

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**MULTILINGUAL POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE
STUDY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**A Research Proposal submitted in partial fulfillment for The Degree of Masters of Arts in
International Studies**

NOVEMBER 2018

DECLARATION

I, Edith Kigen, hereby declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

Signed..... Date.....

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor;

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DEDICATION

To the fabulous four; Isaac, Kyle, Keagan and Chebet. You are special to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to all who have walked with me throughout this academic journey. As much as they are too many to mention, I would like to sincerely single out my project supervisor Dr. Winnie Wairimu for her guidance, advice and patience as I worked on this project.

Special thanks goes to my family too for understanding and bearing with my absence as I undertook this study.

To my classmates at IDIS that I consulted from time to time, I appreciated the support you gave me. I would also like to acknowledge the respondents at United Nations Environmental Program for their cooperation and willingness to share with me the information.

May God bless you all.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Administration Committee on Coordination
AU	African Union
CoM	Coordinator of Multilingualism
DGAACM	Department of General Assembly and Conference Management
DPI	Department of Public Information
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
GA	General Assembly
IAMLADP Publication	International Annual Meeting on Language Documentation and Publication
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LAs	Language Assistants
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ONUSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
PKOs	Peace Keeping Operations
SC	Security Council
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nation Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO	United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World International Property Organization
WWII	World War Two

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ABSTRACT

The role of language in a worldwide organization that brings virtually all sovereign states of the world together is immeasurable. The United Nations occupies this enviable position and ultimately communication in such organization is paramount for the collective action. This study sought to look into multilingualism in the international organizations, a case study of the United Nations. In light of this the study approached the general objective through three specific ones. The study employed two theories, affordance theory and individual rational theory. The affordance theory postulates that the environment to a large extent dictates the amount of affordance favouring specific language(s) in an organization. This could be attributed to the factors that led to the UN ending up with the six official languages out of the many in the world. On the other hand the individual rational theory states that human beings are rational in nature and will choose what satisfies their needs. The study used a mixed method approach which allows the use of both the primary and secondary data for the research. The data was collected from UNEP through questionnaires which were filled by the respondents.

While tracing the history and development of multilingualism, the study established that the UN has only six official languages in its language policy namely Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The number is quite low considering the fact that there are almost 7,000 different languages in the world. However, a number of historical factors expounded clearly the considerations taken before the choice of these languages were arrived at by the UN general Assembly through various resolutions. English and French were chosen as the organization working languages since as early as the days of the League of Nations the two languages were already a pair used widely as the languages of diplomacy as well as in other various spheres of life such as trade, science and were widely taught in school all over the world.

The study established that there is a discrepancy between the UN language policy and its actual application. The multilingual policy is clearly spelt out in the various resolutions however the research reveals that the implementation of the policy is yet to come to fruition. In the case of UNEP the language of documents received from the UN headquarters is largely in English and a smaller percentage in French. Furthermore, meetings within the organization are conducted in English. However the employees confirmed that it least affects their working because majority of them are proficient in the language. Language parity is yet to be achieved since English receives more prominence closely followed by French the rest receiving the least attention. It came out clearly that the language policy should be adhered to. The UN should also make considerations for provisions for additional languages into its language policy to make it more representative. Languages such as German, Portuguese and Swahili topped the list of suggested languages. The study therefore anticipates the full implementation of the multilingual policy in the UN organization.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

1.1.1 Introduction

That language is important to human beings is not in doubt. To most language scholars, language sets us apart as a species and allows us to carry out functions that are considered uniquely human.¹ For instance, in as much as all species have a certain way of communicating, no single species can use language to carry out art, religion and science among other things. Although most species have a way of coding and encoding their communication in a form that they can mutually understand each other, it is the complexity and variety of human language that sets it apart from the rest.²

It is through language that we carry out our activities ranging from mundane day-to-day activities; we use language to buy groceries and foods, purchase tickets to and from work,

¹See Balter M., Human language may have evolved to help our ancestors make tools <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/01/human-language-may-have-evolved-help-our-ancestors-make-tools>

² See Oller D.K. and Griebel U., Evolution of communicative flexibility: complexity, creativity, and adaptability in human and animal communication, MIT Press 2008

express our emotions among other things, to complex international relations and diplomatic activities.

Language is in itself quite an oxymoron; it unites and divides in equal measures. Most nation-states are formed based on a shared linguistic background. United Kingdom, Germany, China, Japan and other nation-states are formed based on a common language. On the other hand, in the European Union and developing countries attempts to form joint institutions are relentlessly made difficult by linguistic diversity and demands for recognitions by plentiful of languages in the world³.

Language serves different functions in the world. It is an instrumental, symbolic as well as sentimental tool. As an instrumental tool, language-especially those that are deemed to be higher up in the (perceived) hierarchy, it allows the user(s) to access power, opportunities and material resources while at the same time excluding those who cannot speak that particular language (well). This is because it carries with it immense political, social and economic power which can be exploited to the advantage of the user(s). Language being symbolic is used as something of an identity badge. Because of ability to speak a certain language or at least relate to it that, individuals claim to belong to a certain group.⁴ Thus, speakers and non-speakers of the languages are classified into in-groups and out-groups. Members of an in-group will more likely view others differently.

It is because of the power language has that most jurisdictions around the world have considered language policy⁵ to be of great concern. Language policy is an issue that is of ethical, political and legal consideration in many jurisdictions⁶.

Ideally, language is and should be an individual choice. No two speakers use the exact words or phrases even if the language they speak is shared. It is this unique characteristic that has allowed

³Patten Allen, Political Power and Language Policy
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0090591701029005005>

⁴Lauring J., Rethinking Social Identity Theory in International Encounters: Language Use as a Negotiated Object for Identity Making. Sage Publications.

⁵ Language Policy is what a government does either officially through legislation, court decisions or policy to determine how languages are used, cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages

⁶Patten Allen, Political Power and Language Policy
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0090591701029005005>

us to have the tower of babel with thousands of languages, both in use and extinct, evolving. However, since it is a resource that should be used communally, those in power have found it fit to ‘restrict its use’ and ‘standardize it’ to maximize its efficacy. Language policies evolve a fact that does not auger well with some scholars. S Makoni “protests fixed categorization of language and the fact that most language policies are organized according to discrete and defined boundaries.” This implies that the individual choice to express themselves in a manner that they find appropriate and comfortable to them is severely restricted by rigid rules about what is not only right to say but also the right way to say it. This is the very essence behind the standardization of language where the personal discretion of and individual to ‘freely’ express themselves is tempered down to fit into a defined set of ‘correct way’ of speaking a language.

When the choice crosses over from not only the standard way of using a particular language to the choice of language that an individual or groups of individuals can use, we start to constrain the ability of the ‘victims’ to fully and ideally express themselves. Viewing language in discrete ways is thus an invention of political entities such as nation-states that exerts unnecessary burdens and constraints to a user of a language. It goes against the grain that language is not an entity that life exists of its own, separate and above human beings but has its true existence only inside the individuals.

According to the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the world has close to six thousand languages currently.⁷It is against this backdrop that the researcher wants to look at the United Nations (UN) and its language policy.

1.2 Problem Statement

Language is a very important component of human relationships. In international relations, language determines whether nations come and stay together, whether wars will be waged among other things. Language carries with it enormous economic, social and political capital. The choice of what language to use or not to use is therefore something of importance not only to scholars but also to diplomats. Despite this colossal importance of language, little attention has been given to language as compared to the other facets of international relations such as international political economy and military power. The UN being a global body with

⁷ UNESCO

representations of almost all independent countries in the world with offices in different parts of the world has only six official and working languages. This is a very small fraction of the world languages especially in a world that is truly now a village. To what extent is the language policy assisting the UN in carrying out its mandate? How does this policy work in practice? Does this policy hinder the performance of non-native speakers in the performance of their tasks? It is vital that a study be done in order assess the impact language policy impacts the operations of the UN.

1.3 Research Objective

1.3.1 Main objective

The main objective was to assess the impact of United Nations language policy in relation to its operations in the world

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- a) To assess the history and development of multilingualism in the UN system.
- b) To assess the UN policy on multilingualism and how this policy works in practice.
- c) Assess how the policy influences the UN working in states around the world.

1.4 Research Questions

- a) What is the history and development of multilingualism in the UN system?
- b) How the UN policy on multilingualism works in practice?
- c) How the policy influences the UN working in states around the world?

1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study

The study will be useful in the below discussed three fronts.

1.5.1 Policy

The research will help the policy makers to review their policies about language and communication. The study will specifically look into the significance of multilingualism in and further the inclusion of more languages apart from the six official languages in the United Nations and how it will enhance the organization service delivery.

1.5.2 Academic

Research has been and will always be an enriching element to the academic field. Therefore, this research will greatly contribute to the enrichment of literature in the field of multilingualism especially in international organizations. It will also serve to enhance the understanding of the subject under study. The limitations to the study may also provide areas for future academic research.

1.5.3 General Public

The United Nations is an organization whose decisions and actions affect almost all the sovereign states in the world. The study will therefore establish the role of multilingualism in the United Nations and the extent to which how language can aid as well as enhance communication within and without the organization. The findings will be of great benefit to the UN, its stakeholders and the public who are party to the organization, which is viewed as close to a world government.

1.6 Literature Review

1.6.1 Multilingualism

Multilingualism has received much attention in the linguistic field in the last few decades. As a concept, it can expansively be utilized to describe the numerous forms of social, institutional and individual ways in which a person, groups of persons use more than one language. A multifaceted discipline incorporates neurolinguistics, psycholinguistic, linguistics, education, and social linguistic and language policy.⁸ The above listed components of multilingualism focus on language as from its acquisition to processing and most importantly especially to this study, the use of different language in social context.

Multilingualism is not a new concept. It has been in existence since time immemorial. Biblically, the tower of Babel is the one of the most famous illustrations of multilingualism. In this instance, a group of people who previously shared a common language could not communicate due to a

⁸ Canez J. Introduction to Multilingualism

sudden proliferation of other tongues.⁹ Whereas this was a hindrance to communication, it was progressively overcome. Multilingual scholars, for instance, were in charge of the translation of Arabic and Greek writings into Latin and the transmission of learning program during the middle ages.¹⁰

At the societal level, the most famous instance of multilingualism is the case of England immediately after Norman Conquest in 1066. During this period, English was the language used by the largest percentage of the population. On the other hand, French was the language of the ruling class while Latin on the other hand, was the language of record keeping and used for religious activities. This created social stratification based on the ability or inability to speak a certain language.

Presently, because of globalization, across border movements of people and the explosion of the new technologies that have extensive impact on the various diversified political, social and educational contexts, multilingualism is inevitable. The worldwide spread to multilingualism is expected as there exist close to 7,000 languages in the world in about 200 independent states. Therefore, it is inevitable that the number of the languages significantly exceed the number of countries, in addition to the many languages, the distribution of the users of these different languages are unequally distributed translating to the fact that speakers of smaller languages as a prerequisite ought to use or speak other languages on normal occasions in order to carry out their daily business smoothly. Due to the inevitable globalization, multilingualism is now a priceless asset to not only a state but also to an individual. Contemporary multilingualism embraces the geographical, social and the medium aspect. Multilingualism is not restricted to geographically located languages or a particular area or trade routes; instead, it is now a global phenomenon that has proliferated into the various regions of the world.

From the social perspective, multilingualism is currently as an equalizer since it is no longer affiliated to specific social strata, profession or ritual. The medium employed has also evolved over time. Earlier, multilingual communication almost only limited to writing, however a

⁹ See the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11:1-9 New International Version.

¹⁰ Raining L & Singleton D, Multilingualism as a new Linguistic Dispensation, 2008

revolution occurred in the 21st century because of the widespread of internet, which led to the use of multimodal and instantaneous communication.

1.6.3 Multilingualism in International Governmental Organizations

Significance of multilingualism in international organizations can be looked at from historic prism and can be traced to the late 19th Century. The inception of a global body that gives the members a platform to discuss issues resulting from their relating with one another was created in year the same with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1889, and is still operational to date. It draws its membership from 157 national parliaments around the world. The IPU was the forerunner to the League of Nations, founded in 1919 just when the First World War came to an end; the latter was abandoned giving rise to the formation of the United Nations after the League of Nations unsuccessful attempts to avert further conflicts.¹¹ The legacy of IPU, the League of Nations and other early international alliances does not emanate from the efficacy of these institutions as actors, instead as a platform for nations to air their opinions and engage in discussions among themselves. This was arguably their greatest achievement, as even after the failure of the League, States were still for the opinion that they pursues the creation an alternative institution that would present them with a platform to exchange ideas and provide another chance to resolve dispute by the use of pacific means. Thus, the creation of the United Nations in 1945, which to date is the sole institution that has the highest number of states subscribing to its membership. To promote dialogue in a context with thousands of languages is a challenge therefore the need to have a common language or sets of languages.

It is definitely through language that communication as well as social interaction is made possible. People worldwide interact through language whether written or spoken. Language is one of the major components of a society that is most crucial in carrying out other activities. Language in its basic form is a tool that humans have utilized effectively and at times not so effectively to communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings to others. International organizations play integral roles in the world.¹² They help in bringing to light the issues that

¹¹ Thompson A. and Snidal D., International organization: institutions and order in world politics
https://politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/athompson/pdf/Thompson&Snidal_ParisiChap17.pdf

¹² Orbe M.P and Harris T.M interracial communication: Theory into practice. Belmont, CA: Wordsworth(2001)

affect countries worldwide, they referee discussions of political nature by providing an arena for political conversations and act as advocates of coalition groups. In a bid to carry out their mandate, international organizations have to choose a language or languages convenient for them and their target partner(s) in order to enable them carry out their day to day activities in their areas of operation effectively. Therefore, multilingualism is an ingredient to be incorporated by these organizations in order for them to cover a wider audience depending on their objective.

Multilingualism is an integral part of multilateralism. It is possible for one to find themselves in a challenging situation such as the most rudimentary and ordinary activities in a foreign country because they do not speak their language or has a different perspective because they do not have a particular multilingual resources and skills necessary in that particular locality. It is without doubt that a change in environment definitely affects the human's capacity to deploy linguistic resources and skills hence imposing a requirement which might not be met and that is the inevitable globalization which has been accepted as a sociolinguistic problem. Space or the environment dictates the language to be put in use. Globalization has compelled the need to seek a better integration of sociolinguistic, discourse analysis and social theory. It is because of globalization that states interact with one another in one way or another. International organizations and globalization are two sides of the same coin; they are intertwined and one cannot functions with the other.

In the international arena, states are brought under one roof in most cases by international organizations; either governmental or non-governmental organizations and not to forget the supra nationals. Political interest, economic as well as social changes are all made possible with the aid of communication between the parties or actors involved. The globalized economy is dictated by the revolutions in language and identity over time in diverse ways namely, the escalating strained relationship that are state based or in corporate language identities and practice between or among local, national and supra-national identities and language practices, and amongst mixture and uniformity.¹³

¹³ Heller M. Globalization, the new economy, and the commodification of language and identity.

Growing volume of new, high quality multilingual content that is to be delivered by governments, multilateral organizations and the multinational corporations. Secondly is the inadequate supply of experienced professionals in the field of language not to forget the cost implications.¹⁴ This rapidly increasing gap existing between the demand and the supply of multilingual content delivery capacity will definitely have a huge impact on the abilities of multilingual organizations to achieve their own business objectives.

In fact, many industries in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, financial services, legal services, automotive and many other sectors are increasingly merging to create global corporations. Due to the global expansion, these organizations will end up serving a multilingual constituency ranging from the employees, investors, partners as well as customers of their products or services. These expansions have been made possible due to the removal as well as reduction of the many trade barriers that existed in the previous year's catapulting the number of small and medium sized business that serve the global markets. This has happened in both the public sector and in the private sector. In the public sector for instance, many governments and multilateral organizations are rapidly expanding their mandate to serve stakeholders in their native languages. The European Union expanded from 15 to 25 countries in 2004 and not to forget the many United Nations agencies that keep on expanding the scope of their mandates in relation to multilingual delivery of content.¹⁵

1.6.3.1 European Union

European Union was formed because of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 that was consented by Six states- France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxemburg. The union was a brainchild of two Frenchmen who had a plan to avert wars that would possibly break out in future through formation of an economic association which would bring states together politically.¹⁶

Crafters of Treaty of Rome acknowledged the importance of language. They noted that language is just more than a communication tool for it carries with it cultural identity of the people. Thus,

¹⁴McCallum B Streaming Multilingual Content Delivery for Large Organizations. (2003)

¹⁵ McCallum B Streaming Multilingual Content Delivery for Large Organizations. 2003

¹⁶Goldstein J.S. and Pevehouse J. C, International Relations, Pearson Longman, 2006 pg. 380

they adopted a multilingual policy that requires all the official languages of the EU member states be official languages and working languages of the EU. Thus with 28 members, EU has more official languages than the United Nations with 193 members. IN practice, almost every new member with the exception of Cyprus has added a new language to the union.¹⁷

In reality however, the 27 languages cannot be said to be representation of the EU's language diversity. For instance, Catalan (spoken in Spain, France and Italy) has more speakers than lesser languages like Finish and Swedish yet it is not represented .The problem is further compounded when you consider the fact that not all languages enjoy the same rights despite the fact that they are considered official languages. In fact, English, French and Germany are more pronounced than some other lesser languages. The big three are considered vehicular languages and all original European legislations are drafted in these languages first before being translated into the rest. The monster of translation from vehicular languages to the 'lesser' languages is compounded by the fact that the languages have different structures and word lengths, yet the legal texts must always correspond to that of vehicular languages.

