



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

LANGUAGE AND LIFE

A LINGUISTIC GLANCE AT KENYA

INAUGURAL LECTURE

BY

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Ph.D.(London)**

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1999

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PROFESSOR (MRS.) LUCIA NDONG'A OMONDI

Born in Gem, **PROF. (Mrs.) LUCIA NDONG'A OMONDI** started her education at home under her father Japuonj Simeon Odera, and completed her Primary and Intermediate education at Luanda Primary and Intermediate School in 1958. She proceeded to Butere Girls' High School from which she graduated in 1962. In 1963, she went to do her 'A' Level education at Alliance Girls High School until 1964. She then entered the Nairobi Campus of the University of East Africa where she studied between 1965 and 1968 and obtained a B.A. Honours degree in English and Political Science. She earned a scholarship from the Ford Foundation that enabled her to immediately proceed to study at the University of Edinburgh. She got a PostGraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics from there in 1969. From 1970 to 1971 she studied Linguistics at the University of Nairobi and graduated with the PostGraduate degree of Bachelor of Philosophy in Linguistics. From 1972 she studied for her Ph.D at the University College, University of London and got her Ph.D in Linguistics in 1975. In the same year, she was appointed Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies, University of Zambia where she worked until 1978. Since then she has been in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Nairobi, rising from Lecturer to full Professor in 1991 and serving as the Chairman of the department from 1989 to 1994 when she was appointed Principal, College of Education and External Studies. She is married with five children.

INTRODUCTION

THE MEANING OF INAUGURAL LECTURE

It is considered particularly appropriate that this inaugural lecture on language and life with special reference to Kenya should begin with an attempt to ascertain that all concerned have the same idea in their minds of what is about to take place. The professional way to do this would be to start by handing out a well designed questionnaire basically answering the question “*What do you understand by an inaugural lecture?*” Depending on what we find, we would then proceed to design a reaction that would help us ensure effective communication in the common endeavour. As a shortcut and a compromise, we begin this event by a review of its semantics.

Perhaps the first place to look for the meaning of an inaugural lecture is in the etymology of the event and of the word that names it. We can assume that there is no problem with the meaning of the noun **lecture**, and if there is, we can deal with it by giving the ostensive definition in our performance that is, if you do not know what a lecture is, look at what I am going to do in the next hour or so, and if still in doubt as to which of my actions can be interpreted to mean lecture, ask me.

The root of the term **inaugural** is in the Latin word *augur* (or earlier, *auger*), a fortune teller. An *augur* in Roman times was a diviner. Specifically, the *augur* foretold the future by looking at the flights of birds or by observing their trails, giving the word the literal meaning ‘one who performs with birds’ (Ayto 1990:43) - cf. Words like *aviary* in English from the Latin *avis* for *bird*. *Augurate* was the Latin verb meaning to act as an *augur*.

The verb *inaugurate* with its past participle, *inauguratus*, was derived from *augur* which meant to read omens from the flight of birds and to consecrate or install a person into an office when the omens so read were favourable. The Latin form *inaugurationem* would then mean consecration or installation under good omen. This is the historical background of the English verb *to inaugurate* which a modern English Dictionary such as Webster (1984:740) define as 'to induct into office with suitable ceremonies; to dedicate ceremoniously; observe formally the beginning of; to bring about the beginning of...'. A noun from this in modern English is *inauguration*, and *inaugural*, means then, of an inauguration.

How much of all this constitute components of the meaning of inaugural lectures at the University of Nairobi remain a moot point. A Professor in this University obviously gets ceremoniously installed as a full Professor; but it has not usually been at the literal beginning of that career, and the lectures are not the first ones of many to come. For the most part, and for practical purposes, the divination part of the meaning has long been lost and remains totally opaque. I have been given no reason to believe that those in charge have effectively secured *good omen* both for this ceremony and for the career in office it is meant to precede. However, we can still in our environment understand inaugural lectures in a way that does not quite completely discard the entymological essence of its meaning: Coming out of the underworld of laboratories and the magically isolated and lonely scientific struggle in search of truth in the specific area of expertise, a Professor after being recognized and honored comes out at an inaugural in Nairobi to expose, air and explain her paraphernalia to the society in a bid not only to renew the mandate to continue, but also to exhort that society to take interest in and utilize what otherwise might remain only games on the tables of ivory tower runaway intellectuals. It is in this spirit that I proceed in this lecture as a Professor of

Linguistics, to throw light on issues of **Language and Life in our nation** so that more people can see the issues a little more clearly for the benefit of both Language and Life in the Republic.

CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGE

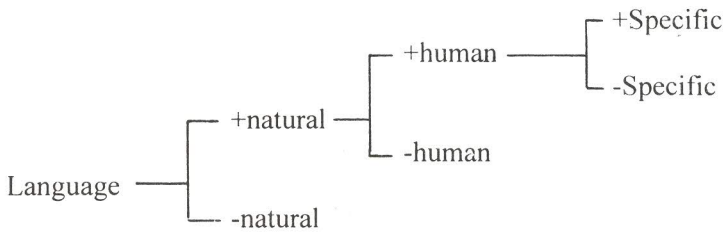
1. Language in General

Intuitively, the English word language has both at the core as well as the periphery of its use the sense of what communicates meaning in some way. This is surely the common thread in the meaning of the following English phrases:

- The language of flowers
- The language of bees
- The language of mathematics
- The language of computers
- Body language
- The language of the deaf
- Human (natural) language
- The language of the Abagusii
- The language of home etc.

Language, in its general sense is a system of communication with the comparable meaning to *langage* in French; *linguaggio* in

Italian; and *lenguaje* in Spanish. In this sense, the term language can be classified as follows:



What this system network says is that there are artificial languages such as the languages of mathematics, logic, or computers, which differ from non-artificial languages which in turn are natural. There are non-human natural languages such as animal and perhaps plant languages about which very little, if anything, is known so far. These contrast with human language, often referred to as natural language. In turn, human language has recognition as the species' means of communication, as well as each realization in specific languages. There is no doubt, however, that either by human ignorance or presumptuousness, the language of the other fellow living species have been ignored, misunderstood or simply played down. Systems of communication used by human beings such as body language and sign language are obviously natural too. Whereas there is a developing recognition of these, there is perhaps a rather firmly rooted viewpoint of human language as realized in specific systems of communication by various world speech communities cited as English, Kiswahili or Ekegusii. If I were to ask this audience how many Kenyan languages you individually *do not speak*, I would be very surprised if, particularly the non-linguists here would remember to list or consider the Kenyan sign language together with the other instances of natural

human languages. In the majority of linguistic literature in fact, the terms natural and human language have been fully equated with these languages, albeit with the understanding that each human language such as English is an instance of the more general human language. We shall continue in this tradition and use these terms in this sense. Further, in spite of the fact that the term language has the wide meaning already outlined above, it is usually used without qualification to refer to these so called natural or human languages. We do see this as the most unmarked use of the term and will therefore adopt the use and qualify any other uses.

2. Human Versus Other Languages

As communication systems, all languages, natural or artificial, human or not, are coding systems whereby the signals of certain forms are encoded by a sender through a channel to the receiver who gets the meaning by decoding them. However, language (human language) is traditionally envisaged to be distinctly different from all other languages in specific ways. The following are the characteristics of human language that define it and differentiate it from other languages:

(a) Duality: In the semiotic system of human language the elements of form by which the messages are encoded and sent to be decoded by the receiver have independent structures at two or perhaps more levels. In other words, the noises we make in their most elemental and individual forms do not convey meaning until they combine with one another to create units that convey meaning.

(b) Discreteness: The elements which convey meaning in the human language are discrete rather than continuous.

(c) Arbitrariness: Except in instances of a limited number of words that are identifiable as onomatopoeic, the form into which

messages are coded in human language do not relate to their meaning in any regular, principled or natural ways.

