in educational systems shall yield far reaching benefits for both learners and society. Local languages, if properly utilized, could complement foreign languages as mediums of instruction in African classrooms.

The multiplicity of languages in African societies could bring about effective communications and unity contrary to the widely held view that it could be a “communication barrier, and would engender conflicts and tensions” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010).

The existence of a variety of speech communities which use different languages could be effective in matters of governance, communication and above all, education. In essence, African languages could be instrumental tools in reshaping the lives and dreams of entire generations.

Language policies could be developed through holistic means to enhance social cohesion and overall linguistic and academic development of learners. Thus concerted efforts of all stakeholders in the business of education are needed to make learning vibrant. In fact, African languages could be used as mediums of instruction in schools to enhance students' understanding of concepts that are abstract and alien to them. When carefully selected and utilized, they can positively improve learner's performance in the achievement of set down educational goals and targets. Also, with the use of indigenous languages, and increased access to learning materials, there will be massive community participation in the educational arena. Thus, capacities of both the beneficiaries and implementers of education shall be enhanced to reasonable degrees.

In its 2003 Biennial Meeting, ADEA succinctly stated that African languages could be determinants for quality education. Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2006), in concord with ADEA, also asserted that "improving the quality of education is one of the six goals of education". These assertions have set the motion for an all-out debate on the use of the mother-tongue with a view to improving the educational performances of learners.

Linguistic diversity could bring to light the linguistic reality of a country. Through a well-planned and coordinated language learning programme, community activities could be clearly outlined. According to Djite (2008) and Stronel (2002), a linguistically empowered and creative people are able to contribute more effectively to economic growth. This view is vital to note because community life in African settings is characterized by the use of languages.

Moreover, access to knowledge and information technology through the use of African languages is critical in boosting the productive capacities of beneficiaries. The language industry can greatly complement the creative industry through the effective use of mother-tongue based instruction or communication. African languages continue to be relevant in education and commerce. Djite (2008) discusses the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity for development from the perspective of health, education, governance and the economy. Industrial countries could help in the development of strategies based on the realities on the ground in

8 P. Gomez: African Languages for Education & Development

order to meet their demands and targets within the framework of efficient and healthy competitions. This shall enable education planners and partners to effectively support drives that are necessary to make education meaningful and responsive to the needs of the people.

The argument in most intellectual circles that most African languages are too costly and time-consuming to integrate in the mainstream of educational systems should not be given much consideration. This is because as language develops in use, it could be used to meet set down targets using cost effective strategies. In Senegal for instance, Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED) publish in Pulaar to respond to the Pulaar community's need and demand for Pulaar literature. ARED's main aim among other things is to go beyond basic and functional literacy materials with a view to making their interventions broad-based and in line with the changing needs of their beneficiaries.

Using the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction in schools continues to draw the attention of many scholars. This is because the learner's L1 could greatly help him to better comprehend abstract concepts that are supposed to be developed at an early stage. Schools should build on the skills and expertise in the first languages as language learning takes place in all subjects, not only in language classes (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong learning, 2010).

Macdonald (1990) found that the frequent switch from one medium of instruction to another continues to be responsible for the inadequate linguistic proficiency of many early learners. Thus, a good number of such learners eventually find it impossible to be able to appropriately get themselves immersed in the foreign language of instruction. Alidou and Brock- UTRE, 2006; 87 outlined that some students, particularly girls, avoid speaking in class especially if the language of instruction is unfamiliar to them to avoid being "ridiculed". Girls are more likely to participate actively in the classroom when the language of instruction is the local language (World Bank, 2000).

With a carefully planned language instructional strategy, learning in African schools could be greatly enhanced. Learning

outcomes could be qualitatively improved. Results of learning objectives will be greatly enhanced.