For all purposes, the European language has a language policy that promotes equality of all official and working languages without providing equality. The lesser languages are in all practical reality used only in as far as judicial processes are concerned. In order to cure the language hierarchy, through the Barcelona Objective, EU has tried to encourage members to learn two other languages other than mother tongue.¹⁸

1.6.3.2 African Union

The African Union (AU) was formed in 2002 to take the place Organization of African Unity (OAU).OAU had been on the forefront of agitating for the liberation of African countries from colonial rule. Having achieved its target, with the last of the countries-South Africa gaining independence in 1994, OAU had to transform itself in order to deal with the challenges of the 21st Century. The AU is mandated among other things 'to achieve greater unity and solidarity

¹⁷ Language Policy for the European Parliament

¹⁸https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism_en

between African countries together with its citizens and to promote human and people's rights as it complies with the African Charter on human and other relevant human rights instruments.'¹⁹

Like all other organizations with multiple languages, in order to achieve its objectives, it had to look for a common language that would spearhead this unity. In article 25 of the constitutive act, 'the working languages of the AU and all its institutions, if possible, should be preferably an African language, English, Arabic, French, and Portuguese.'²⁰ The choice would look like it is complementing the key objectives as enumerated in article 3 named striving for unity whilst embracing human rights that include *inter alia* the right to use language of choice as espoused by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948). In fact, one would argue that the act goes further to embrace multilingualism better than EU had managed. Whilst EU had a limited number of its many languages as official and working languages, AU went ahead and adopted all 'African languages' a grand if not exceptional gesture.

However, in reality, only French, English, Arabic and a bit of Portuguese are given prominence. The choice of 'African languages' is so vague that it is of no good considering the thousands of African languages that exist. Which of the over a thousand languages will be used as working languages? Besides, two classic cases, EU and South African cases have shown that many means few. The sheer number of languages in EU has practically made it impossible to communicate thus making English and a few languages of cross appeal such as French and German as the de facto languages of communication. In the South African case, a bid to expand official language choices from two-English and Afrikaans by adding nine more languages resulted in English being the 'only' language.²¹ A sense of belonging comes along at times with a common language; a common language could also influence how an individual, a society or a state makes decisions and even largely what option to take. For instance, during the African Union election of the regional bloc's chairperson, there were two divides; though not so obvious but evident there was a rift between the French speaking countries and the English speaking countries; the elections were drawn to a battle between the Anglophone and the Francophone. Evidently, the representatives of the member states decision on who to vote for was influence by language.

¹⁹Article 3 of the Constitutive AU Act

²⁰Article 25 of the Constitutive AU Act

²¹See Myers-Scotton, 1990, Phillipson 203 and Tonkin 2007

1.6.2 United Nations

The United Nations (UN) was formed in 1945 by a group of 51 states to replace the League of Nations, which had failed to effectively counter aggression in the 1930s. Currently, there are 193 members' states in the UN. It is the only organization that has almost attained the status a world government though it is yet to get to the summit. This is because the member states have not yet surrendered to it. They are very protective of their sovereignty and accepts no external interference even from the UN except within the consent of the states government.²² Thus, the UN is mandated to reinforce law and order whilst at the same time acknowledging the anarchic²³ nature of the world.

The UN Charter recognizes the fact that in the eyes of international law all states equal and free to, and carry out their internal business independently without any external interference. This is because they possess full sovereignty over their own affairs, have full independence coupled with territorial integrity. Members states of the UN are equally obliged to behave at all times in accordance with the Charter.

The UN structure centres on the UN General Assembly, where delegates from member states congregate in order to deliberate and pass resolutions. The general Assembly oversees both the numerous UN initiated development programs as well as its autonomous agencies. The UN Security Council is another important arm of the UN. It has five permanent members: United States of America (USA), Russia, France and United Kingdom, and ten rotating members. The Security Council is accountable for ensuring that there peace and in case of any breakout of conflict it has to intervene including dispatching peacekeeping forces. The UN secretariat, led by the Secretary General is responsible for running the day-to-day affairs of the UN. The World Court (International Court of Justice) is the judicial arm of the UN.

²²Goldstein J.S. and Pevehouse J. C, International Relations, Pearson Longman, 2006 pg 256

²³In an anarchic state, there is no hierarchically superior, coercive power that can resolve disputes, enforce law, or order the system of international politics

As a worldwide organization bringing together virtually all sovereign states, the United Nations is, at its core, an organization that values (or ought to value) communication for the purpose of collective action.²⁴ The choice(s) of language(s) is a key aspect. To conduct its operations, the UN has adopted six languages namely French, English, Chinese, Spanish and Russian, as the official and working languages.²⁵

The UN also has its various regional centres and offices spread throughout the world. This therefore brings to the fore two critical issues as far as language is concerned. One, being a representative of the ‘world government’ it has within itself tens of thousands of languages that are spoken by its member states. Secondly, having its offices located in different parts of the globe means it is staffed by people who and use thousands of other languages. When we thus compare the number of the official and working languages of the UN against the tens of thousands of languages that are currently being spoken in the world, we can get the picture of how small a fraction this is.

1.6.3 The Structure of the United Nations

The UN system has various organs each with a specific role to play. It is made up of the General assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, the *World Court* (the International Court of Justice) and the Trustee Council. The general assembly is one of the major organs of the UN, its principle function is to give all member states an equal platform through representation during the organization’s deliberations and policy making. It presents a forum in which the representatives from all the member states sit together listen to speeches and pass resolution on matters of international concern that is within its mandate. The General Assembly further oversees numerous development programs and other autonomous agencies through Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Security Council whose major mandate is to maintain international peace and security in another major organ of the UN. It is also mandated to admitting new members to the organization and approves any changes to the UN charter. In its endeavor to maintain peace and security, the Security Council constitutes peacekeeping operations, establish international sanctions and approves military interventions by means of council’s resolutions. It has the privilege of being the only UN body that has the authority to

²⁴ Tonkin H, Language and the United Nations: A Preliminary Review in <http://esperanto-un.org/images/languages-un-tonkin-draft-dec2011.pdf>

²⁵ *ibid*

issue binding resolution to member states. The Secretariat is the UN executive arm led by the secretary general, its key responsibility is to set the agenda for the UN deliberative and decision making bodies including the General Assembly, Security Council, ECOSOC and the Trustee Council. It also oversees the implementation of the resolutions made by the above mentioned organs of the UN. It is the administrative organ that oversees and monitors the execution of the daily tasks of the organization.

1.6.4 United Nations programs under its Economic and Social Council

The broadest organ of the UN is the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) through which the General Assembly oversees its numerous programs advancing economic development and social stability in poor states of the global south. These programs undertaken are funded to a certain extent by the General Assembly allocations and also using the contributions collected from member states, businesses or private volunteers. Among the programs is the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) whose headquarters is in Nairobi Kenya. The UN Environment Program checks environmental conditions together with the World Meteorological Organization to gauge the deviations in the global climate year after year. UNEP is guided by the propositions advocated for at the Earth Summit – the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Brazil in 1992. The second one is the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is the UN agency whose mandate is to provide technical assistance and provide funds to help poor countries particular on programs that are of benefit to the children. It sources its funds from volunteers but also has a funds drive organized by the United States annually. Thirdly is the office of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) which channels its efforts to protect, support and relocate back home refugees who run away from their home countries across international borders to escape from war and violence. In addition is the UN Development Program (UNDP), the agency in is charge of coordinating programs aimed at improving the developments in poor countries. Lastly is the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which works towards achieving favourable trade relationship and dealings for all. ²⁶Most poor countries rely on exports to fund their economic development hence they were prone to instability of prices commodities and other trade related issues. As a result the agency’s responsibility is to strive to

²⁶ J Goldstein & J Bevehouse *International Relations*

strike better agreements on trade in regard to prices, tariffs and to ultimately create conducive environment for trade among states

1.7 Research Gap

Whereas studies have been done elsewhere to determine the role language policy plays in international organizations, little seems to have been done in as far as the role multilingual language policy plays in the United Nations. Granted, the United Nations has six official and working languages and can thus be said to have embraced a multilingual language policy, but the scope of the choice and selection is so narrow and limited considering the number of languages under the United Nations jurisdiction. Therefore, it was imperative that a study be done to establish what role a truly multilingual language policy had on the operations of the United Nations.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

In this study, the researcher employed two theories the affordance theory and the individual rational choice theories. The two theories explained how language choices are arrived at from social and individual perspectives. The theories are discussed below in detail.

1.8.1 Affordance Theory

The theory poses that affordance of the environment is what is offered to the animals that provides or furnishes what is good or evil. This ecological approach brings multilingualism scholars close to the society, and the language and language teaching and learning. Affordance theory brings about the various dispositions and features of differing behaviors of the multitude of the different animals, human beings included in respect to their different kinds of experiences and encounters. It further incorporates the concept of linguistics and metalinguistic awareness which has a connection with information with self and the society as a whole. This concept further looks at the language apprentice towards language or languages they are concerned with and focus towards the apprentice themselves as a language learner and language user. Therefore when the two are merged and placed in an immediate context affordance manifest itself according to the needs of the end user.

Multilingualism scholars Aronin and Singleton argue that the domain of affordance which is the environment provides a significant amount of affordances favouring specific language or languages in a multilingual society or organization.²⁷ Affordance approaches multilingualism from two perspectives: language affordance social language affordance and individual language affordance. It advances that language affordance can be achieved through communication which uses language as a vehicle used for delivery. For social language affordance, the theory poses that situations differ depending on the specific community at a specific time which translates to the licensing the use and acquisition of a language or languages. In this study affordance theory will enable it to shade light on the decision of the UN as an organization to arrive at the six official languages. This is so since affordance can be achieved through a realization of who can relate with who using what language or languages.

In this study, the theory will look at the extent to which the United Nations has abrogated to itself the responsibility of determining which language(s) are to be used as the official and working languages. This raises stature the said languages elevating them (and the native speakers) in the hierarchical structure whilst making the other languages and their native speakers subservient.

1.8.2 Individual Rational Choice Theory

Individual rational choice theory is a theory that was borrowed from economics. The theory posits that individuals are rational beings who will always choose what satisfies their needs. The aggregate of these choices is what the market prefers and offers for sale. When applied to language, faced with an option to choose between competing languages, individuals will choose a language that they believe will give them a better chance in advancing their interests. The theory assumes that the individuals are rational beings and are better placed to know what works or does not work for them.

Critics of the theory aver that in most cases the individuals have no say in the choices that they make. The society has already decided which languages should or should not be used. Thus, what the individuals are doing is only to choose from a limited set of predetermined choices.

²⁷ David S and Larissa A. multiple language learning in the light of the Theory of Affordance. Vol 1, 2007

1.9.0 Research Methodology

1.9.1 Research Design

A research design is a collection and arrangements of circumstances under which analysis of data aims at combining significance to the research purpose that is precise and to the point in procedure. In this study, the research design used a mixed method that utilizes both the quantitative and qualitative aspects.²⁸

1.9.3 Target Population

The target population consisted of people who reasonably contributed towards the generalized findings of the research. Target population refers to the selected individuals whose views on the subject under research informs the conclusion drawn by the researcher.²⁹ The target population for this study were the employees of the United Nations, language experts and professionals.

1.9.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

Sampling is a process of picking out a considerable number of individual/things/objects for a study ensuring that those chosen effectively represent target group from which they were drawn from.³⁰ A sample can basically be defined as subcategory that is part of the target population which can be considered to possess the relevant characteristics of the phenomena that is being studied. The sample size should be of a reasonable size to permit for extrapolation but should also be small enough to be manageable.

The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling gives room to select individuals or objects of the study that have the desirable features of the target population. For probability sampling, the besought groups of respondents will be divided into groups. From each stratum, the researcher used a systematic random sampling. Systematic random sampling is where every K^{th} case in the sample frame was picked for sampling.³¹ The sample frame, was the list of departments of United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

²⁸ Economic Development 11th Edition 2011

²⁹ Mugenda, O & Mugenda A research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods.

³⁰ Kothari, Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques, 2006

³¹ Mugenda and Mugenda, Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative approaches (Acts Press 1999)pg 46

which was used to pick the staff from departments as random as possible to make the sampled group representative.

In non-probability sampling, purposive was used. Non-probability sampling was chosen in this case partly because of the other category of target population that is language experts, was statistically insignificant and probability sampling may not have been appropriate to be used pick them out. Purposive sampling cases of subjects were selected because they were informative or they had the required and desired characteristics.³²

1.9.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

This study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Qualitative data was collected using self-administered questionnaires with structured, open and closed ended questions. The structured questions were accompanied by a list of all possible alternative from which the respondents were to pick the answer that best defined their condition. Open ended questions were preferred to probe the respondents to provide more light on the issues at hand. Qualitative data was collected using in-depth interviews.³³ An interview guide was used to get a detailed insight on the assessment of the role of multilingualism in the area of study.

1.9.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

After questionnaires were received from the respondents, they were checked for accuracy and completeness. This required the researcher to practically check each questionnaire to ascertain if all the questions were correctly filled. Any questionnaire that had incomplete responses was automatically discarded.³⁴ Coding of the responses was done to make it practical to analyze the responses of quantitative data. The codes were then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 12). Descriptive statistics was in form of means, standard deviations and percentages as the means of analyzing data from the questionnaires.

Findings from interviews were categorized according to related themes. The themes were arranged according to similarities with all related responses heaped in one clutch. From this clusters, analysis and conclusions were then arrived at. This type of analysis is often preferred

³²ibid

³³ Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. Acts Press 2003

³⁴ Adams, G et al Understanding Research Methods. Longman Inc. 1985

for such type of data that has open-ended responses that will be impossible to analyze unless they are grouped into related categories. The analysis sought to paint a narrative from a bird's eye view to shed more light to build generalities that were useful in drawing conclusions on the area under study. The technique of analysis is most suitable for analyze data gathered through in-depth interviews.

1.10 Thesis outline

Chapter 1 presents language and language policies from a broad perspective. Demographics and background facts about United Nations are also introduced in this chapter. The researcher also expounded on the main objective, general objective and specific objectives of the study that have been derived from the research problem. Rationale of the study that was mainly illuminated on the trinity of policy, academic and general public was also tackled too. An evaluation of work done by various scholars was done to show the connection between use of particular languages policies and effectiveness of international organizations was also done. From the evaluation, gaps were identified that the study intended to fill. The researcher employed two theories; social dominance theory and individual rational theory to guide this study. Lastly, the researcher outlined the target populace from which they purposes to collect information from. The sample and sampling methods together with techniques that were used in data collection as well as the instruments used for data collection, analysis and presentation were described at length.

Chapter 2 traced the historical development of multilingualism in the United Nations System while Chapter 3 looked at the UN policy on multilingualism and in particular how it works in practice. On the other hand, Chapter 4 assessed how the policy influences the way UN system works around the world while Chapter 5 concluded the study, made policy recommendation and suggested areas for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Introduction

This chapter traces the history and development of multilingualism in the United Nations System. It looks at the United Nations multilingual policy as it is in the UN system. It also looks at how the said policy is in a selected UN agencies.

2.2 History and development of Multilingualism in the UN system

The UN is an international organization that has the highest number of member countries. In being so, it therefore has to make efforts in various aspect in order to be an all-inclusive organization as possible. In this regard, language is one of the most important aspect that has to be given priority, language is the means of communication and dissemination of information within and outside the organization. The languages chosen for dissemination of information therefore should aim at reaching out to the highest percentage of the targeted persons as possible

to ensure that the organization is able to dispense its mandate with ease.³⁵ Multilingualism has been embraced by the UN, it has designated six working languages in order to make communication convenient in all its agencies.³⁶

The ultimate purpose of multilingualism is to facilitate both the full participation of all member states in the legislative process and to reach the greater public with the aim of enabling the building of a more expansive global support that creates avenues for partnerships.³⁷ Over time, the organization has been admitting and adopting different languages so as to allow it to maintain or improve the quality of its service delivery. The adoption of the diversity of the chosen languages is viewed as a source of enrichment and a source of an improvement in communication and general relationship among the members state. Multilingualism is an asset to the United Nation's various organs as they discharge their mandates.

The United Nations system has specific reports and resolutions that deal with language services and any other issues related to languages, and this constitutes the historical development of multilingualism in the organization. Article 111 of the United Nations Charter states that Chinese, French, Russian, English and Spanish are equally authentic, there is a clear distinction on the working and the official languages in the UN. The working language(s) in an organization refer to a language that is given a unique legal status treated as the primary means of communication. For instance English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat and the languages chosen for use in the organ's day to day activities. A working language is also known as the procedural language in other circumstances. The concept of official and working language in the UN is drawn from resolution 2(1) of the General Assembly.³⁸

Since the times of the League of Nations, there was for a common language of international interactions and engagements among states. In cognizance, the League of Nations adopted two languages French and English for communication in the day to day activities of the organization. All these was way before the inception of the United Nations Organization in 1945. The two

³⁶ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System

³⁷ Humphrey Tonkin *Language and United Nations* : A preliminary Review.2011 Pg 1

³⁸ UN Resolution adopted on the Reports of the first committee

languages were definitely because they were prominently used in the international diplomacy, trade, science and ultimately the education sector where they had greater prominence since English and French were widely incorporated into the education system.³⁹ They were therefore taught in majority of the education systems globally. It was therefore not surprising that the United Nations chose the same languages to conduct its business, considering the language regime of the League of Nations. These two languages remain the languages of the secretariat and the General Assembly to date.

With time the inevitable changes in language technology opened up new options. With French and English, the UN secretariat is basically a bilingual setting in its day to day activities. The organization at more than one point found it necessary to increase its language base for the purpose of its official setting for instance the General Assembly and the Security Council. Initially, English and French served as the organization working languages, while there were Five official languages, the two working languages an additional three namely; Chinese, Spanish and Russian which remained so for a very long time. Official language(s) refer the specific languages chosen and given a legal status in a country, state or other jurisdiction for instance international organizations such as the United Nations. It is the language used within a government or an organization in their judicial systems, legislature and administration.

The term United Nations was coined by Franklin Roosevelt to refer to the victors of the World War II; these were China, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, France, the United Kingdom and the United States who ratified the UN charter that created the Security Council. The same states ended up establishing themselves as the five permanent members of the council wielding veto powers to the council's resolutions. This justifies the conspicuous absence of German, though an incredibly dominant and an influential language in Europe together with Japanese which were excluded from the UN system languages.