(d) Productivity: From a limited set of elements of form, every human language, governed by specific rules, produces an infinite set of signals in communication, making a totally open rather than closed system.

(e) Displacement: It is believed that unlike the majority of animal languages, for example, human language is particularly characterized by the ability to be used to convey meaning beyond the here and the now; people can communicate about what is far removed including what is not existent. They can talk about the present, the future, the past and even the timeless.

(f) Duality of Medium: Speech and writing give human language the property of duality of medium that is at least yet unknown in animal languages.

It should be observed that some of these properties of human language have been found in, for example, animal languages, making them quite rich and complex, with high concentrated information level. For example, adult black-headed sea gulls have been found to use 17 signals to transmit up to 30 different messages in what obviously constitutes the so far known part of their language. In the dances of bees has also been observed detailed and precise descriptive signals that give information on temporary and especially remote things (Barry *et al*: 1965:44-45).

In the final analysis, we must observe that the distinguishing characteristics of human language must be viewed with caution because the languages of other species have not only not been studied to the same degree as human language, but they have also naturally remained opaque and inaccessible to human beings so far. Comparing languages is a precarious endeavour, whether they are those of human communities or all God's species. As of now, linguists tend to hold the position Lyons: (1981:17-19) holds,

namely that all the characteristics of human language make it a distinctly flexible and versatile semiotic system with the categorical position that: "No other system of communication would seem to have anything like the same degree of flexibility and versatility."

Perhaps the sea gulls cited above have more signals than man has deciphered. On the other hand, if it were to turn out that they have only 17 signals but that they live and effectively communicate as much as they need to, then perhaps, their language is more versatile and efficient than ours.

3. The Nature of Human Language

Human language is the kind of phenomenon whose complete shape cannot be determined from a single feel. Knowledge about the nature of human language remains fragmented. That knowledge has two related sources: observation, reflection and experience with language in its presence and absence; and individual studies of specific instances of languages.

(a) *Language Signs (Substance):*

What is so far known about human language suggests that language is made up of the following:

(i) Segmental Sounds: Language is rather popularly understood to be centrally made of segmental sounds fundamentally emitted in speech. With the organs indicated in Appendix 1, (Barry *et al* 1965: 50) and a supply of compressed air from the lungs, the emission of speech involves human beings playing out sounds such as described in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), Appendix 2, which systematically combine to form other non primitive units used in each language to convey meaning in a conventional rather than a natural way.

(ii) Prosodic Sounds: Besides the segmental sounds such as transcribed in Ex 1 and 2, languages exhibit a sort of parallel sound

system that combine with the segmental ones in speech. In 2, for example, the segmental sounds are the same in *a*, *b*, *c*, but the word [k-e-n-d-o] with the same segmental elements of sound become different words depending on the tones that it is spoken with. Tone, is thus an example of suprasegmental or prosodic feature of human language. The others include stress which, for example, marks the difference between *export* the noun, and *export* the verb; intonation; length etc.

The number and specific speech sounds and prosodic features in every language are basically unique unto itself, as is the way they combine. The chart simply shows the reservoir from which languages choose their sounds as it were.

Ex 1	a	This is an inaugural lecture əɪs ɪs ən ɪnɔ:ɡjʊərəl lektʃə
	b	<i>Kenya tunaipenda</i> kɛnə tʊnaɪpɛnda
Ex 2	a.	<i>kendo</i> To marry
	b	<i>kendo</i> hearth
	c.	<i>kendo</i> again

(iii) Paralinguistic Symbols: Human language has a reservoir of sounds and kinesic signs that form part of its constitution. The sounds are produced by the same speech organs but they do not fall in with either the segmental or the prosodic. Their users in fact obviously distinguish them from speech sounds and name them differently in words. Dholuo examples include *ndakruok*, *hum*, *chok*, *wuoro* (as in whistling) etc. There are also sound based expressions that use the segmental and suprasegmentals that might be considered part of paralinguistic rather than strictly verbal language. These are exemplified by Dholuo expressions such as *po*, *thu*, *ng'o*, etc. often accompanied by physical expressions. The other paralinguistic signs are the

physical symbols or gestures. Perhaps every language has a gesture for *yes* and *no*, or saying one, two three. There are also gestures for *respect*, *anger*, *joy* etc.

Each instance of human language selects from these three types of signs in a unique and unpredictable way. For instance, from the phonetic alphabet chart, the sounds found in English may overlap with those in Dholuo, but the two languages do not have totally identical sounds. English has the sound *sh* which Dholuo does not have. Dholuo also has the sound *ndh*, which English does not have. The same can be said of the prosodic features: Dholuo for example uses tone differences so much more than English that Dholuo is specifically characterized as a tone language while English is not. The paralinguistic signs are perhaps selected by each language from the infinite possibilities. As was demonstrated by our study of Zambian and Kenyan paralinguistic, they are, however, very much language specific (Omondi: 1979). The movement by which each speech community says *yes* and *no* even using their head is not necessarily the same; in fact speech communities have been known to use the same gesture for just the opposite. A study by Chet Creider (1978) also demonstrated that gestures are integrated in specific languages and used in a systematic and predictable way.

(iv) The Base: Every human language is superimposed on a base, which inevitably forms a part and a significant part of it. What we here call the language base is individual and social; contemporary and historical; immediate and remote. This base may be likened to the total background to artists' creation with an unstructured detail whose silent presence spells the beginning and the end of the limited focused creation. The base is constituted from facts and factors around the individual and the speech community as a society: these will include aspects of the people's history, culture, and total environment. There is in that base facts, legends and myths of a speech community as well as their literature, folklore, artforms and artifacts like riddles, metaphors.

proverbs etc. The environment (Physical, Spiritual, Imaginary and real) and the people's way of life including their daily circles and any other circles in their calendar in terms of what in English we may conceive of as time, weeks, months, years etc. becomes an integral part of the language base and the language.

(b) Language as a Macro-System:

From what has been said about the nature of human language so far, it is clear that the sounds organized into verbal units form only a part of the phenomenon. The paralinguistic signs form another part, for example. These are micro-systems within the totality which is a much more complex macro-system in which the verbal, prosodic, and paralinguistic signs are brought together, predicated on the base, and used in life perhaps centrally for communication. Sometimes elements of the base find currency in the symbolic system of the language.

(c) Variety in Human language:

Human language manifests itself not in one universal system accessible to all human beings but in various systems known to various and varying numbers of people who then constitute a speech community defined by their specific language. Languages vary basically first in terms of the segmental, prosodic, paralinguistic symbols they choose from perhaps a universal reservoir, as well as the elements from their bases. Secondly, languages differ in the way they put together the symbols both in micro and macro sense. That is to say, for example, that languages combine segmental sounds in differing ways and they also combine verbal and paralinguistic in significantly differing ways. This is not to say that there are no similarities at all in languages at all levels: Languages often have many signs in common and, for various reasons similar or the same elements for their base. However, variety is still inherent in the very delineation of one human language from another.

At a lower level, every language is not as unified a system, as being given a single name would suggest. On the vertical axis,

languages are constantly changing so the language of yesterday is not the same as the language of today or tomorrow even though they may still be called one language. With the tradition of writing, this becomes quite clear: In England, the English of Chaucer is very different from that of Shakespeare, which in turn is different from that of Dickens that is similarly very different from modern English authors such as Thomas Hardy.