This implies that Africans must start to take ownership of their own education, not in isolation, but within the global context of new technological flows and information orders. In *“Decolonizing the Mind”* (1986), Ngugi Wa Thiong’o argues that the control of the African mind during the transAtlantic slave trade and colonial periods was done through the devaluation, at best, and destruction, at worst, of the African peoples culture, art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, and literature. Most crucial, of course, was the domination of the African languages by the languages of the colonial masters. This was necessary for them to be able to dominate the mental universe of the African and this necessity was explained away by the prejudicial assumption that “what we understand by Africa is the unhistorical under-developed spirit, still involved in the condition of nature” (Hegel, 1991:93). In the same vein, both Emmanuel Kant (1960) and David Hume (1964) believe in the inferiority of the Black race vis-à-vis the Whites. Therefore, in the family of nations the African is “a late-born child” according to Lugard (1968).

African culture and history are rich and their scientific exploitation and popularization are a sure path to progress and survival. The Gambia is one of those countries that could serve as a glaring example in terms of cultural wealth. Her culture places high premium on the respect of the integrity of women, and of marriage to ensure harmony and procreation and the expansion of the family. Before colonialism, venereal diseases were almost unknown in The Gambia and the soundness of the cultural values transmitted to the present generation explains why the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in this country is among the lowest in Africa. Wealth should not be defined in fiscal terms alone. African culture and tradition are also her wealth and academics are invited to explore further into the intrinsic cultural morality of traditional Gambians.

It is evident that the continued effort to control the African mind by controlling his language is so strong. This has resulted in what Ngugi (1998, P.89) refers to as a continent of “bodiless heads and headless bodies”. Yet in the 21st century it is not surprising to find Africans dismissing any recognition of positive experiences in

10 P. Gomez: African Languages for Education & Development

African history or language (Menang: 2001). When an African conspires to denigrate Africa (Emmanuel Kwofie: 1972) and her glorious past while admiring and eulogizing the totality of Eurocentrism and trying to be what Ali and Alamin Mazrui (1998: P.137) term *Afro-Saxons*; there is definitely a mental and developmental problem. The role of the African people in taking the lead in designing the development of their societies through African-centered education by using African indigenous languages is central to Africa's socio-economic development. Africans must start to take ownership of their own educational systems so that they find solutions to Africa's myriad problems.

Indeed, our continent is confronted with a plethora of mammoth problems and challenges that permeate through every single fabric of our human lives. These include health, education, socio-economic, political to name just a few. A prominent African somberly summarizes the African situation thus:

Once a region with rich natural resources as well as bountiful stores of optimism and hope, the African continent now teeters perilously on the brink of economic disintegration, political chaos, institutional and social decay.

While this appraisal of Africa might seem too depressing, very few Africans would want to disagree with this observation that Africa has been experiencing regression, rather than progress, not only in the economic sphere, but also in the social and political spheres. It is against this backdrop that it is deemed necessary to rethink, revisit and re-conceptualize education in Africa to contribute to the socio-political and economic transformation of the continent.

Another prominent scholar on African studies also observes that colonial education was Eurocentric and ignored the achievements and contributions of the indigenous populations and their ancestries; and that education in Africa is still struggling to rid itself of this colonial legacy.

It is time for Africans to liberate themselves from this Eurocentric colonial legacy if any meaningful development is to be achieved. This can only be done by underpinning African education

in African indigenous cultures and languages as a tool for socio-political transformation. Strictly speaking, there is a strong nexus between language, education and development (Mbaabu: 1996).

It is indeed true that development in any country has to do with the improvement of the social, cultural, economic and political lives of the people. However, this paper will be confined to the nexus between language, education, socio-economic development and the international environment. There is evidence pointing to the fact that there is a correlation between language, education and economic development; and this lies in the nexus between language and education on the one hand, and education and development on the other, all evolving within a given international context. It is axiomatic that language plays a critical role in education. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o identifies two aspects in every language: one is its role as an agent that enables us to communicate with one another in our struggle to find our means of survival; the other aspect is its role as a carrier of the history and the culture built into the process of that communication over time. The two aspects, he concludes, are inseparably linked and form a dialectical unity, describing language as the collective memory bank of a people.