Arabic is the latest language to be admitted to the UN system which happened in the year 1980, it was adopted in two capacities; as a working language and also an official language. Consequently it led to the elimination of the distinction between working languages and the official languages in the General Assembly.⁴⁰ The status quo of the language regime in the UN

³⁹Humphrey Tonkin *Language and United Nations* : A preliminary Review.2011 Pg 2

⁴⁰ Humphrey Tonkin *Language and United Nations* : A preliminary Review.2011 Pg 4

system has been maintained for nearly 40 years now, this has been so due to the fact that the Member States that constitute permanent members of the Security Council are the conquerors of the WWII.⁴¹ This makes an introduction of a new language to the UN system an uphill task since the change in the language regime in the organization is quite a political issue. It goes without doubt that no member state whose language was chosen as a working or official language would let the opportunity slip out of their hands that easily.

However there have been formal proposals seeking to have other languages added into the list of the chosen five. They include Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Portuguese, the attempts of getting these languages has hit a snag since the whole process is highly politicized. The choice of languages used in the United Nations system is quite interesting. To begin with, the original official languages that is English, Chinese, French and Russian are languages of the five permanent members of the Security Council namely the United States, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom. Among the five languages English and French seem to have had an upper hand over the others, this is partly because for English it was already a widely used language internationally. For French it was the language used as the international language of diplomacy. English was highly advantaged since it was widely used since the Great Britain had not only made a number of conquests and therefore controlled quite a number of colonies, protectorates and the Indian empire but also had maintained special political ties with the then four semi-independent Dominoes. In addition, the United States which had emerged to have had the greatest military and economic power. The Chinese language is also quite advantaged since it is not only a language of power but also the most widely spoken. Russia being the United Nations working language is quite an interesting decision, this is so because it is not widely spoken outside the Soviet Union. Therefore the politics of the World War II had a great impact in the choice of the United Nations working and official languages.⁴² This is evident with the fact that the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council had their languages picked for use within the UN organization, to crown it they are the winner countries in the WWII.

2.3 United Nations Resolutions on multilingualism

⁴¹ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System

⁴² Ibid

The language included into the UN system were to ease communication in the line of working of the organization. The languages used contributes significantly to the working environment of the organization makes possible the communication of information within the organization and ultimately issues of global importance. The UN working languages and official languages were adopted step by step one after the other, and at different historical periods. In 1946, through Resolution 2(1) of the General⁴³ Assembly, it was agreed upon that Chinese, French, English, Russian and Spanish be adopted as UN working languages. The Security Council adopted a provisional rule of procedure S/96 distinguishing the working languages from the official languages.

Two years later, in 1948 the General Assembly resolved to adopt Spanish fully as a working language through Resolution 274(111).⁴⁴ Spanish was chosen as one of the organization's working language by the virtue that it is a language of the largest number of member states. In the same year, there were a number of amendments to the rules of procedures. Resolution 262(111) spelt out clearly that both the General Assembly, its committees and sub-committees would use English, Spanish and French as the working languages. Rule 46 of the amendments rules and procedures stated that speeches be made in any of the working languages then translated into the other two working languages into the three working languages. However were it to happen that there was any representative who was not conversant with the UN system's official languages, there was a provision that she or he makes the speech in their preferred language. In such instance, the representative would provide an interpreter of his or her speech into one of the organization's working language. Afterwards it would now be made possible to make interpretations into the rest of the working languages by the interpreters of the secretariat. The provision also extends to any verbatim which is equally drawn up in working language followed by a translation of the whole part of it made into either of the other two languages and availed in case need arises in any of a delegate.

Concerning the evolution of multilingualism in the UN system, the choice of languages taken was carefully thought out decision. It was after 20 years that an additional language was admitted

⁴³ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System

⁴⁴ David Fernandez-Vitores Spanish in the United Nations System. Institute Cervantes at the faculty of Art and Science in Harvard University. 2014

into the UN working languages. In the year 1968, the General Assembly through Resolution 2479(XXII) stated the unanimous decision to take in Russian as one of the UN working language.⁴⁵ It further recommended that the Security Council to consider Russian together with Spanish as one the organs working language. The General Assembly's wishes to have the other arm of the UN Security Council to adopt the two languages came to a realization within the following year. The Security Council through resolution 263 of the year 1969 it adopted the two languages Russian and Spanish as the council's working languages. It was not only a recommendation from the General Assembly but also after taking into account the *note verbale* of the permanent mission of the United Soviet Socialist Republic in the UN and another one from the permanent Mission of Spain in the United Nations.

The General Assembly's resolution 2479(XXII) however highly influenced the council's decision since the resolution highlighted the significance of the use of multiple languages by the UN. The use of multiple languages would advantageous because it could be a vehicle through which the objectives of the charter of the UN could be attained. As a result the General Assembly found it conducive and favorable that the inclusion of the two languages be considered to be part of the organization working languages. It was in line to the amendments of the rules and provisions of the Security Council in regard to the annex to the then present resolution. It was during the United Nations 1463rd meeting in January 1969 that the president made a statement into the working languages and the revisions made are as a result of the decisions to add Russian and Spanish to the working languages of the council.

In 1973 the UN General assembly took in another new language into the status of the organization working language. Through resolution 3189(XXVIII) Chinese was finally adopted as the General Assembly working language along with the same principle recommended the Security Council into taking it too as its working language. In the resolution titled 'inclusion of Chinese among the working language of the General Assembly and the Security Council' 'Chinese was given the recognition as one of the five official languages of the United Nations.'⁴⁶ At this point the UN system has already upgraded four out of the five official languages into the working languages of the General Assembly and the Security Council respectively. The increase of the number of the languages was in the interest of effectiveness and efficiency of the

⁴⁵ General Assembly : Resolution <http://www.un.org>

⁴⁶ Rule 41 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council

organization hence was necessary that Chinese be granted the same status as the earlier chosen official languages.

Arabic is the latest language that gained its entry to the UN system, through the execution of resolution 3190(XXVIII). The General assembly and its main committees were mandated to embrace Arabic as their working language.⁴⁷ Arabic was a language that had been used by its speakers to present and disseminate the civilization of mankind and his culture it would therefore be an asset to the UN system. Arabic is a quite widely spoken language, it is spoken by at least nineteen members countries on the United Nations. The language has also had the privilege of being incorporated in most of the organization specialized agencies such as Educational, scientific and cultural organization , the food and agricultural organization and the International Labour Organization. The African union also has Arabic used as the organization official language. The need to attain the highest international cooperation and promotion of harmony in the endeavors of the countries and nations that envisaged the same mission in the charter of the United Nations. In 1980, it was a win for the Arab state members since Arabic was not only adopted by the General Assembly but also it was recommended to the Security Council and ECOSOC who both took it in as their working language⁴⁸.

2.4 Status Given to Languages

The United Nations charter recognizes the fact that it is an organization bases on principles of equality even in regard to the use of language. It aims at achieving equality in all spheres especially on matters that touches its main stakeholders: the member states. The status given to the organization six languages by the signatories cement the effort by the organization by the organization to strike an equilibrium between the geopolitical reality resulting from the Second World War II, its desire to alter the 19th century way of practicing diplomacy and their pragmatic imposed by the cost factors. A variation in the status given to languages in instances of multilingualism has been evident in many international organizations. The UN notwithstanding, the differences in the status of the six languages is clearly manifested in the use of certain terminologies while referring to particular language(s) for instance languages within the

⁴⁷ UN Resolution adopted on the reports of the 5th committee

⁴⁸ Rule 32 of the rules and procedures of the Economic and Social Council

organizations there is a sub classification of languages depending on when and where it is applicable.⁴⁹ The terminologies used include languages of authentic text, languages of official texts, official languages, and working languages, languages of deliberations, languages of documentation and languages that are none of the above.

In theory all the UN six languages have equal status, but in practice things are quite different. English and French are the dominant languages. They are both the working and official languages of the General Assembly and the Security Council. It also happens that public information not often translated into Spanish, Chinese and Arabic, and this has led to a friction between the organization and the speakers of these languages. The most recent case was a protest by the representatives of the Spanish speaking countries in the year 2001. It was pointed out that the organization over relies on English locking out the other five official languages. As pointed out earlier the Spanish speaking member nations brought this to the attention of the UN Secretary General the late Koffi Annan who responded that despite the budgetary challenges the organizations was facing in achieving full language parity, he assured the concerned parties that all efforts were being made to improve linguistic balance in the organization.⁵⁰ Further, in 2008 and 2009, through a General Assembly resolution the secretariat was urged to accord respect to the parity of the six languages especially during the dissemination of public information.

Languages of authentic text is another category of the various classification of languages. As captured in the UN charter article III that Chinese, French, Russian English and Spanish are equally authentic. It further states that subsequently the texts of the constitutive acts of treaty-based organizations or the texts of the treaties administered by them have been signed in one or a given number of languages and the texts are considered authentic texts. This is important for the text to be considered for any translation it must have originally been language(s) of the organization which usually serves as the basis of any translation.

In most international organization the United Nations Organization included have a provision of the language or languages in which information is dissemination within the organization and its organs. Budgetary constraints in these organization dictates them to prescribe only a few languages during the meetings and documentation despite the numerous number of its member

⁴⁹ Kudravtsev E and Ouedraogo L Implementation multilingualism in the United Nations System. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2003 pg 3

⁵⁰ Secretary General response to Spanish Speaking countries in 2001. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/56/>

state. The limited number of languages picked for the purposes of interpretation translation services which is the responsibility of the secretariat to do so. However the translation can only be done within the official languages of the organization, in case of any variance, the general rule has a provision that states that in case a member state requests the services of interpretation in the to any other language other than the prescribed languages, they have to pay for all or part of the cost of the interpretation.⁵¹ It can be concluded that funding and budgetary allocation is a distinctive quality that differentiates the prescribed languages from other languages since their translation costs is excluded in the expenses of the organization. The concept of official and working languages in the United Nations came in to existence through its General Assembly resolution (2) 1 in which it picked Chinese, Russian, English, French and Spanish as the official languages in all its organs except for the International Court of Justice while English and French were regarded as working languages.⁵²

International organizations draw a distinction between their working and official languages, the European Union just like the United Nations has both, except for the fact that all the 24 languages of the EU all of them are regarded as both working and official languages. In the United Nations English and French are the working languages of the secretariat and also the languages used in the day to day professional interaction. In accordance to the General Assembly resolution 68/268, a maximum of three official languages can be used for the daily business of the organization, however on exceptional cases a fourth language can be used if need arises to facilitate communication among the members⁵³. However each and every member party retains the right to interact with the treaty bodies in any of the six official languages. The World Health Assembly resolution 31.13 of 1978, it recognizes the concept of official languages in World Health Organization which at the present relates to interpretation of speeches made in those languages whereas the concept of working languages relates essentially to translation and is applied on applicable basis while taking into consideration the specific needs of Member states, the Assembly and the Executive Board⁵⁴. At the point where there was simultaneous

⁵¹ Kudravtsev E and Ouedraogo L Implementation multilingualism in the United Nations System. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2003 pg 9

⁵² The rules and procedures of the General Assembly 1st session in 1964

⁵³ General Assembly Resolution 68/268

⁵⁴The World Health Assembly resolution 31.13 of 1978,

interpretations were unavailable, speeches were made in any of the three official languages then later interpreted and availed in the United Nations two working languages. All the resolutions of the General Assembly and other documents were availed in the official languages. This also affect the status of languages in all other organs of the UN organization. For instance the six languages are both the official and working languages of the Security Council and official languages of the ECOSOC, however English, French and Spanish are the working languages of the Social Council. As per the present rules and procedures of the three main organs of the UN; the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, there is no distinction of the status of official and working languages in terms of interpretation and translation except for ECOSOC where records are kept in only the working languages.

2.4.1 Language of Communication in the United Nations Agencies

Dissemination of information is one of the system's crucial aspect in its operation in its respective mandate. The organization owes its stakeholders information from time to time especially if it concerns intergovernmental interactions and relations. The medium of relaying information involves relying on the traditional media where the publishing of information is done in both the hard copies and complemented by electronic publishing and the organization websites in the internet. The languages in the electronic media and the organization website should be given a category of its own.

The various UN agencies have their own websites and relay their information in other various languages apart from those that have the working and official languages status in the organization. Publication generally are done in any of organization six languages whether it has to be availed in the soft copy or in the electronic format⁵⁵. Publications of documents in the different languages depend on the sources of funds and also if there are any partners incorporated for co-publishing. Publications intended for sale are not usually available in any particular official or working language. Some however are done in one language usually English, while other are available in two or three languages. The various autonomous agencies and programs of the United Nation organization have different ways of carrying out their publication using the

⁵⁵ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System. Pg 8

languages that best suits their stakeholders and intended audience. Just to use a few of them, the United Nations Children Funds (UNICEF) did their world child report in three languages English, French and Spanish and was later translated to at least 25 different languages. Another program the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) did their Human Rights published in 2001 in 13 languages while FAO used five languages to publish flagship publication acknowledge all the UN five languages and in addition published some in German, Italian and Portuguese which are the program's official languages.⁵⁶

In a review done by the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publication (IAMLAPD) in the 1999 on multilingual internet sites of international organizations, it concluded that besides classifications of languages into official and working languages, the languages of the web should be included as a new category of its own.⁵⁷

Languages of deliberation and dissemination of information differ from one agency of the UN to the other this conclusion was arrived at after looking into a few selected agencies. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Executive Board of the agency acknowledges the distinction between official and working languages, it has three working languages; English , French and Spanish. However all official documents of the board are translated into the six official languages of the UN except for country programs and conference papers which are translated into the two official languages only.⁵⁸ Generally the Rules of Procedure in regional commissions of the UN rarely makes any reference to official languages but only to working languages. In all occasions speeches made in any of the working language will be interpreted into the other working language. In addition, all the resolutions recommendations, formal and annual reports are all availed in all the working languages.

The United Nations Children Funds program uses various languages during it general conferences, the languages include Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish which are the official languages of the program. In case needs arises any other language other than the ones above can be used as the official language of conference but

⁵⁶ Ibid pg 8

⁵⁷ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System. Pg 12

⁵⁸ Ibid

this only happens if there is a formal request from a member. However this provision has never been utilized before since no member state has ever made the request. It is Rule 55 that guides the use of languages in the UN agencies states that any amendments to the text of the constitution, or any other decision of the General Conference regarding the constitution and the legal status of UNESCO shall be translated into all the official languages. At the request of any delegate, any other important document including verbatim records may be translated into any other official language.

In the case of the World Intellectual Property Organization, the situation is quite different in that the secretariat to them the term official language does not exist. WIPO is a UN agency whose mandate is to ensure that the rights of creators and owners of intellectual property are protected worldwide and the investor and authors are given a recognition and reward for their ingenuity. As it dispenses its mandate, especially to its 184 member states use of language for communication is an important aspect. It has to make a prudent choice of the languages that will enable it ensure that it carries out its three core responsibilities which are: to ensure that there is a progressive development of international intellectual property law, to assist developing countries to build intellectual property capacity at the national as well as regional level and finally to encourage more effective use of intellectual property as a tool for economic development⁵⁹. The agency as it dispenses its mandate it uses Portuguese, English and French as its working languages.

2.5 Language Policy in Selected UN Agencies

2.5.1 Language Policy in World Health Organization

It is a UN agency that specifically deals with issued related to international public health, its core responsibility is directing as well as coordination the health work globally. The six languages of the UN General Assembly are similarly the agency's Executive Board as well as the Health Assembly's working and official languages. The languages were chosen under the World Health Assembly Resolution WHA31.13 of 1978. Documents from the Executive Board and the Health Assembly are administered concurrently after they have been translated into all the agency's working language. After translation the concerned departments ensure that the information get to

⁵⁹ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System

the general public since the agency's audience is the global population⁶⁰. The organization has embraced fully the use of the internet as one of its ways of sharing information because it covers a wider circumference in the shortest time possible yet quite affordable. Since WHO is mandated to oversee the global health matters, reliable information is of utmost importance to the entire population of the member states. The constitution of the agency clearly captures the mandate that it is obligatory for WHO to give timely and crucial information to the global population that it serves, offer counseling services and aid the global health sector. In addition it is mandated to facilitate in the developing of knowledge and a communal opinion among all people on health matters. In order to ensure that information flows smoothly and reaches the targeted population in the member states the translation of the documents into the official languages is mandatory⁶¹. Information and documents must be made accessible to the widest population possible therefore necessary measures are undertaken to guarantee this flow of the crucial technical informations within the organization regardless of the form it is in visual or audiovisual, informations must be tailored to suit the needs of the individual member countries and the region. The importance of multilingualism include the streamlining the access to information which was reinforced by the World Summit on information Society in Geneva in 2003, during the summit multilingualism was termed as a factor that aids the reduction of barriers to equitable access to information in all spheres such as the economic, social, political health and the education realm.

2.5.2 Language Policy in United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is one of the UN specialized agencies whose mandate include promotion of peace and security through international cooperation in various sectors namely education, scientific and cultural improvement in hope of growing universal respect for justice, the rule of law and human rights together with the rudimental freedom declared in the United Nations charter communication is a vital component of any organization, therefore, it is crucial that all the agencies of the UN have language policies. Language use in UNESCO is quite a flexible one compared to that of the General Assembly, other than recognizing and utilizing the UN six languages the agency in the recent past has added three languages to its multilingual policy namely Hindu, Italian and

⁶⁰Louis-Dominique *Multilingualism and access of information: A Case Study of the World Health Organization. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva2003*

⁶¹WHO Library database

Portuguese which are among the agency's official languages.⁶² To emphasize the importance of language the agency celebrates international language day its rationale being the organ of commitment to global linguistic diversity. In addition, it commemorated 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human rights and its slogan 'No discrimination can be made on the basis of language.' It further applauds the UDHR's effort to translate its human rights document in more than 500 languages. UNESCO plays a crucial role in language policies globally, on numerous occasions it has been tasked by Member States to supervise national and regional policies on language protection for establishing societies.⁶³ For a successful multilingual society, a language policy is inevitable therefore language policy for any organization is a must have to minimize instances of confusion on what language to be used within the organization⁶⁴. Enormous importance is attached to language, that language is clearly much more than a mode of transmission of information from one person to another but rather the very core of humanity. Language is a peoples beliefs, values and ultimately a sense of identity that is innate. It is of paramount essence in that through it people can share their experiences, culture and knowledge placing the necessity to have a language policy in an organization or even a state of paramount importance.