On the horizontal plane, at any one time, every language inherently has varieties in *dialects*, *registers*, *styles* and *idiolects* that form identifiable sublanguages within itself. This internal variation in language is most probably basically predicated on matters related to the base: Dialects closely relate to geographical regionalization and has therefore relationship with environment of the speakers; idiolect bears on the individual user with all her idiosyncrasies both physical and circumstantial; registers and styles predicate on specialization and strategization by users of language for specific purposes and in specific circumstance. To exemplify what is being said here, as far as dialects go, English language has so many varieties which are so varied that there is talk of there being many Englishes. Even to an observer, the Standard American and British English are different; The American Ghetto and British Cockney languages are even more different; Nigerian, Sri Lankan and Jamaican English are hardly the same language. Nearer home however, the language we call Luhya is virtually a conglomeration of many dialects; Dholuo, though not as differing as Luhya, has dialects that give away the origins of its speakers as soon as they open their mouths.

Register refers to the specialization in language with respect to use in particular (professional) aspects of life: The legal register stands out in English, as in all languages, as very different from that of religion and remain easily recognizable. Idiolect refers to individual personal variety of any language they speak. This is what makes it quite easy in linguistic communication to identify a person by their voice even without seeing them. Attributes of this comes from the physical variation in the individual organs of

speech which can produce only specific sorts of sounds and sound quality in terms of harmonic analysis, or biological specification that allow for only certain possibilities or movement in gestures. Besides these, each individual has her linguistic habits, which include choices of words, or expressions with which they become identified. Individual idiosyncracies are also relevant in matters of the language base because even at this level, language is not neutral but comes with and is properly understood only within the full knowledge of its user. The individual's knowledge competence, experience, profession and character reflect and is reflected in her idiolect.

Further variation in the language phenomenon is in what is called *style*. Style is the technical term for the variation in each individual speech or writing habits according to differing situations and roles in society. The same person will use different types of speech and writing in communicating with and to strangers, family, children, professionals, etc. A person talking in an intimate situation uses a different style from when they are in a normal or public role. The concept of style is perhaps best understood in relation to literary language where it has developed into a subdiscipline in linguistics.

When we put together all that has been said about the nature of language, it needs to be observed that as a matter of fact, the notion of any single language such as English, Luyia, Gujarati, Dutch etc. is but an abstraction rather than a reality.

(d) Language Universals:

Although variation is inherent in language, each instance in a language is not so different from the others that it forms a new phenomenon. From what has been said already, there are the defining of characteristics that form one level of language universals. Below that, there is an interesting catalogue of statements of language universals which vary from what has been observed to be true of all human languages, to conditional observations like if an aspect of a language X has the property A then it will or will not have the property B.

(e) Language Medium:

Generally two mediums of language have been recognized – speech and writing. Quite obviously this is with reference to microlanguage. Speech is the verbalization of language sounds. But language is a sign based system whose signs become symbols in use. The segmental sounds are only one type of symbols in language. Talking of speech, one must stretch it to cover the ‘speech’ of the deaf, for example, which then includes the human use of non-verbal and non-vocal symbols. Writing on the other hand is a medium that adopts symbols based on the three different kinds of units recognized in speech - namely sounds, syllables, and words. Depending on which unit is taken as basic, writing systems are usually describable as alphabetic, if based on sounds, syllabic if on the syllable and ideographic if based on the word. The development of writing has affected the nature of human language in that in some languages there has been a clear distinction between written and spoken varieties: First, there is a lot of aspects of ‘spoken’ language that is never written. Many of the strategies in language use and some aspects of the base may not be always available in written language. So written language is not just a representation of spoken language. There are, further, instances of language development that have involved spoken and written language variously giving rise to the two forms of the same language being clearly different in their vocabularies and structure in such a significant way that the written language becomes virtually independent of the spoken one. Lyons (1968:41) cites French, Chinese and Latin, Sanskrit, Byzantine Greek and Old Church Slavonic as good examples of this.

(f) Language and Culture:

The idea and reality of culture is a consequence of the strategy for human existence that leads man into mutual recognition of and existence within types of societies. Language is a major typifier of human societies. As Goodenough (1959:167) quoted by Wardhaugh (1986:211) defines it, ‘a society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a

manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves'. Wardhaugh (*ibid*) continues to state 'that knowledge is socially acquired, the necessary behaviours are learned and do not come from any kind of genetic endowment. Culture therefore, is the 'know-how' that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living'. Language is one of the things an individual needs to know in order to operate in any role in a manner acceptable to a society. Secondly, it is through knowing a society's language that much of what needs to be known for efficient and acceptable performance in a society is acquired. A famous view of the relationship between language and culture is that expressed in the Sapir-Whorf or Whorfian hypothesis (Sapir: 1921); that a language determines its speakers' worldview both in physical and other terms. Implications of this view is well put by Wardhaugh (1986:215):

In this view, then, language provides a screen or filter to reality; it determines how speakers perceive and organize the world around them, both the natural and the social world. Consequently, the language you speak helps to form your worldview. It defines your experience for you; you do not use it simply to report that experience. It is not neutral but gets in the way, imposing habits of both looking and thinking.

While the relationship between a people's language and their culture is as dangerously obvious as it might be intricate, there are observations that can be made about it. It would evidently be false to claim the opposite that language and culture of a people are independent of each other. An intrinsic relationship between language and culture is widely recognized sometimes more in relative than in the more deterministic sense associated with Whorf. A people's language is part of their culture. The other aspects of their culture find expression in their language. So a people's culture is part of their language. This relationship will explain the facts such as that a look at Maasai language will predictably show a larger vocabulary around cattle and pastoralism

than any language of an exclusively hunter-gatherer people. Similarly, the Eskimos have many names for different types of snow.

All that a people know, think or do does not just find expression in their language, but it also gets deposited in it in both semantic and even structural terms. For example, all the cultural aspects of the institution of marriage among the Luo can be discerned from Dholuo words as well as sentence structures. Given an adult male, Onyango, and an adult female, Atieno, the Luo can acceptably say (Ex.3) but neither (Ex 4) nor (Ex 5) are unacceptable.

Ex 3 *Onyango nene okendo Atieno* Onyango married Atieno.

Ex 4 **Atieno nene okendo Onyango* Atieno married Onyango.

Ex 5 *Onyango gi Atieno nene okendore* Onyango and Atieno
married each other

On the contrary, the English equivalents are all acceptable in English. The explanation here lies in the cultural understanding of marriage in the two societies: In Luoland, regularly, only men marry – and they, so far, marry only women. Women usually do not have the capacity to marry anybody, they only have the capacity to get married by men. Among the English, both men and women have the capacity to marry and traditionally marry each other (See Omondi 1991). The matter here is obviously complex. The point is that it clearly exemplifies the intricate relationship between language and culture bringing together the two in an inseparable manner.

The relationship between language and culture would explain why it is not possible to master one properly without the other. In real life, it explains why languages often become powerful and emotional symbols of a people in terms of who they are and their genius, or who they want to be. Consciously or otherwise, they use language to sustain reality – the reality that opens up to them

through or within their culture. Even observationally, the way different speech communities use language varies, and that variation has something to do with their culture. Every culture would for example recognize what the English call politeness. Each culture will prescribe details of this in various aspects of human interaction defining what is interpreted as polite and what is not. Demonstrably each language will communicate and reflect the details of the acceptable and unacceptable nuances of politeness as the medium of its expression as each culture will prescribe the language details for polite behaviour as well as impolite behaviour. This can be said of all aspects of human behaviour that they are defined by the culture for the society and individuals' survival according to the values of the specific peoples. Language is not just used to communicate or communicate about what culture prescribes; language contains all the know-how prescribed by the culture for existence and survival in a society. One can go further and say that language itself (micro language in abstraction) has its prescriptions from culture, which governs its manifestation at the general level, and its use.