Going back to the role of language in education and consequently in development, this paper earlier emphasized the role of language in education. It is through linguistic interaction between teachers and learners on one hand, and among learners on the other, that knowledge is produced. Certainly, language learning proper, Bunyi argues, is an important component of the education itself. Accordingly, much of the children's early years in school are spent on developing their linguistic skills. Such years are said to be spent on literacy development.

Being one of the most multilingual continents, and therefore the most linguistically complex area of the world, post-Independence Africa needs to revisit and re-examine what type of literacy must support her policies as regards indigenous languages in education. It is therefore clear that "the use, misuse or even the non-use of a culture to which language belongs, can have a very fundamental impact on the minds of those who would have otherwise excelled, had they been taught and made to articulate their thoughts in a language they understand, a language that they

12 P. Gomez: African Languages for Education & Development

are comfortable to spontaneously and creatively express their ideas and experiences in” (Senkoro: 2005, P.15)

The relationship between literacy and economic development has already been confirmed and established, and UNESCO concludes in a study that illiteracy has a close correlation with poverty and underdevelopment. This suggests that in order to achieve meaningful development, literacy rates in Africa, especially south of the Sahara, must be raised. Needless to say, policies as regards indigenous languages in education will have a positive impact on the success of African development.

The spread of languages such as English, French and Portuguese was concomitant with the advent of colonialism. Consequently, the educational role of these various languages has been, arguably, more destructive than constructive: “With the benefit of hindsight, one can only conclude that the colonial administration machine, knowing the important role of language in shaping one’s identity, initiated language policies that were meant to subdue their subjects, making them more susceptible to western languages and cultures. Many began to disdain their languages and other cultural practices, trying instead very hard to learn the western way” (Mohochis: 2005, P.5). Furthermore, whether through practice or by attitudes, the colonial languages have come to enjoy unparalleled pride and prestige in formal education in Africa. Ironically, it is African indigenous languages that have been and continue to be neglected in the formal education in Africa.

As long as the denigration and devaluation of the African indigenous languages continue, no meaningful development can take place in the continent. It is time Africans domesticated African educational institutions by creating a strong relationship between indigenous languages and education for the purpose of socio-economic development. This, combined with the use of ICTs as tools, can be fruitful in the drive to achieve new goals as set out in the 21st Century agenda.

Indigenizing education needs a total social re-engineering and this is not only vital, but also immensely necessary if Africans want to promote and effect socio-structural change and to meet educational needs for socio-economic development.

To achieve this, indigenous African languages should be given a more central role in education in Africa so as to contribute to the much needed social, economic and political transformations. The enormity and difficulty of this task is self-evident because of Africa's socio-linguistic complexity.

Language is constantly evolving and the language policy in Africa today must take into consideration its utility, and its integration into regional and continental supranational institutions. Language, as an instrument of development, should serve the African and not the other way round. It should not be an instrument that is used to construct ethnicity and nationality which are fluid in most contemporary African societies.

As an instrument of development, language should be effectively used as a tool to bridge the inequality gap that exists among the different strata of African societies. Within the context of social and economic development, it should be used to harness the hopes and aspirations of the African people. It could, at all cost, be used to portray the wishes and aspirations of the African people within the framework of economic and social development; very far from the notion that it will create ethnic strife.

Afro-centric scholars of contemporary times could use language to counter the prejudices and bias in the colonial literature concerning the black man (Okolo: 2005). It should be used to redefine the black man as opposed to the Eurocentric definitions and interpretations of him. A close re-examination of indigenous African languages shall bring to light realities concerning African culture, values, knowledge, beliefs and standards. This, to a large extent, shall unlock the mystery that has for a long time surrounded the African cosmological system.

In fact, local languages could be effective tools that could be used to identify and strengthen the bonds that exist between and among the diverse ethnic groups in African societies. In some extreme situations, they could be used not only to intimately connect peoples and societies, but also to identify their different cultural identities and locations.