The agency has a strong opinion on multilingualism hence through its project to formulate recommendation on the world atlas of languages it reiterates the UDHR's significance of languages and how a linguistic community should not be underprivileged in enjoying and experiencing their fundamental rights and freedom of expressing their diverse opinions. UNESCO acknowledges the fact that linguistic diversity and multilingualism contributes significantly in promoting pluralism, equitable and an all-inclusive society.⁶⁵ As part of its policy and strategic orientation it recommends that member states be mandated to come up with and take up a suitable national language policy on the crucial issue of linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

2.6 Rationale for multilingualism in the United Nations

⁶² Rule 54 of the Rules of procedure of the General conference: <http://unesdoc.org>

⁶³ Ouedraogo L Multilingualism and access of information: Case study of the World Health Organization. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2003

⁶⁴ Finnemore Martha *International Organizations as Teachers of Norms: The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and Science Policy*

⁶⁵ UNESCO Education Position Paper *Education in a Multilingual world. UNESCO2003*

Multilingualism has been a subject of interest that has topped governing bodies of the UN among them General Assembly. It is a concern that has taken much of attention of the organization over time. As a result, a decision was made concerning multilingualism during the marking of the 50th anniversary of signing of the UN charter in December 1995. The General Assembly then consented in Resolution 50/11 that the universal nature of the UN makes the consequences of multilingualism affect each member state of the organization. Since the UN expounded on the equality of each member, there was need to cultivate equality including on the linguistic front. Consequently, each member, irrespective of the official language in which they express themselves in, reserve the right and duty to make themselves understood and to understand others.⁶⁶

On the same note the General Assembly stressed on the significance of availing the documents, archive and data banks to all the governments and organs of civil in all the official languages. The assembly therefore mandated the secretary general to see to it that the adherence to the execution of the resolutions made pertaining language arrangement for both working and official language of the secretariat and the member states is observed. The various governing bodies of the organization pride in the diversity of the languages used. They term it as generally enriching and that it promotes better understanding among the member states.

2.7 Conclusion

The United Nations System has a limited multilingual policy that has six languages namely English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian as the official and working languages. The said languages are also the official languages of all the UN agencies but some of the agencies have opted to have only English and French as the working languages. The rationale behind having the multilingual policy is to promote unity in diversity as well as facilitate the meeting of the organization's objective of promoting peace and security, development and human rights. This can only be achieved if all members communicate effectively between and amongst each other, a fact that can only be achieved if the choice(s) of language(s) is either cross cutting or big enough to accommodate (almost) everyone.

⁶⁶ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the UN Multilingual Policy with a bias towards how it is implemented both at the UN principal organs and related autonomous agencies. It will also look at roles of various departments including Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, Public Information, and offices such as coordinator of multilingualism and what specific role they play in as far as entrenching multilingualism in the UN is concerned. The chapter will also look at the prospects and challenges in the implementation of the policy.

3.1 United Nations Multilingual Policy in Practice

The United Nations Multilingual policy states that there are six official and working languages that shall be used in all its official engagements both within its organs and agencies. The United

Nations currently has six languages namely Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish. These languages ended up in their current status in the UN system after an extensive and intensive deliberation that was done over a long period of time. It is through the UN General Assembly resolutions that the languages in question were elevated to the status they occupy currently in the UN. In the 1946, through the General Assembly resolution 2(1), it formalized the decision of using Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish as official languages while English and French doubled up as the organization working languages⁶⁷.

At the moment the UN language policy captures the fact that there are six official languages which are used in United Nations meetings and deliberations and that all UN official documentation are written in these languages. As much as the organization embraces a multilingual language policy, there are thousands of language professionals whose services are inevitable time to time in the UN offices all over the world. Four of the five principle organs of the United Nations; the UN Secretariat, the Security Council, the General Assembly, and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are based in New York while International Court of Justice is based in The Hague. . The other major autonomous agencies are based in three other cities; Geneva Switzerland, Vienna Austria and Nairobi Kenya.

Language is a key component of any organization; it is the means in which information is not only disseminated within the organization but also to any outside the organization. The United Nations an international organization that closest to a world government has an international audience hence the language in communication is of importance to both the organization and its audience. During the various meetings that take place in the UN offices such as the General Assembly, a delegate may use any of the official language, it is mandatory that the speech be translated simultaneously into the other official languages of the organization. On the contrary, in case a delegate chooses to make his or her speech in a non-official language then it is compulsory that the delegate provide an interpretation or a written text of the speech in one of the official language.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ E. Kudryavtsev Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System

⁶⁸ Ibid

The UN prides itself in having a multilingual policy that guarantees some level of linguistic diversity for both its organs and agencies. However, as it is seen later in this chapter, the said policy can be viewed as being a quasi ‘monolingual’ with English being the dominant language. In cases where the language choices are expanded out of necessity, a heavy bias towards English is still evident. For example, we have had cases where the General Assembly carries out its non-official meetings in one language: English in the absence of any interpretations services. In the United Nations headquarters in New York it is irresistible to use English, this is contributed by the fact that it is the local language and secondly it is highly likely that the members of the secretariat stationed in the offices are of a high level English proficiency as dictated by the nature of their job.⁶⁹ In addition, the diplomats attached to the New York offices are also deployed there in most cases after the consideration of their good command of the English language. .

The dominance of English in the UN system in the General Assembly and some of the other organs of the UN is something that has not gone unnoticed and has often led to an uproar among the delegates. This is something that led to a strongly worded Resolution no. 71/328 that among other issues read.....

Notes in particular that a high proportion of calls for bids are published only in English, and therefore encourages the Secretariat, where appropriate, to make use of existing multilingualism policies to facilitate the participation of local vendors in the United Nations procurement bidding process;⁷⁰

And

Notes with concern that the English version of the Procurement Manual is from July 2013 while the French and Spanish versions are from March 2010, and encourages the Secretariat to continue its efforts to ensure that the Procurement Manual is up to date;⁷¹

The rampant cases of the use of English at the expense of the other five official languages of the organization, is viewed as discriminatory over them hence the inequality of the language use. In a bid to achieve language parity in the organization, the UN Secretary General the late Koffi Annan introduced the post of the coordinator for multilingualism who was mandated with among other roles to ensure members grievances concerning language disparities were addressed. The

⁶⁹Humphrey Tonkin *Language and United Nations* : A preliminary Review.2011 pg 7

⁷⁰ A/RES/71/328

⁷¹ ibid

roles of coordinator of multilingualism shall be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

3.2 Contributions of Other Departments in Entrenching Multilingualism

In order to achieve its mandate, all the UN departments and offices must strive to integrate multilingualism into their core operations. Indeed all the UN offices do acknowledge the importance of the multilingualism policy as being not only very relevant but also the key driver towards achieving their mandates.⁷² However, whereas all the department and offices claim to acknowledge how important of multilingualism is in to them, in practice very few have explicitly made conscious efforts to integrate it (multilingualism) requirements into their day to day activities. For example, all departments and offices and departments must have all their records documented in a timely and accurate manner, but only a small fraction have consciously made it clear that the documents must, simultaneously, be produced in the six official languages. In essence, what this leaves room for the departments and/or office can document the proceedings in one or two languages but still claim that they have met the requirement. The three departments that have expressly incorporated multilingualism in their day to day provisions are; the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public of Information and the United Nations Office at Geneva. Of the three only the Department of Public of Information mentions multilingualism directly.⁷³

As such, in order to achieve their mandate in as far as multilingualism is concerned, there is need to have concrete measures and undertakings that will ensure multilingualism is consciously and deliberately entrenched in all the department and offices. As it stands this is far from being a reality, at least in the short term. This is because the proposed strategic framework documents for the years 2018-2019 that guides the actualization of proposed mandates into concrete objectives has in less than a tenth of them mention either language or multilingualism.

This research will briefly look at how various United Nations and department and offices have approached the issue of multilingualism.

⁷² Report of the Secretary General on Multilingualism 71/757

⁷³ Ibid

3.2.1 Office of Coordinator of Multilingualism

Recognizing the important role that multilingualism plays in the UN setup, the UN in Resolution 71/328 endorsed the terms of reference of Coordinator for Multilingualism as requested by Resolution 54/64. The Secretary General was also given the go ahead to appoint any of the senior members of staff in the secretariat to the position with clear mandate to ensure that all resolutions regarding multilingualism are implemented in furtherance of the objectives of the United Nations to not only support the achievement of three pillars of as peace and security, development and human rights, but also address recommendations that were put forward by the joint inspection unit on multilingualism. The joint inspection unit had noted among other things the disparities in the UN multilingual policy with English being given undue advantage. In fact, speakers of the other UN official languages have expressed concerns.

The Coordinator of Multilingualism (CoM) is supposed to be the focal point between the Secretariat and all the heads of the departments and offices in the UN system. As the focal point, the CoM will establish a network of focal points within the said departments an offices in order to certify that the multilingual policy is effected in reality and not just on paper. To ensure that this is not only understood but actualized, the CoM will engage the focal points on a regular basis either in person or through whichever means that are practically possible. As such, CoM will ensure that the multilingualism policy is effected in a timely, coordinated and coherent manner by all stakeholders. In this regard, the CoM will ensure the UN, both internal and external, are conversant with the rationale behind having a robust multilingual policy that is mainstreamed in the day to day operations The. CoM is also supposed to ensure also actively carry out research that ensures that emerging linguistic trends and areas of concern in the implementation of the policy. The CoM also has to support the activities of the UN language days and oversee the drafting of reports on multilingualism among other activities.

It is evident that most of the UN organs have an internal multilingual policy all aspiring to work towards improving the implementation of their specific policy on multilingualism. UNESCO for instance is one of the organs that have a tremendous record in upholding multilingualism within as well as outside the organization⁷⁴. Upon appointment of the coordinator for multilingualism

⁷⁴ JUP/REP/2002/11

the General Assembly resolution 54/64 of 1999, the office was tasked to ensure that it harmonizes the measures implemented and also propose strategies that makes sure that the UN language usages are in line with the requirements and commendations drawn from the numerous resolutions relating to multilingualism⁷⁵.

However, in practice some of the entities within the UN secretariat seem not to be conversant with the role of the coordinator multilingualism. A specific case is cited of UNCTAD which stated that it has neither perceived any substantial change nor received any specific orders from the said office. The department of public information seeks to improve certain areas in the organization namely the outreach, communication through the organization website and language partnership with interested parties. For instance the department entered into an agreement with institutions of higher learning in three countries (China, Belarus and Spain) to translate materials for the UN website into three languages: Chinese, Russia and Spanish at no cost. Even with the laudable undertakings above, there is still lack of a proper strategic plan that involves all the entities of the UN towards the implementation of multilingualism.

Despite the existence of a compact agreement between the CoM and the Secretary General the implementation of multilingualism is not captured as an objective it is however treated as the expected accomplishment of one of the broad objective. This is quite unfortunate considering the importance of multilingualism as a tool to be used by the entire UN to reach the widest possible audience that it owes crucial and important information. It is indirectly alluded to in the general objective 'raising public awareness of, and support for, the activities and concerns of the UN' and the expected accomplishment of 'increased reach of public information products and services through multilingualism'. Needless to say, the budgetary allocation is not even within the reach of the coordinator instead, the department of public information's budget includes that of performance procedures linked to multilingualism.

Even though the office of the CoM is not well-known by all the UN secretariat organs, some of them have internally appointed coordinators who are to play the role of being the focal points for multilingualism. However other than their appointment there a number of challenges faced by the offices in practice. For instance in most cases organization such as United Nations Industrial

⁷⁵ <http://daccess-dd-nv.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/236/34/PDF>

Development Organization (UNIDO), they are not placed at a high level in the organization's structure hence may be inhibited from working with ease to make proposals with authority concerning procedures and measures that will dictate the implementation of multilingualism by all departments of the organization⁷⁶. In addition in most cases the post of coordinator of multilingualism within an organization is an additional workload to people who already have other official responsibilities. In this case definitely there would be an unhealthy attention given to the two competing responsibilities by the affected officer. Also the coordination of multilingualism is neither fairly recognized nor supported by means of resource allocation to see to it that it is effectively implemented should there be a proposal or even an action plan in regard to multilingualism.

In a nutshell, the CoM is supposed to act as the link that moves the smooth implementation and actualization of the multilingual policy. It is therefore important for the office of the coordinator of multilingualism to be more empowered other than just the appointment and the title especially through the objectives that are specific, achievable, timely and realistic.

3.2.2 Department of Public Information

As mentioned earlier, Department of Public information is one of the few departments and/or offices that have language explicitly mentioned in their objectives. Of the three it is the only one that mentions multilingualism directly. According to Resolution 71/328, the department is among other things to provide outreach activities, accurate, comprehensive, timely, impartial, balanced and relevant information about the United Nations to its various publics. The information so provided must be in all the six UN languages in order to ensure parity. As noted in that resolution, there were considerable concerns expressed by members that English was getting a highly disproportionate attention in activities of the UN including by the UN Secretariat.⁷⁷ The major shortcoming of this resolution is the absence of performance indicators. It is having more languages used in the communicative process just enough or should there be some indicators such as the quality and contents of engagements

⁷⁶ Fall L.P and Zhang Y Multilingualism in the United Nations System Organization: Status of Implementation. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2011. Pg 53

⁷⁷ See UN Resolution on Multilingualism no. 71/328

Therefore the Department of Public Information was to take a conscious effort to ensure that there was not only language parity was restored. The department was also supposed to ensure that the available staff are not only equal to the task but were also enough to ensure that the objectives of the department were met. Among the things that the department is mandated to do is ensure that all existing United Nations texts and publications are translated into all the official United Nations languages. In cases where it is possible, available resources including budgetary, the said texts can be translated into major non-official languages. Efforts to publish them into local languages in developing languages are also encouraged.

As such, the department can be said to be making a conscious effort to further the multilingual policy of the UN as per Resolution no. 71/328, at least on the face value, with the deliberate efforts it is supposed to take. The effort to include non-official languages including local ones is a step in the right direction at least acknowledging the power such may have in the communication process. However, on closer inspection, this researcher noticed the very irony in the said resolution which is published in three languages namely English, French and Spanish.⁷⁸ It is fair however to acknowledge the efforts made by the DPI for its tremendous role in promoting multilingualism, in the UN Geneva office special efforts to recruits multilingual staff is applied specifically for the sole purpose of communication and working in several languages. The department has also successfully managed to enter into agreements and partnerships with member states to sponsor the UN language days. An initiative that have been considered a success outreach program which would boost the recognition of all the organization official and working languages.⁷⁹ Further the DPI has worked on the issue of language parity and has made notable effort through the newly introduced daily news-related audio visual documentary that featured on the UN home page that is posted including captions in all official languages, this without doubt has improved multilingual access to the public.

⁷⁸ See

http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?ipp=20&spp=20&profile=bib&ri=&index=.TW&term=Multilingualism&matchopt=0|0&oper=and&aspect=power&index=.UD&term=A/RES/*&matchopt=0|0&oper=and&index=.TN&term=&matchopt=0|0&oper=and&index=.AW&term=&matchopt=0|0&ultype=&uloper==&ullimit=&ultype=&uloper==&ullimit=&sort=&x=15&y=10#focus

⁷⁹ Fall L.P and Zhang Y Multilingualism in the United Nations System Organization: Status of Implementation. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2011. Pg 53

3.2.3 Department of General Assembly and Conference Management

United Nations organizes many conferences either itself or through its autonomous agencies. It is the responsibility of this Department of General Assembly and Conference Management and to ensure that the conferences are not only held but also conducted in the six official languages as per the UN Multilingual Policy. The department must also ensure that the proceedings are translated and documented in the *Journal of the United Nations* in a language accessible to as many people as possible. With over 200 employees located in Vienna Austria, Nairobi Kenya, Geneva Switzerland and New York, United States of America the department is one of the largest in the United Nations System.⁸⁰ The department of conference management in the UN just like in other organizations is responsible for a number of tasks including timely simultaneous distribution of all the documents in the organization official languages and also posting the same information on the organization's website.⁸¹

The UN is quite unlucky since it cannot afford a wholly internal language service especially the translation of documents and interpretation services. According to the Joint Inspection Report of 2011, timely submission of original documents by the parties concerned is yet to be met, and this has affected adversely

The department of conference services in each organization is responsible for the efficient provision of conference services, including timely simultaneous distribution of documents in all official languages, as well as their posting on websites. In organizations with internal language services, other services, such as translation of documents, interpretation, report and précis-writing, among others, are also provided.

At the present toe UN secretariat procedure and distribution and issuance of documents are anchored on four principles as it make attempts to respond to the requests that arise from the various General Assembly resolutions on the matter.⁸² Firstly in the rules is the provision to issue the agenda of the meeting must be distributed in all the six languages of the UN eight weeks prior to the opening session. Secondly all the documents needed for deliberation are to be

⁸⁰ <http://www.un.org/Depts/DGACM/>

⁸¹ Fall L.P and Zhang Y Multilingualism in the United Nations System Organization: Status of Implementation. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2011. Pg

⁸² General Assembly resolution 55/222

issued six weeks prior to the opening session in the six official languages. Thirdly all official languages versions ought to be issued simultaneously and finally it is a basic requirement that documents should only be posted on the organization website when they are in the six languages and officially issued.

However these set rules are not adhered to especially the one on simultaneous issuance of the versions and the posting on the website in six languages.⁸³ These are the two most flouted rules and procedures. Most of the time the information in the organization website is in only one language: English. For instance even the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit which is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly does not always issue its reports in the six UN official languages as required.⁸⁴ As a result of the budgetary constraint a number of documents most of the times are only translated into English. Another cited case is the draft resolution which despite being essential tools to be used by delegate for negotiation is not translated prior to their approval.