(g) Language as a Complex and Efficient System:

From the foregoing, it is clear that human language is a very complex phenomenon. Although its complexity is not yet fully understood, its efficiency is not disputable. As a human tool and resource in the art and science of living every human language is adequate for living amongst the specific speech community. The Luyia language, for example, in all its variety and instability is completely adequate for the life enterprise among the Luyia speech community. Maa is similarly adequate for all that the Maasai speech community may need by way of language in their individual and communal lives. Naturally, when new aspects of life develop, and vehicles and refrigerators become part of the life of a people, language has an in-built mechanism to deal with it so its adequacy remains; The Maasai and Luhyia medical practitioners have a comprehensive recognizable language that is enough for them and their patients in the same way that the parents

in each speech community have enough and full measure of what language they need to bring up their offsprings right from birth.

The complexity and adequacy of human language can be seen in aspects of the descriptive knowledge of human languages. A look at the grammar of any language demonstrates the complexity and efficiency by which so much can be crammed into rules which virtually generate a facility with infinite capacity for communicating about everything and anything in a peoples' universe. The fundamental challenge in the understanding of the nature of human language is in fact whether and to what extent this complexity is systematic or perhaps productively rule based. The observation has remained intriguingly tantalizing. Many theories have been proclaimed to address this issue, and many rules both for the universals of human language and specific languages have been proposed. Although no one has been able to say *eureka*, there is much reason to believe that the complexity is necessarily structured at least to a large extent. Indeed at the level of specific languages some details of the operational rules bear witness to the preciseness in which language comes to its users in a speech community. In Dholuo, for example, there is a productive process of word reduplication which really means that the language has a double lexicon which it uses to fulfil a communicative need met by other languages in different ways as can be seen in the examples below.

- Ex 6 *Onyango tedo* Onyango is cooking
- Ex 7 *Onyango tedo ateda* Onyango is just cooking
- Ex 8 *Onyango anyanga tedo* Mere Onyango is cooking.

In the Bari language, and other Eastern Nilotic languages like the Kalenjin ones, and much unlike in Dholuo and other Western Nilotic languages, all actions as named by verbs in communication will take the speaker as the focus and indicate whether the action described by the verb is towards, or away from the speaker. This

means that as a matter of detail and ordinary fact, Bari finely distinguishes by a productive grammatical rule which direction any action is taking place on the axis of towards - away from the speaker as shown in the following examples:

Ex 9	<i>Kur</i> <i>Kururu</i> <i>Kuru</i>	dig dig that way dig this way
Ex 10	<i>du</i> <i>du oro</i> <i>du un</i>	cut cut that way cut this way
Ex 11	<i>der</i> <i>derara</i> <i>derun</i>	cook cook that way cook this way
Ex 12	<i>har</i> <i>harara</i> <i>harun</i>	take a long take along that way. take along this way

4. Functions of Language in Life

O'grady *et al* (1989:1) start their book with the statement:

Language is many things - a system of communication, a medium for thought, a vehicle for literary expression, a social institution, a matter for political controversy, a factor in nation building. All normal human beings speak at least one language, and it is hard to imagine much significant social or intellectual activity taking place in its absence.

Human beings need language for individual and for social purposes, and God in nature gives it in the essential measure to all normal beings.

(i) From the individual point of view, development of cognition has been found to be intricately related to language acquisition by children, (O'grady *et al* 1989:291-292), (Taylor 1976:27), even though there is no agreement on the details of the relationship. Similarly, it has been and can be demonstrated that the way we categorize and perhaps therefore relate to the world around us is interrelated with if not determined by the relevant categories or vocabularies in our language.

(ii) Secondly, Linguists and Psychologists have for a long time addressed the issue of the relationship between human thought and language. Again not yet fully understood, but there are many indications that human thinking is intertwined with his language. Whereas all thinking might not be tied to language, people would not carry on the way they demonstrate thinking in ordinary life without a language. We can all observe that in thinking based activities such as argumentation, debating, convincing etc., linguistic competence is an advantage. Without oversimplifying a very complex issue, language is a tool that facilitates thought and that is essential for demonstration of clear thinking.

(iii) The most obvious social use of human language is communicative function. This function rests on the definitive view that language has or signifies meaning. A communicative act is usually envisaged as having the following parts as for example stated by Leech (1974:49): (1) subject matter (2) originator (3) receiver, (4) the channel, and (5) message. Similarly language is observed to have meaning that can be categorized into types. Leech, (*Ibid* : 10-27) breaks down linguistic meaning into seven types namely *conceptual* which is denotative meaning of linguistic units; *connotative* meaning which involves the sense in language beyond what is referred to; *stylistic* meaning which language conveys about the social context of its use; *affective* meaning

which is the reflection of the feelings and attitudes of the speaker/writer towards his listener or subject matter; *reflected* meaning 'which is the meaning which arises in cases of *multiple conceptual* meaning, when one sense of a word forms part of the response to another sense; and *collective* meaning which is the associations with a word or piece of language it acquires from constant concurrence with another or others. Within the basically telementational view of communication, and this understanding of how language means, Leech (*Ibid*: 47) proceeds to identify five functions of language in communication. Language helps us to just pass information. For instance Kiswahili can be used by a mother giving her child critical information as in the sentences:

Huyu ni baba yako

This is your father.

Huyu ndiyo baba yako.

This is the one who is your father.

It is often thought that the passing of information in this way is the most important function of language. But there are other functions which are not only different, but which in fact are sometimes indistinguishable from the informational function and from one another. Human beings use language constantly to express attitudes and feeling they have towards their total environment. In life, human beings do not simply observe life and then for example, say to themselves "Oh, that's a tree, and that a priest, and here is porridge". The human dimension involves body, spirit and soul, which three, in totality make the normal being as we know ourselves. When we experience or see anything, we take positions in judgmental terms of evaluation and we emit various types of feelings. Language helps us express these as it functions as the expressive medium of communication.

(iv) Fourthly, human life in society is characterized by relationships on both the horizontal and vertical axes. Human cooperation takes place within these paradigms of relationships. In the process, we do not only inform one another, or express our

feelings, but we seek to influence each other's behaviour to make, maintain, or otherwise affect or effect relationships. Language helps us in life to carry out directive functions in our attempts to influence the behaviour or attitudes of others. The obvious example of directive function of language is in commands or requests. But we must remember that it is through language that we direct and maintain cultures and social values of our societies. It is the medium through which we direct our children and mould them into what they become. This is the directive function of language on a vertical plane. All management situations require that the manager does some directing, giving the political definition of power as the ability to influence. We may not be able scientifically or even taxonomically to say just how language is used in its directive function. But this does not make it any less real. Without language to help direct, influence and manage human society there would be anarchy, or at least we would not have the human society as we know it.

(v) Fifthly, language is a major means by which human beings appreciate themselves and their environment aesthetically. All languages allow human beings to use them to create aesthetically satisfying artifacts, themselves often built into the other functions from what other meaning the artifacts might have outside the artform. Aesthetic creativity is demonstrably a necessary and significant need in human life. There is no human society without its literature, for example in its variant artforms. This merges with music through poetry and narratives to complete this aspects of human desire. In turn, as I suggested in the definition of language, the aesthetic artforms must be seen as further tokens of language that turn on themselves to carry out the other functions of language in real life. For example, a lot of information passing is carried out through poetry, song, folklore, or even novels. Indeed, sometimes these are the only ways or the most efficient ways of passing some information either synchronically or diachronically. This they may do in their totality, as they are understood, appreciated and enjoyed. They may also do it by parts of them that come to symbolize certain meaning, or certain values. For example,

anyone in a situation to teach the value of environmental harmony to a trigger happy individual who is killing, despising or otherwise ill treating other creatures around may simply remind the culprit to remember 'The Ancient Mariner' in the poem by the same name by S.T. Coleridge. Similarly, there are contexts in which the calling to attention *Nyamgondho wuod Ombare* will communicate most effectively to anyone with the necessary command of the Luo language. Metaphors, proverbs, and riddles with their culture based aesthetics and their depersonalization facilitate very effective indirect communication of information, feeling, influence etc.