The different linguistic groupings and languages could be harmonized with the different speakers adopting one as the lingua franca. Kiswahili is a typical example: it is spoken by almost 95% of

14 P. Gomez: African Languages for Education & Development

the population (Batibo 1995: P.68) in Tanzania and other East African countries with more than 120 local languages according to Roy-Campbell and Qorro: 1997 (quoted by Senkoro: 2005, P.7). Wolof could be the Kiswahili of the Senegambia region if the will is there. With that, one could clearly see the unifying nature of the language within a complex sociolinguistic setting.

Furthermore, post-Independence African countries continue to grapple with problems associated with language. This is because rather than serving as a unifying and developmental tool, it is used in many instances to divide the masses. Thus, a complete rethinking on the use of language for social reorientation and development is essential in both political and intellectual discourses within and among the African academic circles. This shall help unlock the mystery that surrounds the different African linguistic units within the broader context of development. Debates over the roles of African languages in social, political and economic transformations in African societies need to be at the forefront of debates concerning language as a tool for development and progress in post-Independence Africa.

It is urgent to address the challenges that the colonially imposed languages represent for students and scholars in Africa as they strive to understand their linguistic identities within a global framework. The exercise should not be restricted but broadened in order to create a healthy intellectual reflection on the issue.

References:

- Conrad, J., 1950, 'Heart of Darkness' (1899), in *Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness and the Secret Sharer*, New York: Penguin Publishers.
- Hegel, G.W.E., 1991, *The Philosophy of History*, Trans. J. Sibree, Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books.
- Hume, D., 1964, 'Of National character', in Thomas Hill Green and Thomas H. Grose, eds., *The Philosophical works*, Darmstadt 3, no 1.

- Kant, E., 1960, *Observation on the feelings of the beautiful sublime*, Trans. J.I. Goldthwait: Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Kenya”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, vol. 16 no. 1, pp. 85-94.
- Kwofie, E.N., 1972, ‘*The Language question and Language consciousness in West Africa*’, *African Studies Association of the West Indies*, Bulletin no. 5. December.
- Lugard, (1922), *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons.
- Lugard, F.D., (1968), *The Rise of our East African Empires*, vol. 1, London: Frank Cass.
- Mafeje, Archie. (1994). ‘African intellectuals: an inquiry into their genesis and social options’ in Mamdani, Mahmood and Mamadou Diouf eds. *Academic freedom in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA
- Mazrui, A.A and Mazrui, A. (1995), *Swahili, State and Society: The Political Economy of and African Language*, Nairobi & London: East African Educational Publishers
- Mbaabu, I. (1996), *Language Policy in East Africa*, Nairobi: Educational Research and Publications.
- Mohochi, E.S. (2005), “*Language and Regional Integration: Foreign or African Languages for the African Union?*” In F.A. Yieke (ed.), *East Africa: In Search of National and Regional Renewal*, Codesria, Dakar, pp. 41-54.
- Mohochi, S., *Turning to Indigenous Languages for Increased Citizen Participation in the African Development Process*, <http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/mohochi.pdf>
- Ngugi wa Thiong’O, (1986), *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African*
- Okolo, M., (2005), *Reassessing the Impact of Colonial Languages on the African Identity for African Development*, CODESRIA’s 11th General Assembly, December 6 – 10, 2005
- Onoma, A.K. (2005), *The Language Question: an Anti-essentialist Excavation*, CODESRIA General Assembly, Maputo, Mozambique, 6-10 December, 2005

16 **P. Gomez: African Languages for Education& Development**

Senkoro, F.E.M (2005), *Language of Instruction: The Forgotten Factor in Education Quality and Standards in Africa*, CODESRIA General Assembly, Maputo, Mozambique, 6-10 December, 2005

UNESCO (2010), *Why and how Africa should invest in African languages and multilingual education - An evidence- and practice-based policy advocacy brief*, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

UNESCO, (1968), "*The Use of Vernacular Languages in education: The Report of the UNESCO Meeting of Specialists*", in. J.A. Fishman (ed.), pp. 688-716.