On timely submissions of documents, some of the different agencies have come up with a measure to curb late submissions of documents. The organizations have even gone to the extent of imposing penalties payable by departments which fail to comply with the deadlines given according to the rules and procedures of submission of documents.⁸⁵ However ILO noted that although the introduction of the penalty system will have an impact on poor services it may fail to deter those departments with sufficient funding.

It is paramount to note that the value of multilingualism is more than just image, it ensures fair access to information for all and also facilitates participation of all in the delicate decision making process especially by the legislative bodies on an equal footing. Therefore the conference management of the UN has no choice but to make it possible for the use of all the official and working languages as an alternative of using English as the de facto solitary working language of the unit. Submission of documents by all departments on time should be encouraged to enable original documents to be translated and availed simultaneously. This ultimately it will enhance cost effective, quality and productivity in regard to documentation delivery.

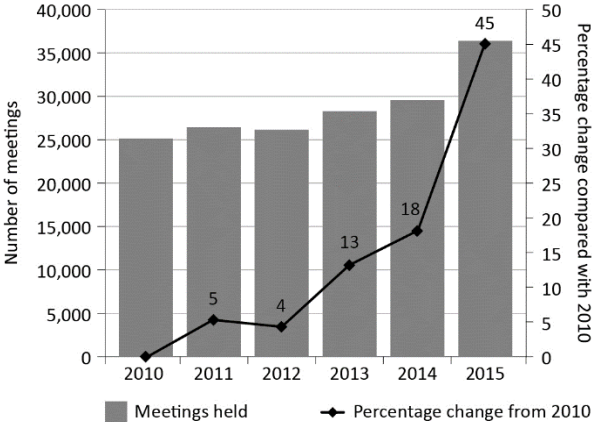
⁸³ General Assembly Resolution 65/311 on multilingualism

⁸⁴ The Arabic version of the Joint Inspection Unit (2010) was unavailable in the JIU website

⁸⁵ Fall L.P and Zhang Y Multilingualism in the United Nations System Organization: Status of Implementation. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2011

The service delivery from the conference management in the recent past has been under pressure to perform effectively and efficiently as a result of the gradual increase in the number of meetings and conferences by the United Nations organization as presented in the figure below. The meetings and conferences have been increasing in the recent years. For example, between 2010 and 2015, the meetings increased by almost 50% from 25000 in 2010 to around 27000 words.⁸⁶They can be represented as in the graph below.

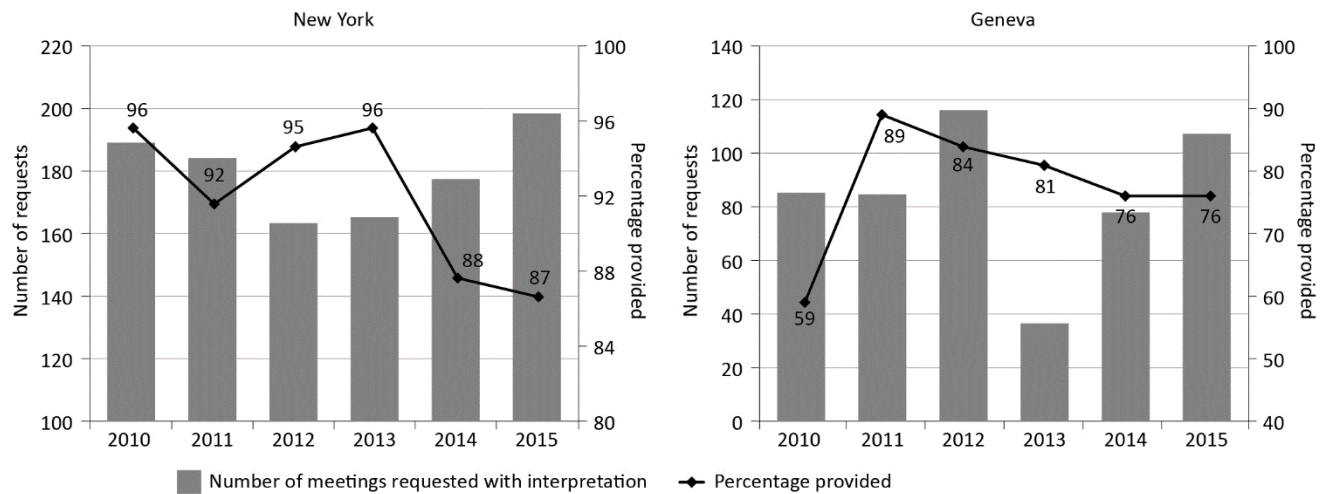
Figure 1. Increase in meetings between 2010 and 2015



Source <http://www.undocs.org/a/71/757>

Figure 2 Percentage of Translation Services provided

⁸⁶ <http://www.undocs.org/a/71/757>



3.3 Human Resources Management

Human resources management involves recruitment and placement of staff to perform the day to day functions of the organization. The Office of Human Resource management is tasked with the responsibility of rationalizing the human resources in the UN in line with among other multilingual requirements. In order to achieve this, it has to make sure that the requirements including key competencies are made known to as many people as possible on what it takes to work for the United Nations. This will ensure that it gets a big pool of competent and motivated applicants to choose from. To achieve this, it has make the information available in the different languages.

Unfortunately, closer interrogation reveals that so the information manual is only published in two languages; English and French. The French version was translated much later from the English version and appears to be an abridged version. Whereas the English version has 195 pages that are very elaborate including step by step guide, the French version has only seven

pages.⁸⁷ The weight attached to English at the expense of other languages is clearly telling and is something that needs to be addressed if the so called language parity is to be achieved.

Recruitment and promotion of employees within the United Nations system constitute a number of factors key among them being the ability to speak at least one of the six United Nations languages and other requirements as may be posted. A review of the language requirements that was done by the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations revealed two broad patterns.⁸⁸ The first one made it mandatory for an applicant to have a perfect command of any or a combination of the six United Nations languages. The second requirement required some (working) knowledge of any, a combination of the six and sometimes a specified non-official language.

A further analysis of the two broad requirement produces six motifs. One, only a single language is required and more often than not, the said language is English and occasionally French. Two, a combination of two languages is a prerequisite with the language usually being English and any other. To a lesser extent, it may be French and any other official UN language. Three, a single language requirement but it must be a mother tongue of the applicant. Usually four languages namely English, French, Spanish or Russian are listed. Four, A perfect command of any working language with English, French and Spanish being the preferred options. Five, perfect knowledge of a combination of two of the official UN languages with the most preferred options being English and French, English and Spanish, and English and Arabic in that order. Lastly, a command of any of the six languages is listed as a prerequisite. Occasionally, knowledge of a non-official language is listed but usually as an added advantage.

The first requirement as outlined above in essence made it mandatory for an applicant to know the language in question. Anything less than that meant that any applicant was automatically excluded from the recruitment process. On the knowledge requirement, an applicant only got an advantage in the recruitment process. The interesting bit is that the knowledge aspect usually was specific to the location of the workstation. For instance, an office based in Tanzania will require knowledge in Kiswahili.

⁸⁷ See comparisons between <https://careers.un.org/lbw/attachments/instructionalmanualfortheapplicant.pdf> and https://careers.un.org/lbw/attachments/inspira-comment_postuler.pdf.

⁸⁸ WFP Human resource policy on Administrative procedures by International professional staff 2003

Likewise, career progression is also based on any of the above combinations that we have mentioned. One thing that clearly stands out is that if any of the six UN languages is your mother tongue, the odds of progressing further in the UN system are stacked in your advantage. Likewise, if your mother tongue is not among the six official languages, chances of career progression are severely limited all factors held constant. In fact, a deeper analysis reveals that even among the six, There is a clear hierarchy with English being at the top, closely followed by French and Spanish in that order. Arabic and Chinese appear to be bottom of the rung. In essence, non-native speakers of any of the UN official languages therefore have to invest a lot in language training to stand a chance of career progression.

What this implies is that the United Nations places an unnecessary barrier and burden, either by design or default on some of its members. Linguistic experts know how difficult it becomes for someone to learn and acquire native like fluency of a new language after a certain age.⁸⁹ This is mainly because of mother tongue interference that is the first language or mother tongue as we commonly refer it to may be having different structures, phonological patterns among other characteristics when compared with the target language. Essentially, the mother tongue requirement could also be interpreted wrongly locking out candidates who are equally qualified and have used the language in question throughout their lives including in education but they are excluded from the recruitment process by the requirement. For instance, candidates who come from former colonies of Britain or France, by default have either of the languages as the medium of instruction throughout their school cycle and can thus be said to have some level of fluency that should be deemed closer to mother tongue level.

The human resource department, in a bid to encourage continuous learning of official languages, the UN and/or its constituent agencies has been giving incentives for each additional official language learnt.⁹⁰ The incentives included a certain percentage of pension over and above the one payable on behalf of the employee or in some cases a longer indefinite contract period for

⁸⁹ andora.cii.wvu.edu/vajda/ling201/test4materials/secondlangacquisition.htm

⁹⁰ A 2000 report by International Civil Service Commission proposed to have the incentives removed but this proposal was short down by the General Assembly

employees of certain positions.⁹¹ In some instances where additional increments are given after a year or two years depending on level, an employee with knowledge of additional languages over and above the ones they joined with is given the increment almost 20% faster.

In a report prepared in 2003 the Joint Inspection Unit reveals the challenges of managing a multilingual workforce. The two note that UN allows workers to be free to use any working/official language of their choice while in the same time granting their supervisors a simultaneous right to do so.⁹²

3.5 Language Training

In order to ensure that there is language parity as well as mainstreaming of all the six United Nations languages in practice, the UN saw the need to train its staff in order to be self-reliant. The Through the Department of Management, the United Nations Centre for Learning and Multilingualism Career Development was set up with a specific mandate of training UN staff.

The Centre is home to the Language and Communication Programme which is supposed to support the learning of languages by all UN staff by providing necessary materials and training products. The Centre is also supposed to tailor make language training programme for the staff as well availing language professionals to sharpen the language knowledge of the trainees. Ironically, the department is supposed to increase language parity-which is one of its key responsibilities, but in practice it is contributing towards increasing the disparity by giving English and French some level of importance at the expense of the other four languages.

The Centre's efforts are supplemented by other UN offices that provide language trainings to their staff that are specific to what the respective offices are dealing with. For instance, the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services as well as Office of Legal Affairs have already conducted their respective survey and come up with their language needs and they routinely train their own staff.

The United Nations has gone a step forward in trying to ensure that the trainings are not done but a certain minimum level of proficiency is attained. This is done through language proficiency

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² Kudryavtsev E., and Ouedraogo L. Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations, Geneva 2003

tests that are conducted by the Office of Human Resources management but a lot still needs to be done in order to encourage and motivate more UN Staff to learn different languages.

Internship programmes to young professionals is another avenue through which the United Nations carries out its language training programmes. The professionals are taken through a combination of internships, traineeships as well as short practicums in order to build their capacity especially as far as language is concerned. For instance, in 2015, a total of 23 such programmes that trained up to 117 young professionals were conducted.⁹³ Most of the interns have been offered varying length of opportunities in the United Nations. However, a report on the implementation of multilingualism in the UN system reveals that rather than increasing language parity, the training programmes were entrenching English as the dominant language. For instance, between 1998 and 2000, the number of people who sat for language proficiency tests doubled from 348 to 727. However, more people undertook English language exams compared to the other five languages combined⁹⁴

Table 1: Language proficiency tests

Examination session	Arabic	Chinese	English	French	Russian	Spanish	Total
February 1998 (47)	2	2	162	82	40	60	348
May 1998 (48)	6	1	247	95	39	48	436
January 1999 (49)	6	4	269	131	58	46	514
May 1999	9	1	357	122	61	70	620

⁹³ <http://learning.unog.ch/portals//> Language Needs Analysis Reports

⁹⁴ Fall L.P and Zhang Y Multilingualism in the United Nations System Organization: Status of Implementation. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2011

(50)							
January 2000 (51)	9	5	381	161	77	56	689
May 2000	15	2	426	149	79	56	727

3.6 Outreach Programmes

The United Nations continuously strives to create positive relationship with all its member states and key stakeholders. It is through this outreach programmes that the United nations is able to gauge the level of satisfaction of its members as well as other key stakeholders in as far as language performance is concerned in line with its multilingual policy. Depending on the level, the UN will carry out corrective measures in order to address the feelings. It is through such meetings that the UN began to have measures that will restore language parity in as far as English vis-à-vis the other five languages is concerned. Some members’, especially the Spanish speaking ones had expressed reservations on the level of importance given to English and to a small extent French in the UN and related meetings in clear contravention of the UN language policy.⁹⁵

The United Nations, through the office of the Coordinator, has continuously trained to raise awareness of the all its six international languages. The international language days, one for each of its six languages as well as sign language are held annually in order to make members appreciate and be aware of the existence of in essence the other languages other than English which either by design or default has taken the lion share of attention and usage in the UN system. Promotional materials are developed and distributed, through various channels including the websites and social media, in as many languages as they are in the policy.

In addition, special, sometimes onetime promotions and competitions, may be conducted with all the member states encouraged to participate. For example, in 2016 an essay completion was conducted with participants required to write about “Many Language One World” and winners

95

were picked from each of the six languages. In total, more than 85% of member countries participating. Furthermore, special a multilingual source www.languagescareers.un.org provides up to date information on all the UN languages to anybody wishing to learn any of the six UN languages. The website has useful information and materials that are ideal for language and would be language professionals.

The outreach programmes are also conducted to potential suppliers in order to rope in the interests from private sector players. All procurement and related manuals are provided in and/or translated into the six official manuals.

Other than just mere awareness, the United Nations needs to carry out outreach programmes in order to take care of its future workforce. Staff exiting the organization through natural attrition, retirement or other factors must be replaced without leaving the UN worse than it was prior to their (staff) exit. This means that the potential replacements must be as competent as the ones leaving in all material aspects including linguistic abilities.

Through a multipronged approach that combines traditional and emerging outreach, social media awareness and a dedicated website, the United Nations has continuously created awareness of the opportunities that are available in its various offices for interested applicants who possess certain linguistic abilities over and above their trainings. In addition the United Nations has collaborated with a number of universities spread throughout the world with the sole intention of building linguistic capacity in the six official languages. The intention is to make sure that future employees have what it takes to carry out their functions effectively. Other centres that the UN is collaborating with include specialized translation.

3.7 United Nations Language Days

In a bid to promote unity through diversity as well promote positive international understanding, tolerance and dialogue amongst the people of the world, the United Nations has special dedicated language days each for six of the official languages as well as mother tongues that are non-official languages. In addition, a day in honour of the role translation does in promoting and enabling multilingualism, plus a day to also celebrate the sign languages, have also been set

aside. This is in line with among other things, UN realization that languages are special vehicles for preserving both tangible and intangible heritage. The UN hopes that by celebrating these days, a fuller and deeper appreciation that language plays in promoting cultural inclusivity and tolerance if embraced positively.

During international Language Day, all UN duty stations carry out a series of activities including entertainment with the sole objective of informing and creating awareness of the culture and the achievement of languages in the UN community.⁹⁶ The international Language days are; French (20th March), Chinese (20th April) English and Spanish (23rd April) and Russian (6th June), International Mother Tongue (21st February) and International Translation Day (30th September). As proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2007, the year 2008 was declared international Language year in line with the UN tradition of declaring week, months, years or decades for observing specially dedicated themes that require concerted efforts and attention. In the International Language year, all member states were encouraged to support activities that promoted linguistic inclusivity. Endangered languages were to be given special attention.

By also celebrating the days, the Un also hopes to meet some other targets , For example, International Mother Language day helps the UN to meet Target 6 of Goal 4 of the Sustainable development goals (SDGs) which tries to ‘ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.’⁹⁷

3.8 Prospects and Challenges in Implementing the UN Multilingual Policy

The implementation of the United Nations multilingual policy as it is has come with some challenges and prospects. The main shortcoming is that the policy excludes and marginalizes a big portion of its members particular from South America and Africa who are technically unrepresented. However, the policy as it is can be said to be cost effective if you compare the budgetary allocation vis-à-vis its principle objectives. The two aspects are discussed below in greater detail.

⁹⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/celebrating-multilingualism/index.html>

⁹⁷ ibid

3.8.1 Marginalization of the Non-Native Speakers in Africa and South America

Multilingualism is an important factor of cultural diversity, a concept that is safeguarded in the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions that was embraced by the General Conference of UNESCO during its 33rd session in October 2005. The same was also endorsed by the UNGA at its 63rd session. With this kind of support on multilingualism questions arise as to why the choice of the official languages of the UN is rather narrow. A critical look the linguistic landscape reveals that it is heavily tilted towards Europe and Asia which account for all the six United Nations official languages. Europe has four (English, French, Russian and Spanish) while Asia has the two (Arabic and Chinese). Whereas North America and Australia can claim some level of representation through the English and French connections, Africa and South America have no native language in the UN language set up.

This is despite the fact that the two continents account for a third the UN membership; Africa has fifty four member states and South America nine member states. Indeed Africa accounts for a third of all the languages in the world.⁹⁸ South America has about 500 languages. Concerns have been expressed by several stakeholders, specifically linguistic experts and scholars, on the marginalization of the African languages in international domains including the United Nations. The scholars have complained of the low status that African languages have in the world including the African continent itself. They have attributed this to colonial legacy, globalization and skewed power politics.⁹⁹ The current UN language set up continues to perpetuate these vicious cycle. This can be placed in the context of limited linguistic ability by most African people in the “restricted” choice of the United Nations working languages. It is no secret that most Africans are less fluent and barely comprehensible in these foreign languages.