(vi) Bronislaw Malinowski identified a very interesting function of language which he gave the name phatic communion-Human beings use language, verbal and nonverbal not so much to express, direct, or give any information, but simply to relate and open up relationships with one another. People can speak, for example to each other when the significance of the interaction is that act of speaking rather than what is said. Often what is said is socially standard for the situation. An example frequently used is the English way of talking about the weather as they meet and quickly pass or stop for a chat simply saying things like "What a lovely day" or, "Isn't it cold!" A typical Kenya example is a questions like *Umerudi?* (*You have come back?*), when it is obvious the person being asked has returned. The significance of this is that language knits societies together and facilitates cooperation and understanding in this way when all we can or need to do is to reassure ourselves of each other's positive presence. The end line of this well demonstrates that non-use of language where it is expected can also speak very loud to affect lives. When you want to show someone they have annoyed you, in many cultures, you can do it efficiently by denying them even phatic communion and if they do not know why they will come asking "What have I done?"

(vii) Beyond the communication process, language functions as the depository, the museum for the culture and history of its speakers. New generations acquire their ways of life, their culture,

with their language, and when circumstances of a people change historically, facts of that history can be deduced from a study of the language.

(viii) Further, language functions as a symbol for group identity and unity. This should not be difficult to understand given the relationship between language and culture or indeed a people's way of life. Given further that man is a social animal that belongs societally, into a family, a clan, a nation etc. – his language becomes a significant in-road into whatever group he identifies with at a particular moment. The group may be young people from an estate in Nairobi identifying themselves as Sheng speakers, or they may be East Africans discovering that they can both speak Kiswahili on the streets of Frankfurt. The identification into a group is not empty even linguistically. Those who belong to the same speech community and share a culture first know who they are in detailed ways just by knowing their language. For example, they have the same presuppositions about life and can therefore take a lot of background information needed both for communication and for cooperation for granted. The opposite holds, much to the same end – when people do not have the same linguistic background as you, you know what they are not, and this will affect the adopted strategies for cooperating leave alone communicating with them. Language thus divides much as in the Babelian story.

A complex and yet essential tool in life, language is quite tyrannical in its functions for man. Shaping the individual's cognitive development, interfering in his thought processes, commanding his worldview, and controlling the expression of all that as it has shaped it, man is himself an animal under the grip of his language. When a Maasai man fresh from Loitokitok meets a Russian fresh from Moscow, the tyranny of language is at its most extreme and the grip is obvious. The two will of course click, and given time even overcome. But at the farthest end of their victory will be another language, be it Maa, Russian, English, or a mixture in a Creole or Pidgin with its own grip.

In the final analysis and in summary, language, is a tool, or a facility with specific roles in human life enterprise. The human body has very specific parts some of which seem superfluous sometimes. But even though we have ten fingers at the ends of our hands, experience shows that lack of one will somehow create a handicap. Language is a facility the lack of which, even in part, creates a basic handicap. Language is a resource for the strategic use by individuals and societies much like air.

5.The Acquisition of Language

Language use presupposes language knowledge. The acquisition and effect of that knowledge on the individual in real life, and his/her relationship with it puts language and the inquiry into its nature in the midst of matters of psychology, biology and sociology. Like with many of human activities, human beings are not able to carry out linguistic activities, at least as they are commonly known, from the time they are born. Linguistic behaviour develops slowly with the child into the adolescent and adult, who in Chomsky's terms would be finally in possession of native speaker competence of his mother tongue. Just how we acquire that knowledge still largely remains a gap in human knowledge and a mystery to be solved even though literature on it is growing.

So far, there is a body of information on the manifested knowledge of language a human child has at various stages of its development, but how a child learns a language in terms of the actual process of its acquisition remains a dim area. Research into this area has been guided by questions whose answers have precipitated approaches and arguments related to the following controversies or issues: The uniqueness of human language as opposed to the possibility that it is just more complex than other animal and artificial languages with which it compares in a continuum; The genetic, biological predisposition of the human species to learn their language as opposed to being nurtured into acquisition by external experience;

and the child's own role in the learning of language in terms of whether it is a strategizing active one or a passive one in which the environment (parents) facilitate the learning. Significantly, there has also been concern with normal versus abnormal language behaviour. Evidently, and predictably, the position of scholars with respect to the issues has tended to fall in with the scientific paradigms of the times. Two opposing views have been widely recognized, sometimes referred to as the empiricist as opposed to the rationalist view of child language acquisition. The empiricist thinking holds that language is learned basically through establishment of stimulus and response experience supported by reinforcement like any other learned behaviour. The innate abilities that might be involved are general being peculiar neither to human beings nor to language learning in human life. This is the view associated, for example, with Skinner (1957). The rationalist view holds that language is basically innate; its structures are biologically specified and children are born already significantly predisposed to acquire language in much the same way as they are born predisposed to walk on two feet. Experience outside the child only activates what is already there rather than enable the child to learn language. This school is particularly associated with the Chomskyan linguistics that emerged towards the end of the 1950s, with his proposal of Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The two views on language acquisition have both interesting arguments from experiments and researches with child language acquisition. They however remain polarized on specific significant issues. The empiricists, for example stand by the view reported by Taylor (1976:235) that "To claim that language acquisition is innate is to explain away a complex phenomenon", while talking for the rationalist he says (p.231) "If language is a result of general learning abilities, linguistic competence should be a function of learning ability, that is intelligence", much like arithmetic which is much easier than language yet is not learned uniformly irrespective of the learners intelligence.

Whatever the scientific positions, language is something that children (human beings) acquire; children need to develop in

certain respects, including cognition, before they can acquire or use language properly, the language acquisition process has a pattern which can be seen in other cognitive tasks (for instance, the acquisition at all linguistic levels of the essential before less essential, simple/short before complex and long, regular before irregular etc. (see Taylor 1976: 235); the language acquisition process is complete for the normal child at about age six through its refinement continues for ever. For all practical purposes, the contradictory approaches complement each other in showing how complex language acquisition is. All boils down to the following facts of life with respect to language acquisition (*ibid*).

The lives of 'normal' children everywhere seem suited to the task of acquiring language. The children spend all their working hours in a speech environment, day after day, year after year. Their main activity is not earning a living but acquiring language and knowledge about the world. They carry out this important activity with warm emotional support from their close family members. In most societies, the family members in turn gear their speech to young children, hence children everywhere are exposed to speech that is simple in concepts and structure. Most important, children everywhere have a compelling need to communicate for their well being if not for their survival.

We must add that much of the psycholinguistic concern with language acquisition is with microlanguage and normal mother-tongue situation. To this we must add the facts of acquisition of macrolanguage and culture in a total process we may call linguistic acculturation rather than language acquisition. Even children do not just acquire the sounds, the words, the grammar and their meaning, they must know when to use these, they must learn when silence must be their language for example. All in all, in the mother tongue situation language is learned for life and nature provides for its learning. In not so normal children, facts and factors will depend on the degree of deviation from the normal. In the case of deaf children, if they are of deaf parents, research reports indicate they acquire sign language in much the same way

as oral language is acquired except that because children gain control of their arms before their speech organs, the deaf children produce signs earlier than the others produce words (de Villiers and de Villiers 1982:240-24). Another type of language acquisition is second language acquisition. This too has been found to have much in common with mother-tongue acquisition. O'grady *et al* (299-322) studies however have raised issues with the ability to acquire language as it relates to age. Children are understood to learn easier and better than adults, adolescent and above. From the learners point of view, research find that irrespective of their intellectual ability, individuals will find it easier or harder to learn a second language according to what they call their cognitive style which characteristically may be field dependent or field independent. Other factors found relevant include aptitude or special knack for language, motivation and attitude. Simultaneously the environment has a lot to contribute.