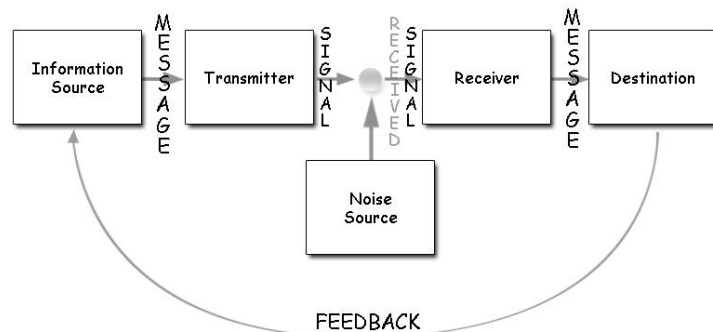
United Nations has tried to help Africa in resolving the cyclic conflicts and myriads humanitarian issues. This can only be achieved by effective communication with the multiple stakeholders. Successful communication as Shannon and Weaver puts it, should have minimal

⁹⁸ Ayo Bamgbose .African Languages Today: The Challenge of and Prospects for Empowerment under Globalization. University of Ibadan.2011.p2.pp4

⁹⁹ Ibid

noise interference. They define noise as anything that affects the transmission and comprehension of the message by the receiver as encoded by the sender. To them, environmental factors, people among others constitute noise. Shannon and Weavers communication model is as illustrated below.

Figures 2 Communication models for the study of mass communications



Source: Windahl and McQuail

From Shannon and Weavers illustration it is evident that the choice of language can affect the effectiveness of the communication. Basically, a language that the interlocutors are not well conversant with can be equated to noise in the communication process. For instance, Indian peace keepers deep in the Congo forest interacting with the populace in the area speaking Lingala language would find it difficult to communicate. It becomes harder considering they would have to communicate back to UN headquarters, sometimes in a battle situation. UN's official languages are supposed to offer a common ground to the said interlocutors but in essence it locks out a majority owing to the fact that roughly less than quarters of the locals speaks and understands the 'common' language.¹⁰⁰ Effective communication could therefore be hindered by the limited choice of languages available to the UN staff. Expanding the pool of UN's official and/or working languages could resolve this marginalization.

However, some scholars aver that the marginalization cannot be entirely blamed on United Nations. The regions deemed to be marginalized have done little to correct the perceived

¹⁰⁰ Ayo Bamgbose .African Languages Today: The Challenge of and Prospects for Empowerment under Globalization. University of Ibadan.2011.p2

marginalization even in areas they have control. For example, in Africa only Tanzania, Ethiopia and South Africa have taken steps to use African languages as official languages. The African Union uses four official languages (English, French, Portuguese and Arabic) and other *African languages*. The African languages to be used are vaguely defined, rarely used and hardly feature in any meaningful discourse. In essence whenever critical AU issues are discussed, the continent is usually divided into language zones- Anglophone and Francophone, none of which is African. It is therefore hypocritical for Africa to complain of being marginalized in the linguistic landscape in the UN yet they do little to correct the ‘anomaly’ in their backyard¹⁰¹.

The African case is similar to that of South America where Portuguese and Spanish are the dominant languages. Colonial legacy could be blamed for contributing to this skewed linguistic situation but the two (Africa and South America) have had relatively long period to correct the situation if they so wished but little effort, if any, has been put. Therefore blaming others (colonialists) is not only defeatist but also a distraction from attaining lasting solutions.

Another noticeable area where marginalization of non-native speakers of the UN official languages is manifested is in the recruitment process. Applicants must have a good working knowledge of at least two of the UN official languages. A minimum proficiency of advanced level (C1) is required in one language and at least intermediate (B2) in the other. Non-native speakers must provide certification whilst this requirement is waived for native speakers. This clearly puts non-native speakers at a disadvantage; besides knowledge of the subject matter they have to grapple with linguistic knowledge potentially locking out qualified but linguistically limited applicants.

3.8 Cost Implications

In choosing a language policy, there are certain factors that must be put in perspectives. Any organization including the United Nations must consider the avenues and channels it must use in order to achieve its set objectives. To the United Nations, the cost elements have always been a key feature in choosing a specific language considering that translation and interpretation services do not come cheaply.¹⁰² Probably to put this in perspective, we can look at the European

¹⁰¹ *ibid*

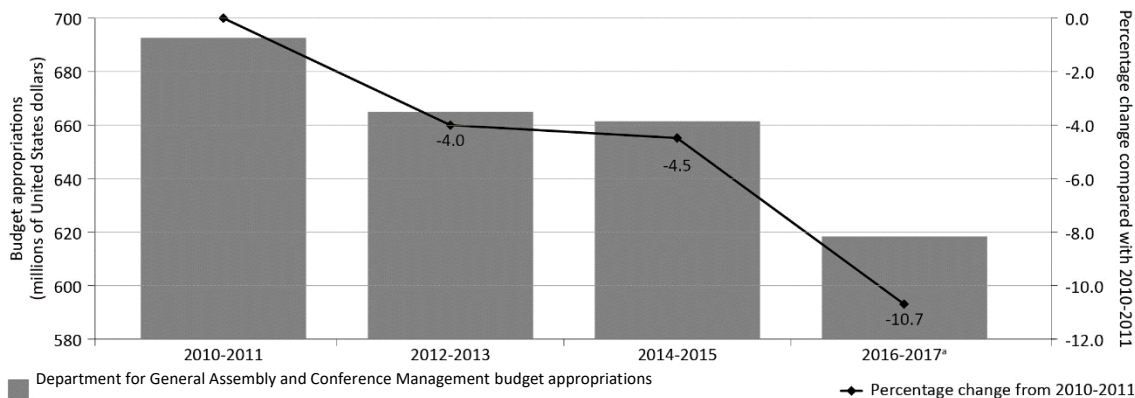
¹⁰² Allen Mark et al *Evaluation of the Translation Process in United Nations*.

Union where studies have been done to show the cost elements of a ‘fully fledged multilingual system.’

A report made by the European Union shows that multilingualism does not come cheap. One day cost upwards of 1476 Euros and 1046 Euros per day for the European Parliament and Commission respectively. If the languages being interpreted increase to three, the cost increases to 8900 Euros per day. The total cost of interpretation translates to roughly 160 million Euros (Kshs 17.6 Billion) a year not a small figure by any means.¹⁰³

The case is not different for the United Nations. As seen, between 2010 and 2015, there has been a 10 percent increase in the number of words that were translated by the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) but ironically the increased workload did was not matched by a corresponding increase in budgetary allocation to the department, in actual sense, there has been a 10.7% budget cut as the table below shows¹⁰⁴

Figure 3: UN Budgetary allocation source A/71/116



Therefore, UN multilingual policy as it is currently can be seen as an economically viable means of making sure that everyone is included without over burdening the purse. The six languages are indeed spoken and understood to a varying degree of competency by roughly a combined 3.5 billion people. The population is geographically spread in such a manner that almost every

¹⁰³ Luoma T, Multilingualism at any cost?

¹⁰⁴ See 71/116

country in the world speaks at least one of the six United Nation Languages. In fact, it is only Chinese and Russian that appears geographically limited in its spread.

However, proponents of expansion of UN multilingual policy choose to look at language not from a cost perspective but rather from a functional one. To them, language is just not about communication but rather a very vital carrier of national identity and every individual must be accorded the right to use a language of their choice. In fact, this can be looked at from the perspective as to why the international organizations including the United Nations are formed in the first place. They were formed to create unity and stop the long periods of bloody conflicts that had been witnessed over the years. Indeed, the organizations were to form a platform for common understanding and open communication in settling differences. Speaking in an interview with Euractiv, Leonard Orban, a onetime Commissioner of Multilingualism in the European Commission, asserts that the ‘core of the European Union was to make previous war enemies sit at one table and speak from a common playing field granted by an appreciation of everyone’s language, especially the right to speak it.’¹⁰⁵

Opponents of expansion of the United Nations language will point at the cost element and argue that it may not be cost effective to expand the cost. As noted previously, Phillipson had alluded to the fact that translation and interpretation service are currently consuming up to a quarter of the United Nations working budget at the expense of core mandates including health and peace-keeping. Of what use will it be to burden the already cash constrained UN with expensive translation services when the core mandate is underfunded? In fact suggestions by scholars such as Tomkins et al is to reduce the number of languages either to one with English being mooted as a possible lingua franca thanks mainly to its global reach, or to adopt a neutral language. Esperanto-an artificial language created to deal with identity elements embedded deeply in languages has been touted as the most viable option although experimentation to encourage its widespread use has often returned negative results.

The present UN language model is very wasteful with too many people using a language they are less fluent in and often incomprehensible in and that too many materials are translated into all

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/interview/orban-multilingualism-cost-of-democracy-in-eu/>

official languages with little or no actual usage. In other words, his position is that the extra amount wasted could be better channeled to other productive uses within the United Nations. Other proponents of language narrowing posit that United Nations must stick to its core mandate of peace-keeping, healthcare and promotion of human rights rather than spending vast amount of fund in linguistic services.

But of what benefit will it be to save all the money ‘wasted’ by multilingualism and end up not communicating to the intended people in the intended manner? As will be discussed later in this paper, the choice of language used can affect the effectiveness of a communication in what is referred to as channel noise. In fact, proponents of multilingualism, contend that we need not look at the money in its raw sense but rather distribute it in what it intends to achieve. Alternatively, we could look at it from the perspective of what would be the scenario were effective communication fail to take place because of a narrow range of language choices(s). Looked at differently, the costs of multilingualism should not be looked at from a narrow angle of direct monetary costs incurred by the United Nations, but rather from the wholesome indirect cost of excluding a huge section of the UN members from participating or benefiting from the discourse they rightfully have a share in.

3.9 Conclusion

The UN Multilingual policy states that there shall be six official and working languages namely English, French, Arabic, Russian, Chinese and Spanish. In trying to actualize this policy, several departments and offices including DGACM, and DPI as well CoM have been set up. This was occasioned by complaints that English was being used disproportionately more than the other official/working languages.

In conclusion, in order to actualize the objectives of the United Nations including promoting peace and security, development as well as human right, there is need to not only fully implement the multilingual policy but also consider expanding the languages in question. This is because, even the United Nations has noted that language is a key driver in promoting not only inclusiveness but also unity of purpose, something that is vital in achieving the said goals.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at how the United Nations multilingual policy influences the working of United Nations organs and affiliates around the world, and relationship between and amongst members. To vividly demonstrate how language policy affects the UN organs and affiliates, it will use two case studies; the case of peace-keeping operations (PKOs) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). For PKOs, mainly secondary information shall be utilized while primary information will suffice for UNEP.

As noted before, the United Nations is an organization composed of (almost) all-independent states with the main objective of bringing about peace in the world especially coming from the embers of the Second World War that brought ‘untold suffering and sorrow to mankind.’¹⁰⁶ To

¹⁰⁶ <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf>

achieve this, a crosscutting consensus and understanding of the mission and objectives of the United Nations had to be sought. The United Nations Secretary General aptly captured this in a report presented to the United Nations' Committee on Information. The Secretary General said that this could only be achieved through 'a communication and information function that informs the stakeholders about what the UN is doing.'¹⁰⁷ Indeed the general Assembly agreed that 'public information should be at the heart of the United Nations and that a philosophy of communication should cut across all level of the organization in order to fully inform all the peoples of the UN about its activities in line with its ideologies and goals as expressed in the Charter.'¹⁰⁸

To effectively achieve this a language or groups of languages that reaches all the 'peoples of the United Nations' had to be used. This is something that even the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had noted as far back as 1997. In a statement stressing the importance of universal access to basic communication and information services, the ACC maintained that 'news concerning what is happening is a main tenet of international relations and contributes greatly on how fast a particular intervention is undertaken and how effective the intervention will be in view of multiplicity of actors.'¹⁰⁹ The plurality of actors involved in the United Nations set-up is indeed both a delicate burden that has to be navigated given the thousands of languages involved.

The million-dollar question then is if United Nations rightfully so understands that effective communication is at the heart of good international relations, why does the UN have only six languages to work with? Is it not then an oxymoron for it to claim that it wants to reach all people, build a common understanding of uniting the world, and avoiding the scourge of war and the untold sufferings, it wrenched on millions, yet have such a narrow choice of means and instrument to do so? Probably to attempt to answer this, we have to look at the linguistic landscape and the actual workload that is available to the 'limited' six. In an organization like United Nations, the number of languages that are there and could be used are as diverse as the numbers.

¹⁰⁷ A/AC.198/1998/2 implementation measures regarding information and communications. Par 5

¹⁰⁸ General Assembly Resolution 56/64 part B of, preambles para 2 of 24 December 2001

¹⁰⁹ Statement of Administrative Committee on Coordination on Universal access to basic communication and information services para. 3

4.2 Multilingualism and user Satisfaction

In theory, the UN multilingualism policy is working so great that very few member states would be seen to be complaining. Indeed, in order to better rate how the members are finding the languages services, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) carried out a survey with indicators that included the satisfaction with quality of interpretations, the timely productions of translations, the volume of the translations produced and the output in translator days. Based on the results of this survey, one would be tempted to believe that the members are practically satisfied with the services offered if lack of specific complaints was anything to go by.¹¹⁰ However, the reality is different based on the recurrent language as expressed year in year out in various UN resolutions. Of main concern has either been the quality of translation and/or interpretation services that members have been receiving. Strongly worded resolutions of the Assembly have repeatedly featured words such as ‘express concern with’, ‘notes with deep concern’, and reiterates its request to the Sec General to ensure’ all directed at the translation and interpretation duo.

What the members are putting across is that they feel that the multilingualism policy, though well intended is fraught with what can be termed loosely as user challenges. Translation and interpretation especially when the languages involves a series of relays¹¹¹ is bound to bring with it some specific challenges that include dissatisfaction with the quality, accuracy or even the non-execution of the task itself.

The situation is indeed compounded if you look at the discrepancies about what the UN stands for in its policies and actually what happens in its many different offices and/or organizations. For instance, quite a number of Spanish speaking countries and some from Arabic group have in the past complained at the prominence English is given by the UN. The same complaint has in the past been expressed by French-speaking member states.¹¹² However, a scrutiny that was led by the Secretary General revealed that the problem might not have been at the UN headquarters but rather in some of its other offices. The answer seems plausible until you put the role and mandate of UN in perspective. As it has been repeatedly stressed, it (the UN) endeavours to unite

¹¹⁰ JIU/REP/2002/11

¹¹¹ A relay set up involves interpretation/translation of one language to another via an intermediary. For instance, to translate something from Chinese to French, if one first has the said thing translated from Chinese to English first, then from English, to French, this will be a typical relay.

¹¹² JIU/REP/2002/11 para 81

the people of the world. This can only be achieved if and only all the United Nations organs and offices worldwide speak the same language literally. The UN is much more than its headquarters but rather the sum of all its offices and personnel regardless of the location.

Ironically, user satisfaction surveys can in essence shroud the real problem based on perceptions rather than actual feelings. For instance, a protest led by French-speaking media representatives covering the Geneva offices would have misled one to believe only the French who were having ‘satisfaction’ issues until you look at the list of signatories. A scrutiny would reveal that the list included Chinese and Japanese journalists who were better versed with French as opposed to English. It is not lost on us that UN has Chinese as one of the languages and one would express that the Chinese journalists would be routing for Chinese language.

4.3 Interpretation and Translation Services: Paradox between Resource Scarcity and Workload Abundance

A universal outlook of the United Nations translation and/or interpretation services will reveal a workforce that is sufficient and capable of handling the volume of work that is thrown on the way of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGAACMs). However, a scrutiny of the smaller meetings reveal that the number is at best inadequate. In a situation analogous to a man whose upper body is freezing while the lower body is in hot water¹¹³, the heavier presence of translators in the established offices especially at the headquarters gives the impression that the work force is sufficient. It is not uncommon to find a battalion of up to 30 pairs in the headquarters thanks to the language relay earlier mentioned.

The ‘lesser languages’ including Russian, Spanish and Arabic are left at the mercy of their established ‘big brothers’ English and French. The problem is akin to the egg-chicken conundrum. One is left unsure whether the disparity is a result of the shortage of skilled translators who are versed in these languages or that the diminished importance the languages are viewed with is the cause of the fewer interpreters employed and thus the knotty coverage the said languages receive.

In order to cope with this conundrum, the United Nations and its other organizations have been forced to hire services of interpreters. This interpreters and translators

¹¹³ This analogy ends up giving a reading that on paper would claim the body temperature is normal whilst the reality is the opposite.

4.4 Language Diversity and Multilingualism

At the heart of the multilingualism concept is the need to promote language diversity in such a way and manner that all languages are treated in an equal manner to avoid the predominance of one language or a set of languages. This was informed by the sad reality that a few elite group of languages due to issues that may include economic and political might may load it over others to an extent that the said languages may be at risk of disappearing. As it is now in the UN set up, a group of six languages have been selected as the official and working languages. The interesting scenario is that even among the select group of six, the predominance of English is something that is making the others feel ‘neglected’ leading to complaints by the others.

UNESCO at its very core has been active in promoting language diversity in a bid to ensure that no language may disappear either due to it being less and less by its native speakers but also as a result of language displacement by other dominant languages either by design or default. It came up with a measure, which it called language vitality¹¹⁴ that looks at the health of a given language based on a number of indicators.¹¹⁵ A language that scores highly on the vitality indicators is said to be less likely to be endangered. The opposite is true.

This concept of language vitality has acquired another use in the UN set-up. It is now currently being used to prevent the tendency of the system sliding towards monolingualism-read English dominance. In particular, it has identified five key parameters to measure how ‘endangered’ a language is or is not. The five are availability of language education and literacy, community members towards their own language, response to new domains and media, type and quality of documentation and governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use.

This could be put in the context of a group that was created in 1970s to monitor, advocate and promote cultural and linguistic diversity in general and French language usage in particular. The group, Organization of Francophone countries (OIF) has been credited to be at the forefront of a

¹¹⁴ Language vitality looks at a number of parameters that include whether the said language is responsive to new domains or media, has a good number of speakers, has available materials for learning, is promoted by governmental and other institutional policies status and use, proportion of speakers within the total population etc

¹¹⁵ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/cultural-diversity/langauge-and-multilingualism/endangered-languages/language-vitality>

number of legal instruments including the Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (2005). Worried about the perceived dominance of English in the UN, OIF has had a number of dialogues with major international linguistic zones in a bid to resuscitate multilingualism in general and the status of the French language in particular. One could in essence argue that OIF is not entirely interested in multilingualism per se but rather the status of the French language. Were the French Language be dominant, it will be arguable if OIF would still be as vocal. The organization of French journalist in Geneva who monitor the usage of French in the Geneva-based UN organizations are a clear pointer.

The linguistic diversity debate has usually led to calls to expand the range of languages that are given the official recognition by the UN. Budgetary constraints has always been the Procrustean bed thrown in to stop the debate from spreading further. However, proponents of the language expansion debate have always challenged the UN to define whether it is indeed a members' organization or a private entity. If it is a members' organization, it has to then walk the talk and include all members in its programmes and activities starting with the very basic level of language.

A scrutiny of the linguistic expansion reveals that the bigger issue is more political than economical one. If the languages were to be expanded, who gets the slot? Africa? India? German? For which services? To deal with the debate in a rather diplomatic manner, a number of countries have been left to make United Nations documentations available in their own languages provided they foot the costs. As such, German, Portuguese and Japanese have had official UN documents in their own languages have official UN documents although they are not official members. The provision has also been extended in such a way that some UN organizations such as ILO and WIPO among others have some of these languages as working languages.

4.5 Multilingualism and other Stakeholders

The United Nations has many stakeholders who interact with it. Key among the stakeholders are the member states themselves who among other things are involved in the expanding or limiting the mandate of the organization. Other stakeholders, with the permission of the main policy

actors-the member states, will also be invited from time to time. The scope could include issues such as gender and environmental or even linguistic issues. Since these are matters that may need collaboration among the different actors regardless of linguistic ability, a smooth way of communicating and reaching consensus on these issues has to be devised.

In essence, a shared responsibility mechanism has been set up and this influences the multilingualism set up as it has been

4.5.1 How does UN multilingual Policy Influence UN Operations: A case Study of UN Peace-Keeping Operations

Languages used in international organizations, including the United Nations, affect individuals and members at three distinct levels. One, at the level where members of the organizations are interacting with each other whether orally or written in their day to day work. Two, at the level where the organization is interacting with entities outside it but vital to its operations such as recipients of a peace keeping operations. Finally, when the organization is communicating with the larger public in order to make its operations known, understood in an effort to solicit support to its core agenda.

The United Nations, being an intergovernmental organization with an almost universal membership and presence all over the world, whether in terms of physical offices or in the performance of its duties including but not limited to peacekeeping, is faced with this unique challenge of navigating the Tower of Babel whilst still trying to achieve what it set out to do.

Other than the United General Assembly (UNGA) meetings, peace keeping operations are the most visible embodiment of the United Nations. They are the quintessence of UN's commitment to promote peace and security to prevent humanity from 'the scourge of war that brought untold sufferings to the millions.' Unlike formal meetings such as UNGA that take place in a formal setup with months of preparations including assistance of trained professional interpreters, PKOs take place in situations that are not only risky but are faced with language challenges.¹¹⁶

In the formal meetings, the working and or official languages are clearly specified well in advance with trained interpreters and/or translators at hand to help in bridging the

¹¹⁶ Edwards V. The Role of \communication in Peace and relief Negotiations Translation Journal 2001

communication gap. However, in a PKO, we are faced with a triple challenge to occur all factors to do with risk put constant. One, we have a peace keepers from country A let us say India, who are sent to country B let's say Burundi. Both countries do not use either of the six UN languages as their first languages and would thus need to have translation services for them to have a common understanding. It is obviously clear that communication is directly interfering with the success of the mission. Because of lack of trained interpreters, language assistants sourced from the local civilians are have to be hired to fill the gap. The Language assistants have to sign a contract to serve for a specified period of time mostly a year subject to meeting specified minimum requirements as assessed by their immediate supervisors. The locals who have the privilege of sharing a common language with the troops contributing country are almost always at an advantage.

The success and or failure of a mission is thus hinged on how successful use of local languages is. Related with language, the understanding of local culture is something that is very vital if the final goal has to be reached. As linguistic scholars have in the past pointed out, language is a vital cog in the holy trinity of identity-culture-language. Missions such as MINUSTAH in Haiti had no option but to co-opt the local language-creole in their operations. An unwritten rule in the UN PKOs is that it is imperative for all missions to use the local language, if that local language is not one of the UN working languages.¹¹⁷ Thus, the working languages that will be adopted in PKOs will largely be determined by; one the UN multilingual policy i.e. the six official and working languages, two the language that is spoken by the troops contributing country and finally the local language. As such, in our example of India and Burundi, the language to be use will be English, French (the language spoken by the elite in Burundi) and Kirundi (the language spoken by the majority). The same case applies to UN observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) where English and Spanish was used and United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) where English, French and Kinyarwanda was used.

As such, it is clear that whereas the UN multilingual policy looks to be adequate if we look at the geographical spread and percentage of people speaking it either as a first or second language- regardless of the degree of fluency- the reality on the grounds calls for modification of the policy to suit the local needs. As such. It will be crucial for military and civilian personnel deployed in

¹¹⁷ Junior, I. A, The use of Language Assistant in UN Peace Missions

conflict areas to among other things have a basic understanding of the local language if the mission is to be successful. In case this is not possible, local interpreters should be used but with due care. It should also be noted that under extreme pressure- a situation very prevalent in conflict situations, a person's ability to express themselves is severely challenged. This becomes even worse if the said language is not their first language and is thus inherently foreign?

In practice, how has the use of language assistant (LA) influenced the success or otherwise of missions? To adequately answer this, we need to satisfactorily equip ourselves with the basic ethos of how interpretations occur. There are basically two ways either consecutive or simultaneous interpretations.¹¹⁸ Sometimes a mix of the two can be employed. In consecutive interpretation, the interpreter has to wait for the speaker to complete their part before relaying the message to the other interlocutor. This usually involves sometimes noting the key message-mentally or on paper whichever is preferable, and then reproducing it. In consecutive interpretation, the interpreter has to relay the information as it is being said in real time. There is no room to decode, recode and convey the message. It is akin to what happens in conferences with the aid of headphones only that this time the message is whispered. Two things become critical here. One, we have to note that the interpreters are not trained in the field of translation and thus may miss certain words or phrases which are key to the communication. Two, sets of languages may not necessarily have a similar set of vocabulary and thus substituting a word with the closest synonym is something that can irrevocably alter the meaning completely especially in a pressure-cooker like environment. This is something that Saphir-Whorf hypothesizes in their theory that the presence or absence of certain words in one's vocabulary does affect their world view. It should also be noted that the language assistant is doing this multi-directional interpretation without the use of a dictionary and should at least have the ability to effectively deliver this.

We also need to keenly look at the ideal qualifications of the language assistant vis-à-vis what is actually on the ground. When recruiting the language assistants, the recruiting body-in this case the mission has to advertise the posts giving out certain ideal description tasks the LA would do. This includes interpretation services in meetings and conferences or other locations that will be specified, coordinate and prepare meetings, draft correspondences in Arabic and English, provide

¹¹⁸ Junior, I. A, The use of Language Assistant in UN Peace Missions

comprehensive and timely administrative support, prepare minutes etc. ¹¹⁹ other than this, the ideal candidate should have certain competencies that include professionalism, client orientation, communication teamwork and good planning and organization. In addition they are required to have certain basic minimum level of education, at least four years of relevant experience among others.

The reality on the ground is rather different. People who have worked with LAs have demonstrated that the said LAs fall way below the competencies advertised for. Most often the only thing they have is closer working relations with the local inhabitants. These LAs have never worked before as interpreters, their grasp of any of the UN official languages is at best poor, they do not have the competencies listed above such as organizational skills among others.

Other than this, we need to put into perspectives including religious convictions, principals of neutrality and impartiality, ideological and political beliefs, ethnicity and confidentiality that may affect the accuracy of the translations/interpretations. Being one of the locals, the information that comes into their contact may be critical towards the success and/or failure of a mission. As thus, it becomes even critical to know the background of these LAs.

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to do this effectively in a conflict situation. A good example of how this can affect the working of the UN is as captured in United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) where, “You are the strongest group in the area. For sure, you can help us by telling us who perpetrated the crime”, was mistranslated into “I know you did perpetrate the crime” by one of the LAs.¹²⁰ This brought tensions between the UN peacekeepers and the rebels because of the blatant unfounded “accusation.”

What this brings out is that either the translator did not properly master both sets of languages or that he failed the impartiality test. In this instance, it took the intervention of one of the rebels who knew both languages well to calm the tension that had developed.

¹¹⁹ Adopted from UN Mission in South Sudan.

¹²⁰ Junior, I. A, The use of Language Assistant in UN Peace Missions

Such incidents could be a recurring motif given the fact that the locals being employed as LAs have gone through the traumatic experiences of war and are thus not likely to be neutral especially when negotiating with their ‘enemies.’

Ideally, translation is not something that can be acquired overnight.¹²¹ Translation is simply not the elementary operation of words from one lexical group to another but is rather a delicate art of trying to build bridges between different linguistic groups while preserving the linguistic and cultural identities.¹²²

In essence what we can see from the case study of UN and PKOs, is that the prescribed official language is not necessarily the language that would be solely used as the working language in the field. As such, restraining the UN to the narrow range of six languages is in itself a defeatist approach. Therefore, restricting the employment in only as far as fluency in the chosen six is concerned is at best counterproductive for it misses the nuances and challenges that an organization serving and operating in a truly multilingual society provides.

4.6 A case study of the United Nations Environmental Programme

In order to effectively understand how the UN multilingual policy influences operations of the UN affiliates around the world, this study took a case study United Nations Environmental Programme to gain primary information. This was obtained by administering questionnaires to respondents from the said agency in Nairobi. The findings are as enumerated below.

Table 1: Number of questionnaires administered and received back.

NO OF QUESTIONNAIRES ISSUED	NO. OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED	QUESTIONNAIRES CORRECTLY FILLED
60	55	50

¹²¹ Guillete, J. Interpreters and Translators: stories of people who have done it, 101 Publishing 2012

¹²² Kelly N, and Zetzsche J. Found in Translation: How Language shapes our lives and transforms the world, Perigee 2012

Table 2: The age Distribution of Respondents

AGE	18 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 -59	OVER 60
NUMBER	6	15	20	7	2

The age group between 30 years and 40 years composed the majority of the respondents of this research at 30% and 40% respectively adding up to 70% of all the respondents.

Table 3: Respondents level of education

LEVEL OF DUCATION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
CERTIFICATE	3
DIPLOMA	8
BACHELOR	24
MASTERS	10
OTHERS	5
TOTAL	50

Majority of the respondents held a bachelors degree constituting 42% of the total respondents. Those holding masters degree came second at 20% and the least being certificate level of education at only 6%.

Table 4: Gender distribution

GENDER	NUMBER
Female	29
Male	21
Total	50

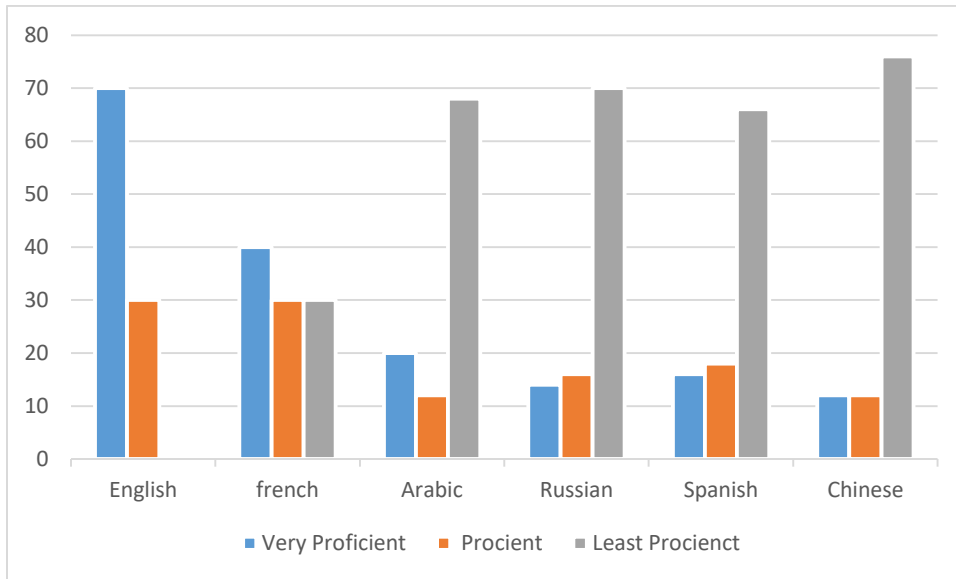
The majority of the respondents were males at 58% and the female respondents were 42 %.

Table 5: Years of service of the respondents at the organization

YEARS OF SERVICE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Less than 5	10
5 - 10	16
11 – 15	18
Over 15	6
Total	50

Majority of the respondents had worked for the organization for more than five years. Only 12% of the respondents though had worked for over 15 years.

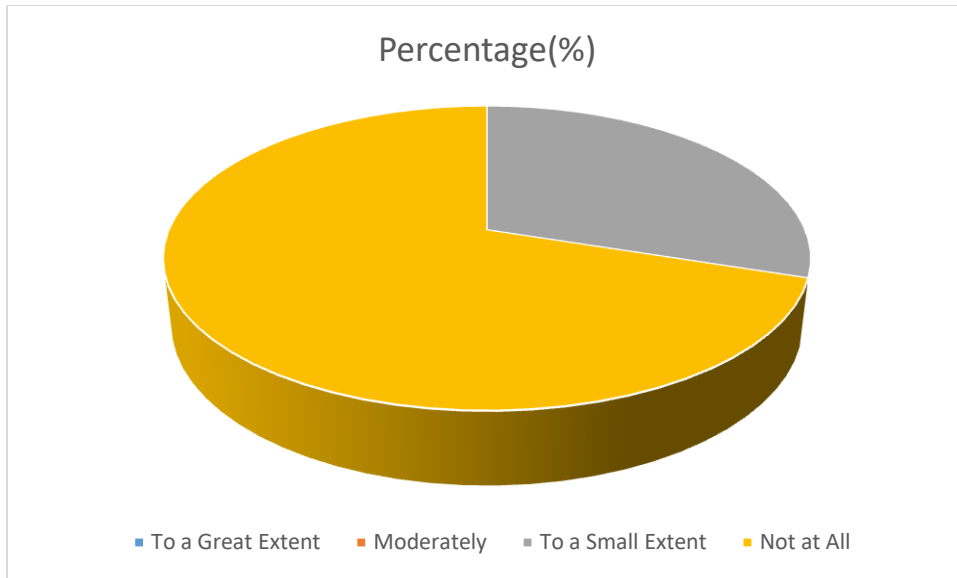
Figure 5 Proficiency Levels in Percentage



4.6.1 Language policy

When asked about the language policy of the organization all the respondents stated that it is a multilingual policy and all could name correctly the six UN official languages Language. They all agreed that UNEP has a multilingual policy. However 96% were for the opinion that the multilingual policy was not fully applied at all times. For instance the research found out that documentation, information in the organization website and meetings were done mostly in English. The research established that the language of documentation was 86% in English and only 14% in French. Other languages are not included.

Figure 8: Extent to which the language of documentation affected the respondents working



Most were fluent in English and French the languages used in documentation. The percentage of those who said that it affected them were mostly those whose proficiency level in either of the two languages was moderate.

4.6.2 Languages of Meeting

All the respondents confirmed that the language used for meetings in their organization was conducted in English with to translation. They said that it was appropriate since majority of the staff were proficient in the language as well as cost effective.

The respondents indicated that they received communication from the United Nations Headquarters in English. However 98% confirmed that despite the use of one language it does not hamper their performance at all.

On being asked what their opinion on the choice of the UN working and official languages language was, 90% of the respondents opined that it is not representative. The majority held the belief that some regions such as Africa is not fully and some for instance Europe is overrepresented with four languages from the continent.

The respondents' opinion on language parity in the organization revealed that there is lack of it. They intimated that English given more prominence followed by French from a distance. 98% of them commented that the multilingual policy of the organization should be strictly adhered to.

4.6.3 Incentives to learn newer language

The respondents were asked whether the organization offered incentive to them to learn a new language. There are provisions to learn new languages such as French, Arabic, Russian and Spanish but English is the dominantly used language in the organization and majority feel that they are already comfortable with their proficiency levels and thus fewer have taken the option of learning the newer language. As a result 20% only have learnt new languages

4.6.4 Languages to be included in the UN

Majority of the respondents (90%) indicated that more languages should be included in the UN language policy to make it representative. Languages such as Swahili (to represent the continent of Africa), German and Portuguese were suggested. The respondents noted that Europe is overrepresented with a total of four languages out of the six UN languages.

4.7 How Multilingualism Affects Relationship Between and Amongst Nations?

The United Nations provides an arena for members to freely interact and dialogue between and amongst themselves. It is aptly captured in the famous phrase “We the People of the United Nations.”¹²³ Ideally the interaction should be conducted in a language that allows all members to fully comprehend what is being discussed or has been documented. In the same vein, the members have to be understood in the language they so wish to use.

Because it may not be practically plausible for all members languages to be included, UN has provided the multilingual policy that has languages that will aid the interaction to the ‘greatest aggregate of its members. Granted, the languages chosen are, on paper, representative of all the regions of the world. With the exception of Chinese, the UN languages are spoken by almost all the countries represented in the UN. Even then, Chinese has the single-most greatest aggregate of first language speakers.¹²⁴

But in this very provision lies the absurdity of United Nations being created for the unity of the world. The choices of languages creates a situation akin to master-and-servant. For the servants

¹²³ Preamble to the Charter of United Nations and International Court of Justice

¹²⁴ That’s if we for theoretical purposes treat Chinese language as one homogeneous and mutually-intelligible language. In practice, mutual intelligibility is not guaranteed.

to partake in the feast of the masters they must conform their mannerism of the later. For the rest of the world to join the conversation, they need to learn at least one of the six languages. Unfortunately this obligation is one way for it is not equally imposed on the rest of the members whose languages are on the UN list of 'special' languages to learn at least one language from the rest of the world. Never mind that the missions and offices could be located outside the confines of the special six.