The goal of all endeavours in language acquisition is the attainment of a necessary competence for the general or a specific life enterprise. From what has been said of human language so far, no one can acquire the totality of any language. In the natural unmarked situation the concept of necessary competence is naturally defined. The purpose for that language acquisition is basically living with a specific people that embrace and share a certain way of life in a geographical space at a temporal point in a history that continues to evolve. The competence so attained therein must be what has come to be known as native speaker competence in modern linguistics. This competence is the ultimate in all language acquisition and is only less than what linguists call the ideal native speaker competence that is practically unattainable.

There are also marked natural language acquisition situations. These are situations where individual human beings are confronted by a life situation with its language which they lack but which is necessary for them to operate in that society. The necessary competence for such an individual is defined by the prevailing variables that will define their need and determine the

approximation of their achieved competence to the related and possible ideal. For example, a six-year-old child, a teenager, or an adult who moves from a society whose language they speak already to one whose language they do not speak will necessarily, by the exposure begin to acquire the language of the new environment. How much of the language gets acquired depends on variables, some of which perhaps still remain unknown. Besides the need, these include age, intelligence, opportunities, individual dispositions, the known and the new languages, the length of time spent in the new environment, available alternatives to acquiring the new language attitudes involved in the society and individual etc. Concretely, a young child of six may well attain a virtually native speaker competence in the new language in one year while a seventy-year-old immigrant may opt to live in seclusion and suffer. In between the two extremes are a cline of infinite possibilities. A major variable that the situation creates for the individual is the individual's own threshold for a reaction to the situation that is by nature trying if not traumatic: The known language does not just become useless, but there is an urgent need to acquire what cannot be hurried.

The third category of language acquisition is essentially related to conscious language teaching and language learning. The goal of the acquisition here may be consciously set, ranging from a general aim at native speaker competence to various competence levels and areas that is covered by the concept of language for specific purposes.

CHAPTER TWO

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

1. History of Linguistics

The development of linguistics can be traced through three major chronological schools: Traditional grammar, Comparative philosophy, and Modern Linguistics.

(a) Traditional Grammar:

The term traditional grammar is used by Linguists to refer to:

that tradition of linguistic analysis and linguistic theory which originated in Greece, was further developed in Rome and in Medieval Europe, and was extended to the study of the vernacular languages of Renaissance and afterwards. (Lyons 1968:18).

This school of language studies and therefore the beginning of Linguistics is traceable to Greece of the 5th BC when it emerges within philosophy as an integrated speculative part of a general

inquiry into the nature of being and its environment. The inquiry and speculation had the following theoretical underpinnings which, though of general nature also related to language:

1. *Was language natural (a result of external independent forces outside man) or conventional (a result of man's actions such as agreement or contract)?* The discussion focussed much on sound symbolism, and etymology of words which aimed at revealing the truths of nature through their origins of true meaning. To naturalists, for example, the sound of *l* is a liquid sound, appropriately and naturally in words naming liquid things such as milk, liquor, blood etc. The meaning of words would be envisaged to have some natural relationships with them onomatopoeically as in hoot, crash, cuckoo etc.; or by extension to such core natural vocabulary through metaphor or inflection (removal addition or substitution of part of a word). The conventionalists held the opposite view that words had only a conventional relationship with their meaning, and phenomenon like onomatopoeia were accidental.

2. *Was language regular (analogous) or irregular (anomalous) in its structure?*

Analogists insisted on regularity of language, citing for example what they saw as proportional relationships between words of the type: $x:y :: p:q$. They classified words into regular paradigms and were ready to correct anomalies in language rather than their idea about the nature of the phenomenon. Anomalists saw examples of irregularity of language in lexical relationships such as homonym and synonymy as well as nonconforming forms in other paradigms such as

dog : dogs versus ox : oxen,

look : looked versus go : went,

and insisted that grammarians needed to address facts of language usage no matter how irrational even though there were also rationalizable regularities in language

3. *What is the relationship between spoken and written language?*

Grammar, the Greek word for the study of language derived from what meant the art of writing. This is because from the beginning, Greek scholars studied written language with a tendency to consider spoken language as dependent on it. This position was crystallized by the later Alexandrian scholars of C3rd and C2nd BC as they compared their contemporary Greek of Alexandria with early classical Greek literary works damning the contemporary works as corruption of true language which they worked to prescribe and preserve. The notion emerged that the educated maintained the purity of language while the illiterate corrupted it. Linguists refer to this view which was held for over two thousand years as classical fallacy.

4. Closely related to the above is another fallacy which related to the idea that language change was language corruption.

Greek grammatical analysis was predicated on the above theoretical issues. Progressively, Greek scholars recognized and defined categories which eventually provided a framework recognized for analyzing language within traditional grammar: In the C5th BC a Sophist, Protagoras distinguished three genders in Greek; between about 400-347 BC Plato is reported to have distinguished between nouns and verbs, logically defining nouns as terms that functioned as subjects of a predication and verbs as the actions or quality which is predicated thus putting verbs and adjectives together; and between 384 – 322 BC Aristotle recognized the categories of conjunctions and tense, adding them to verbs and nouns on the one hand and to gender on the other with the term intermediate for the gender that was neither masculine or feminine. The stoics, mainly anomalists, for whom language was central to their philosophy distinguished nouns, verbs, conjunction, article and refined the noun by postulating common as opposed to proper nouns, but categorizing the adjective with the noun. They

further recognized the phenomena of inflexion, case, aspect, voice, and transitivity in verbs. Alexandrian grammarians built onto the stoic's work further recognizing the following categories: adverb; participle, pronoun, case, number and mood. The first western grammar was produced by one of them Dionysius Thrax towards the end of C2nd BC, providing the basic framework of analysis of language within Traditional Grammar.

The form which traditional grammars took continued to be sharpened in the Roman period as the Romans enthusiastically followed the Greek ways in language as much as in other matters. They adopted both the theoretical issues and the methodologies. Latin Grammars were modeled on Greek ones as grammar remained part of philosophy, literary criticism and rhetoric. Varo's grammar of C1st BC and that of Donatus of C4th AD and Priscian of 5th AD just further established the form of classical grammars, dominated as a volume by defining the scope of grammar as "the art of correct speech and the understanding of poets", dealing with parts of speech in detail, and finally discussing style in terms of good and bad while warning the user against barbaric influence and their predictable faults.

The medieval period saw the continuation of the establishment of traditional grammar. With Latin playing a significant part in educational system, the Roman theories and practices which were adopted as school manuals were written based on the grammars of Donatus and Priscian. The medieval scholars were, however, under the scholastic influence of the times, keen to relate the grammatical categories and show how they could be deduced from first principles scientifically. They attempted to establish what they would see as a theory of parts of speech. Concerned with the modes of signifying by words, they were called *The Modistae*: words signified according to a particular mode (substance, action, quality) relating the word and what it represents to the human intellect.

The Greco-Roman tradition of linguistic theory and analysis spread to Armenia (5th A.D.) and Syria through the translation of Thrax's grammar into those languages. Arabian grammarians had similar influence both directly in Spain and through Syria. In turn, Hebrew caught up with the tradition through the Arabs. Similarly the influence affected some European vernacular languages with a C7th A.D grammar of Irish, a C12th one of Icelandic, a C13th one of Provençal and a comparison of Latin and Anglo-Saxon by Alfric in the C10th. In the C14th and C15th grammars of French were produced for English travellers.

With the onset of Renaissance, interest in European and other languages developed and all the grammars were written with the theory and models of traditional grammar which influenced both literacy and linguistic studies in schools and universities virtually up to now. The earliest studies of the languages of the new world including Africa, and with it, Kenya, caught up with the tradition as they were modeled on Greek and Latin grammars in which their authors, the missionaries had been well schooled.