Granted the rest of the world speaks at least a version of the six languages. But a closer examination of the way in which the languages were literally imposed on the rest of the world is at best forcefully imposed on them through conquest and colonialism with the attendant negative imagery. Thus, even in some of these countries the mastery of the languages is limited to a small fraction of people who have formal education up to a certain level. Even this is still 'doubtful' at least from the perspectives of the original speakers. Why then would for instance Britain require Kenyans to sit for a language proficiency exam to prove their mastery of English yet English is supposedly the official language of Kenya? As such, from the onset the 'secondary' speakers of this languages already start the dialogue from a point of weakness.

Furthermore, interaction between and amongst members of the UN is not limited to conferences only, where translations services may be provided but goes deeper than that. It should involve universal participation of all the citizens of that member state in understanding and contributing to the all potential resolutions. As such, all documents so produced must be read and understood clearly and the views of the citizens captured clearly. Unfortunately, for this to effectively take place, the documents must be translated into the languages understood by the majority of the citizens and back again to any of the official languages.

A closer scrutiny will reveal that none of the countries in the global south has representation on the linguistic map of the UN. Thus, a clear delineation between North and South or industrialized and developing nations is further enhanced by this linguistic divide. The irony being that members who are financially able to translate the materials have no extra financial commitment to make. Essentially what this means is that the information gap that is already prevalent is further entrenched. This is despite the fact that even the poorer countries had contributed-

although not as big a portion- a sizeable portion pound-for-pound to the UN's translation services.¹²⁵ This inequality has seen protest lodged by members of the UN to the Secretary General from time to time often met with the Procrustean bed response concerning budget allocation is insufficient.¹²⁶

4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, United Nations operations around the world are to an extent influenced and affected by the choice of language policy it has chosen. Interaction between and among members is facilitated by the choice of the six languages with a sizeable portion of the world speaking a section of the chosen six. Unfortunately, the conversation among members is something that extends further than conferences where translation and interpretation services are available. It involves citizens of the world as per the phrase 'we the people of the united Nations'. Thus a sizeable chunk of the populace either completely left out or their views not wholly taken into account.

Regarding, UN affiliates around the world, the multilingual policy does not greatly hamper the operations in these offices. This is mainly because the staff employed there are conversant with the languages used. But this may be a clear manifestation of the linguistic inequality already employed during hiring of the staff who must be conversant with at least one of the UN languages especially English and French.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Introduction

This study sought to look at multilingual policy in international organizations with a particular focus on the United Nations. Specifically, it sought to assess how a language policy affects and influences the operations of an international organization.

¹²⁵ Tonkin H, Language and the United Nations: A preliminary Review.

¹²⁶ *ibid*

It is through language that international relations are conducted. A language policy that an international organization chooses will determine whether its objectives are met or not. The United Nations, being the premier international organization with the most universal representation has chosen a multilingual policy to drive its communication agenda. Six languages; English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese and Russian are the official and working languages.

The study was guided by the premise that language carries with it enormous economic, social and political capital. The choice of what language to use or not is something of that should interest only international relations scholars but also diplomats. As such, the study tried to find out what impact language policy has in the operations of the United Nations. Specifically, the study wanted to assess the history and development of multilingualism in the UN system, to assess the UN policy on multilingualism and how this policy works in practice. And to assess how the policy influences the UN working in states around the world.

To achieve this, the study first analyzed literature on multilingualism in other international organizations including the European Union and African Union. For the European Union, an almost universal multilingualism policy with each member state having its main national language adopted as a working and official languages. As such, with 28 members (at least before the Britain formally exits the union) there are 24 languages that are considered official and working languages. African Union has a unique policy that recognizes French, English, Arabic, Portuguese and all major African languages as the official and working languages.

A closer examination of these particular language policies reveal the paradox of more being less. In practice, the multiplicity of languages means that only a few dominant languages especially English, French and German are actually used in the EU as languages of documentations and conferences. In fact all the laws are drafted in these languages and later translated into the other with the 'lesser' languages forced to conform to the structure of the dominant languages. The case is no different for the African Union where English and French are the dominant languages. So dominant are the two languages that contentious matters are decided along the linguistic divide.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Five-lessons-from-African-Union-elections/1056-3795824-14tr7csz/index.html>

Two key theories, affordance theory and individual rational choice, were used. Affordance approaches multilingualism from two perspectives: language affordance social language affordance and individual language affordance. It advances the notion that language affordance can be achieved through communication which uses language as a vehicle used for delivery. For social language affordance, the theory posits that situations differ depending on the specific community at a specific time which translates to the licensing the use and acquisition of a language or languages. In this study affordance theory was used to shade light on the decision of the UN as an organization to arrive at the six official languages. On the other hand individual rational choice assumes that individuals are rational being and that the choices they make including linguistic ones are driven by a conscious and deliberate desire to achieve their interests. The choice or choices are made from a group of competing choices that are capable or incapable to a certain degree to achieve the set objectives. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methodology with United Nations reports and resolutions on multilingualism, and other used to obtain secondary information. Questionnaires were administered to United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) employees in a bid to obtain primary data. The data obtained was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 12). The data was coded for ease of reference and presented in forms of tables, graphs and pie charts for ease of interpretation.

5.2 Summary of the chapters

Chapter one introduced language and language policies from a broad perspective. Demographics and background facts about United Nations were introduced in this chapter and the researcher also elucidated the main objective, general objective and specific objectives of the study that have been derived from the research problem. Justification of the study that points out to the three key areas; policy, academic and general public is also alluded to in this chapter. Examination of various studies and work done by different scholars was done to show the nexus between adoption of languages and effectiveness of international organizations. The two theories namely; social dominance theory and individual rational theory were introduced in an effort to build a theoretical framework. Lastly, the researcher outlined the target population whence from the primary information was to be obtained from. The sample and sampling methods are also explained. Further techniques to be used in data collection, the instruments to be used during data collection, analysis and presentation are elaborated.

This chapter two traced the history and development of multilingualism in the United Nations System. It looked at the United Nations multilingual policy as it is in the UN system both at the secretariat, General Assembly as well as the other agencies including United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The chapter established that UN has a multilingual policy with six languages namely English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian as the official and working languages. The said languages are also the official languages of all the UN agencies but some of the agencies have opted to have only English and French as the working languages. The choice of the languages was made mainly through the lenses of power politics. The victors of the Second World War had their languages chosen as official and working languages. Of the six, only Arabic was a 'neutral' language but ostensibly because Arabic-speaking countries decided to meet the costs associated with its addition.

This chapter three looked at the UN Multilingual Policy with a bias towards how it is implemented both at the UN principal organs and related autonomous agencies. It also looked at roles of various departments including Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, Public Information, and offices such as coordinator of multilingualism and what specific role they play in as far as entrenching multilingualism in the UN is concerned. The chapter also looked at the prospects and challenges in the implementation of the policy.

The chapter found out that the policy is implemented only on paper. In Practice, English and to a less extent French are the dominant languages and they are used for documentation, meetings among other engagements. This is despite efforts including the office of the coordinator of multilingualism that are supposed to spearhead the actualization of the multilingualism aspirations of the UN. Resolutions after resolutions have decried the hegemonic dominance of English. Reports after reports, ironically also done in English have recommended measures on what ought to be done to arrest the situation but either the pace is too slow or little is being done for there to be visible results.

This chapter four looked at how the United Nations multilingual policy influences the working of United Nations organs and affiliates around the world, and relationship between and amongst members. Two case studies; the case of peace-keeping operations (PKOs) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). For PKOs, mainly secondary information was used while primary information was obtained via questionnaires.

5.3 Answers to Research Questions

5.3.1 What is the History and Development of Multilingualism in the UN System?

International Organizations, although they can trace their history to the 19th century, are a 20th Century phenomena. They were formed specifically to serve aspects that were transnational in nature including transport and telecommunications. Other than that, International co-operation specifically to stop the recurrent wars in continental Europe was also a key objective. To achieve their objective, a means of communications had to be found and this was through language.

At the formative period of international organizations, French was the de facto language mainly because France was a dominant power in Europe stretching back to the Napoleonic days. As such it was the language that diplomats and staff of international organizations had to use for their day to day interactions. With time, the choice of language expanded with English coming into the picture, partly as a result of waning of French influence but mainly because of the rise in power of Great Britain and United States of America. This was evident with the formation of the League of Nations although United States never formally joined the League because of domestic veto by Congress.

With time, the idea of having more than one language as the official and working languages became the norm. Later organizations including the United Nations, the European Union and Organization of African Union later renamed Africa Union have adopted a multilingual approach as a means of not only facilitating dialogue between and amongst the members but also making members feel included in the affairs of the organization. A classic example is the European Union that has put a heavy emphasis on the prefix ‘multi’ in multilingualism. With 28 member states, the Union has an impressive 24 languages in its language policy. Essentially, all member states have their national language as an official language of the European Union.

In Contrast, the study found out that the United Nations has a multilingual policy with six official and working languages. The six are (not in any order of importance) English, French, Spanish, Russian Chinese and Arabic. Prima facie, the six languages have both a geographical spread and impressive number of first language speakers and are therefore best suited to be the face of an organization aiming to unite the people of the world and save them from the scourge of war that has brought untold suffering to millions.¹²⁸ However, a closer scrutiny reveals that the main consideration was politics rather than anything.

As an organization founded when realism was the in thing, it would not have escaped a keen student of power politics that coincidentally all the victors of the Second World War had their languages represented. English, French and Russian are languages spoken by United States, United Kingdom, France and Russia who had emerged victorious in the war that had just ended prior to the formation of the United Nations to replace the ineffective League of Nations. Spanish and Chinese were roped in to represent the other speakers who coincidentally happened to be siding with the victors. Only Arabic was added with supposedly little regard to political considerations but rather economic ones. This particular language was heavily influenced by economic reasons than politics but this researcher views the main reason was politically ‘neutrality’ of Arab. Since Arabic speaking nations were not considered a threat to the interest of the hegemonic stability of the big players, it was easy to consider it. Germany is a language that is capable of equally funding itself and has significant influence in the EU but has not been added to the list.

Therefore to answer our question on the history of multilingualism in the UN

5.3.2 How Does the UN Policy on Multilingualism Work in Practice?

On paper the six languages enjoy equal prominence at the linguistic high-table of the United Nations systems. In deed so valued is multilingualism to an extent that a number of resolutions and reports on how to further entrench it (multilingualism) in the UN have been passed by the General Assembly with the Secretary General of the United Nations tasked to ensure their implementation. Offices such as Coordinator of multilingualism that is essentially a group

¹²⁸ Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations and International Court of Justice.

comprising of heads of Key UN offices and agencies who are supposed to network and ensure that all the agencies and offices implement the United Nations multilingualism policy as it is without fail.

However, despite the efforts made by the United Nations, and in spite of the United Nations System adopting multilingual policy with the six languages namely English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian as the official and working languages, its various agencies have adopted a somewhat slightly different approach. Most have opted to have only English and French as the working languages contrary to the multilingual policy. As such, one can say that the policy is only on paper. In fact, on the ground the influence of English is so much to the detriment of the other five with members expressing dissatisfaction with the status of implementation of the multilingual policy.

The level of dissatisfaction is manifest at various levels. The protest letters written by Spanish delegations to complain about the perceived raw deal they get in meetings is one of them. Equally, the caucus of Geneva-based French journalists' decision to actively monitor the extent to which French was used in the UN offices in the city is another. But the most latent manifestation of the dissatisfaction is the recurrent reports in UN Resolutions that almost word for word restate the need to 'restore, reaffirm and entrench language parity and equality in the United Nations system.

Whereas efforts such as coordinator of multilingualism have been mooted repeatedly, the efforts remain on paper. For instance the coordinator of multilingualism remain at best a paper tiger with nothing useful to offer and at worst non-existent.

Other effort that include having language days for each of the six languages have been suggested and indeed observed to some extent. On the specific days, each language has its culture and history celebrated across all the UN offices to create awareness of the importance of the specific languages. However, a closer interrogation of this policy shows that it's an effort that is more virtual than real. Granted we are in a world where technology is gradually taking over our lives, but a physical observance of the days with outreach programmes to communities surrounding the United Nations offices and agencies will go a long way in creating a real lasting impression. The

procrustean bed of financial implication will be thrown in as an excuse why the day cannot be converted into brick and mortar. However, collaborating with interested collaborators is something that can be tried.

A number of reports by the Joint Implementation unit have been made with practical recommendations on how to correct the imbalance that is highly skewed in favor of English. Ironically the very report is only available in English. Probably a classic case of do as I say but not as I do. We should not that the rationale behind having the multilingual policy was to promote unity in diversity as well as facilitate the meeting of the organization's objective of promoting peace and security, development and human rights. This can only be achieved if all members communicate effectively between and amongst each other, a fact that can only be achieved if the choice(s) of language(s) is either cross-cutting or big enough to accommodate (almost) everyone.

5.3.3 How Does the Policy Influence the UN Working in States Around the world?

How as the UN language policy affected its operations in the world? A case study of UN Peace-keeping operations reveals that conflict situations do not occur in UN offices or hotels where one can afford the luxury of well-trained translators and interpretation facilities such as headphones, but rather they occur deep in the hinterland with interlocutors facing a triple-language dilemma. To fully comprehend this dilemma, you have to put into consideration the peace-keeping situation. At the heart of it, you have the troop contributing country, the communities affected by the conflict as well as the UN headquarters. All these parties may be having different languages to communicate with and as thus there needs to be a way of bridging the tower of babel. This usually involves use of language assistant-locals well versed with the local languages and cultures as well as the language of the troop contributing country. How well the locals understand the two as well as other conditions including impartiality and confidentiality will make or break the mission. As such, the narrow choice of languages that are available to UN system is negatively affecting the achievement of some of its objectives.

A case study of the UN Environmental Programmer show that in practice close to 90% of its work is conducted in English. Its website is entirely in English and as such it limits its

communication with the larger population that may not be using English. Granted all its employees interviewed are conversant with English, but a sizeable percentage are not native speakers and sometimes feel disadvantaged when contribution are being made. The incentives provided to learn other languages are curtailed primarily because of two reasons. One the be-all-end-all language seems to be English and most have some degree of proficiency in it. Two, UNEP, being in Nairobi is predominantly surrounded by English and Swahili speakers. Learning a language becomes extremely demanding unless put in a context where one uses it in practice.

5.3 Conclusion

The United Nations System has a limited multilingual policy that has six languages namely English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian as the official and working languages. The said languages are also the official languages of all the UN agencies but some of the agencies have opted to have only English and French as the working languages. The rationale behind having the multilingual policy is to promote unity in diversity as well as facilitate the meeting of the organization's objective of promoting peace and security, development and human rights. This can only be achieved if all members communicate effectively between and amongst each other, a fact that can only be achieved if the choice(s) of language(s) is either cross cutting or big enough to accommodate (almost) everyone.

5.4 Policy Recommendations

In order to effectively achieve its objective of creating dialogue and understanding amongst all the peoples of the world, the United Nations needs to:

- Ensure that all the recommendations and resolutions of the United Nations on multilingualism are implemented fully.
- Consider expanding the number of languages to not only bring a regional representation but also ensure that all the peoples of the world are capable of sufficiently and fully expressing themselves in languages they are equally competent in.

5.5 Suggested Area for Further study

This study focused on how multilingual policy influences the operations of international organizations with particular reference on the United Nations system. A similar study ought to be done on the African Union to collate the findings. It will be interesting to assess whether AU's policy that incorporates a unique form of expansive multilingualism- its official languages are

English, French, Portuguese, Arabic and major African languages, is any better than the limited multilingual policy of the UN.

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Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Edith Kigen, a Student at the University of Nairobi. I am currently undertaking a research on Multilingual Policy in International Organizations with reference the United Nations system. I would appreciate if you helped me collect data by filling in this questionnaire. The information collected will be used solely for the purpose of the research and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Please do not write your name anywhere in this questionnaire

Part A: Background information

1. What is your age bracket?
 - a. 18-29 []
 - b. 30-39 []
 - c. 40-49[]
 - d. 50-59[]
 - e. Over 60 years[]
2. What is your highest academic qualification
 - a. Certificate []
 - b. Diploma[]
 - c. Bachelor[]
 - d. Masters[]
 - e. Other (please specify.....)
3. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
4. Nationality _____
5. Specific job title _____
6. Years of service
 - a. Less than 5 years
 - b. 5 – 10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. Over 15 years

SECTION B: UN LANGUAGE POLICY

1. a) Are you familiar with UN language policy?

b) If yes please list the UN Official language(s)

c) Of the UN official languages you have listed in 1b, what is your level of proficiency?

Language	Very proficient	Proficient	Least proficient

2. a) Which of the following best describes the language policy of your organization?

Monolingual

Bilingual

Multilingual

b) Kindly list the official and working language (s) used in your organization

c) Is the language policy of your organization followed at all times

 Yes No

d) If No please explain

If language policy is monolingual, please skip numbers 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9

3. In what language(s) is documentation done in your organization?

4. a) To what extent does the language of documentations affect your working? (tick where appropriate)

To a very large extent	
To a large extent To a moderate extent	
To a small extent	
Not at all	

b) Briefly elaborate on your choice

5. a) In what language(s) are meetings conducted in your organization?

b) In your opinion is the choice of the languages used to conduct meetings in your appropriate?

 Yes No

c) Please expound on your choice

6. a) In which language does your organization receive communication from the UN headquarters?

b) does this in any way hamper your work performance?

Section C: Language Equality in the United Nations

1. a) In your opinion are all the languages given equal considerations?

b) If No, which language(s) are favoured?

c) What can be done to give all the languages equal prominence?

2. a) Are there incentives to learn newer languages in your organization?

b) If yes, have you taken advantage of them to learn an extra language?

d) Other than learning an extra language on the job, what extra measure can you propose to increase multilingual staff in the UN?

3. a) In your opinion is the choice of the UN official and working language(s) representative?

 Yes No

b) Please explain

c) Do you think the UN should expand the number of its working and official languages?

 Yes No

d) If yes, which languages would you propose to be added and why?

Thank you