Traditional grammar as a School of Linguistics left the discipline with a view of the nature of language and descriptive viewpoint that has not been erased from every linguist's mind. The categories they identified have largely survived, and the names for the categories and processes provide the metalanguage in linguistics up to now. Further, the recognized levels in which language studies are done find their roots in traditional grammar. These levels have remained fundamental to even thinking about language: all studies and subdisciplines relate to them at levels of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics.

(b) Comparative Philology:

Linguistics as an independent branch of scientific inquiry into knowledge dates to the early part of the C19th when Comparative Philology (comparative Grammar/Comparative and Historical linguistics) broke with the academic grammatical studies and the

Greco-Roman scholarly studies of civilizations through literary texts (also referred to as philology) of the previous century. The French Academy, for example, entered the term *linguistique* in its dictionary in 1835 where it was defined as 'the study of the principles and relationships of languages'. It was thus essentially a branch of scholarship which concentrated on the history of related languages.

Related languages in linguistics are languages understood to share a history so that they are said to belong to the same family. Such languages are envisaged to have developed from the same language. As the most significant development of language scholarship in the C19th, Comparative Philology evolved a theory of language change, and language relationships together with the methodology and principles for setting up language families. What emerged had the economy, exhaustiveness, consistency, and predictive power which made Comparative Philology acceptable as a science by the definition of science that is still current. (It should be noted that the Port Royal and Speculative Scholastic Grammarians before them believed their work was scientific by their perception of science). This development of language studies benefited from several factors of the time: the notion of evolution being predominant, in the C19th thought with Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 created a natural atmosphere for thinking not just of the state of language at any one time, but its development from one state to another; Romanticism of the end of the C18th reacted against Classicism giving language scholars a leeway out of the classically fixed "canons of literary excellence", (Lyons : 1968:24) thus promoting interests in various aspects of language such as earlier stages and varieties of all rather than only 'civilized' languages; Renaissance had brought interest in many more languages than Greek and Latin, availing dictionaries and texts of various languages from the C16th; The discovery that the sacred Indian language Sanskrit was related to Greek and Latin at the end of the C18th with the influence of oriental linguists such as Sir William Jones gave irresistible impetus to the development of Historical Comparative Linguistics declaring an obvious challenge

that the affinity in both verb roots and grammar could never be accidental.

The theories of comparative philology provided generalizations and explanations of the observable facts that languages change and relate to one another on the parameters of similarities and differences in various degrees. Like all sciences, it has progressed by developing and testing the various hypotheses against the facts. Their original point of departure was significantly that language facts could be so studied according to scientific principles. These facts were studied on comparative and historical basis. They yielded complex and relatively reliable theories and formulae explaining facts of language change and relatedness of different languages. The Indo-European languages provided the springboard for this school. As Comparative Linguistics revealed many similarities of the various Indo-European languages, the linguists tried to reconstruct the developments of these similarities and in the process created a respectable body of knowledge with explanatory and predictive power about the historical principles and facts in the development of related languages that had the rigour required of scientific endeavour.

Comparative Historical Linguistics worked and still works from the premise that: Language is largely conventional rather than natural - at least words in languages are conventional. It is therefore to be expected that words rather than onomatopoeic ones are unique. When different languages present words which share both their sounds and meaning, there is need for explanation. Such explanation can be found in the concept of borrowing, either from one another, or from a common source. For example, when one takes a look at any Kenyan language one finds for example that the words for *book*, *school*, *class* to be virtually the same, and this is because these words have been borrowed into the languages from English.

Dholuo	Kikamba	Luyia	Nandi	English meaning
<i>bu:k</i>	<i>ivuku</i>	<i>ibuku</i>	<i>buguit</i>	book
<i>skul</i>	<i>sukulu</i>	<i>isukuli</i>	<i>sungulit</i>	school
<i>klas</i>	<i>kilasi</i>	<i>kilasi</i>	<i>klas</i>	class

Secondly, the explanation may be that it is simply accidental resemblance. When those explanations are eliminated, Comparative Linguistics relies on grammatical mechanisms, general structuring in languages, and the phonic shapes of words with the same or nearly related meanings to make deductions on the histories of the languages and their speaker. Vocabulary comparison is the most developed, using the concept of core vocabulary (body parts or animals).

For example Indo-European languages exemplified below, the first four words show that the German and English examples constitute one group while French, Italian and Spanish another group. The next four words show a general similarity in parts of the words' forms. The observation or discovery by Comparative Philologists was that the similarity was part of a correspondence in word forms with the same meaning which was systematic and regular. Even where the words were not too closely similar the observed sound correspondences were significant.

Meaning	English	German	French	Italian	Spanish
Summer	summer	<i>sommer</i>	<i>e"te</i>	<i>estate</i>	<i>estio</i>
	<i>/summə/</i>	<i>/z mer/</i>	<i>/ete/</i>	<i>/e'state/</i>	<i>/es'tid/</i>
hand	hand	<i>Hand</i>	<i>main</i>	<i>mano</i>	<i>mano</i>
	<i>/haend/</i>	<i>/hant/</i>	<i>/me'/</i>	<i>/'mano/</i>	<i>/'mano/</i>

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life	life /laɪf/	<i>Leben</i> /'e:ben/	<i>vie</i> /vi/	<i>vita</i> /'vɪtə/	<i>vida</i> /'vɪdə/
give	give /gɪv/	<i>geben</i> /'ge:ben/	<i>donner</i> /dɒne/	<i>donare</i> /do'nare/	<i>donar</i> /'d'onar.
foot	foot /fut/	<i>fuss</i> /fu:s/	<i>pied</i> /'pye/	<i>piede</i> /'pi'ede/	<i>pie</i> /'pie/
two	two /tu:/	<i>zwei</i> /tʃvai/	<i>deux</i> /do/	<i>due</i> /'due/	<i>dos</i> /dos/
three	three /'ori:/	<i>drei</i> /'drai/	<i>trois</i> trwa/	<i>tre</i> /'tre/	<i>tres</i> /'tres/
me	me /mi:/	<i>mich</i> /'mic/	<i>moi</i> /mwa/	<i>me</i> /me/	<i>me</i> /me/.

Observation of such data led to deduction of what was seen as precise rules of sound changes in languages over a period of time. A famous example is 'Grimm's law'. As Lyons (1968:27) says:

Grimm explained such correspondences by postulating 'sound-shift' in a prehistoric period of Germanic whereby the original Indo-European 'aspirate' consonants (bh, dh and gh) became unaspirated (b, d and g), the original voiced consonants (b, d and g) became voiceless (p, t and k) and the original voiceless consonants (p, t and k) became 'aspirates' (f, o and h).

Subsequent refinements of laws of sound change in language addressed, and often inco-operated what Grimm considered exceptions in a process he did not insist on being regular. Similar laws were established which accounted for the observed correspondences between Indo-European languages.

Comparative Philology helped establish language studies within the scientific principles. From within the discipline, it created tools for genetic classification of languages, beginning with the Indo-European languages and spreading to families of languages in the whole world. With consistent scientific resharpener, the theories and methods have remained in an exciting branch of linguistics more known as Comparative Historical Linguistics currently which deals scientifically in the History of languages. That history is largely reached through sound changes, analogy (the process by which a language regularizes its grammatical forms) and borrowing.

In the final analysis, languages observed to have similarities may be a result of coincidence - divergence that creates a family from one language, or convergence - the emergence of a language from other languages in contact which can be established by historically oriented comparison.

Besides the classification into families through historical comparisons, languages are compared, and according to various criteria, grouped into types through typological comparisons. They are then typified according to their phonetics, phonology, grammar or syntax, morphology, and lexicon. As Robins (1989:36) says, typological comparison attempts to answer the question '*What is this language like?*' Languages can be typified by the types of articulation in the sound production or specific phonetic features such as glottalization or retroflex which may be outstanding as characteristics. Phonologically, there are characterizing features which include matters of the syllable or mora and its structure; or the presence or absence of tone. Syntactic criteria include matters of relationship between sentential parts as marked or unmarked for various categories such as gender, number, case, tense, aspect etc. and their word order. For example, languages may be SVO or VSO, or SOV, where these stand for Subject, Verb and Object. Lexical comparison moves to compare words and lexical systems in relation to the socio-cultural background of their speakers. With reference to word structure languages are classified as to whether

they are isolating or analytic, exhibiting no paradigms, and therefore being typified by invariable words; agglutinating, where words are typically made of morphs each representing a morpheme; inflecting or fusional with words which are impossible to neatly and consistently break into the morphs for the morphemes even though the words are variable in form. Just like the sounds, language typology changes thus creating part of the history of individual and families of languages. The comparative studies of language have also yielded what have been proposed as language universals.

Comparative Historical Linguistics yielded linguistic findings from which inferences are made beyond the study of language into areas that deal with the speech communities involved. Historical, cultural, environmental and other deductions can be made from linguistic findings. Some of the methodology developed have also been used within other disciplines. For example, an American Linguist, Swadesh, using comparison of vocabularies proposed the following formula for working out the depth of separation of two languages which would provide historical facts on the peoples:

$$t = \log C/2 \log R,$$

where c is the proportion of words preserved in the basic vocabulary of the two languages, R is a 'constant of retention' equal to about 0.81, and t is the minimal chronological depth of divergence, expressed in millenia. (Pierre Alexandre 1967 :64).

(c) **Modern Linguistics:**

Modern Linguistics rests on the foundations laid by the Geneva based Ferdinand de Saussure who is accepted in all quarters as its father, and whose lectures given between 1907 and 1911 were posthumously published in *Cours de Linguistique, Generale* in 1915. These lectures' contribution in the founding of modern

scientific study of language lies in the fact that in them, de Saussure defined or redefined the discipline and its object in a manner that made it possible for linguists to study language in the scientific manner without recourse to the historical dimension as previously established. By his various definitions, he established, in the words of Lyons (1968:48) that "Each state of the language can, and should be described on its own terms without reference to what it has developed from or what it is likely to develop into". As Denis and Taylor (1990:2) put it: "He defined linguistics in such a way that even those who disagreed with him were forced to accept that definition, and work within it or around it".

De Saussure's influential arguments were made within the following distinctions and definitions:

Language: Langue, parole, and langage:

De Saussure's dominating principles rest on a definition of human language that recognizes a three dimensional ambiguity in any single term for the phenomenon: There is the shared knowledge that those who are said or known to speak the same language have (in common) - *la langue*; there is the set of actual utterances which the speakers of a language produce when they are speaking the language, *la parole*; these two are intricately related and perhaps even interdependent, but distinct. The third dimension is the sum of *langue* and *parole* - *le langage*.

Diachronic and Synchronic Study of Language:

De Saussure used the analogy from the game of chess to point out that like the state of the board in the game, language is constantly changing. The diachronic study of a language would address its historical development through time. A synchronic study would address the language as it is or was at some particular point in time.

Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Relations in Language:

Conceiving of language as a depository of signs, as its elements, de Saussure crystallized the notion that the elements of language are linearly structured entering into two types of relationships - the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic. The syntagmatic relationships of language elements are the relationships an element has with those with which it co-occurs - sometimes therefore called the relationship in to praesentia. Paradigmatic relations refer to the relationship an element of language has with all the units which can occur in the same context as itself, hence this is sometimes described as relations in absentia.

In essence, the Saussurian contribution can be summarised thus: It was possible and necessary to study language synchronically without reference to its development and this could be done scientifically because *langage* had structure and accessible facts as long as the object of study was *langue* and not parole or language.

The C20th has seen a proliferation of schools of thought and linguistic theories which have been basically predicated on Saussurian principles. The goal of all the theories have been to facilitate the understanding of human language in general, but usually if not invariably, through specific particular languages. The theories attempt to make generalization about language which have predictive powers, and remain falsifiable.

De Saussure anchored these efforts in:

1. Proposing certain 'facts' about the nature of human language which provide fundamental presuppositions in the search for the truth about the phenomenon: the elementarity of the sign as what language is made of; paradigmatic and syntagmatic arrangement of those signs within the given that language is linear, and very significantly, the notion that language is a complexity perspectively divisible or separable.

2. Arguing for abstraction in the study of language-abstraction of what can be handled to leave out what cannot be handled scientifically.

3. Demonstrating and insisting that Linguistics can and must be practiced within the established paradigms of modern science.

It should be noted that although modern Linguists tend to play down their indebtedness to traditional grammar, it has always, from a certain point of view, formed the bedrock of linguistic theories and practice: the original insights into the nature of language as can be deduced from the terms and categories from traditional grammar has remained the same as these terms and categories constitute the given paraphernalia of the descriptive trade as well as theoretical take off points. The notions of verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions etc. as well as case, gender number, subjects and predicators, phrases and clauses, sentences and words automatically create the initial view into any inquiry into the nature of language generally and specific languages in particular, albeit with sometimes improved definitions.

Founded on the two predecessors Modern Linguistics has been characterized, as Robins (1989:321) suggests by "*Quot homines tot sententia*" (for everyone his own opinion) in a search for the truth. The theories or schools of thought which have emerged are summarized below.

1. Structural Linguistics:

The Structuralist theory or theories of language were built straight into Saussurian theoretical foundations. It remained dominant until 1957. In order to approach their research into the facts of language structuralist targeted what they believed were the real language facts - the emitted sounds in real speech. The known enthusiasts actually recorded real telephone conversations secretly for their analysis. That analysis proceeded by cutting up the strings into constituents until the minimum constituent was isolated

according to rigorous rules of procedure. Grammars therefore put the constituents into distribution classes and named them, being careful to avoid what was seen as weaknesses of traditional grammar: prescriptions and national generalizations. Anchored on behaviorist principles of the time, American structuralism was characterized by strict empiricism and methodological precision which pushed for better definitions of the linguistic technical vocabulary as it curved out linguistics as a science with what is sometimes called Boomfieldian Linguistics.

2. Tagmemics:

Not too different from American structuralism, and associated with Pike and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, this school remains defined by the concept of the tagmeme (a place in the structure and the elements occupying it), and discovery procedures in language research. Sometimes referred to as slot and filler grammar as Longacre (1965:65-76) states, "Tagmemics is a reaffirmation of function in a structuralist context".

3. Hallidayan (Systemic) Grammar:

This theory contrasts linguistic form (grammar and lexis) with substance (phonic or graphic) and contexts of situations in which linguistic forms have meaning, through the link of phonology/orthography. Sometimes called Neo-Firthian or Scale and Category Grammar, referring to its real founder, Firth, and the postulation of categories (unit, structure, class and system) purported to be related on scales of rank, delicacy and exponents albeit with allowance for rank shifting.

4. Stratificational Linguistics:

Developed by Charles Lamb in the 1960s this school postulates strata (levels) and tactic rules which specify the reunited combinations in each stratum. Realization rules in turn link the elements strata.

5. Generative Transformational Grammar:

Introduced by Noam Chomsky in 1957 through his publication of *Syntactic Structures*, this school has remained active and productive horizontally and vertically. Predicated on structural tenets, Chomsky set up the practice of citing inadequacies in existing grammars and suggesting improvements in comprehensive statements of principles and procedures to achieve set goals in the linguistic enterprises. The basic departure points were realized in the notions of deep and surface structure, competence and performance as terms whose definitions define language, and phrase structure rules and transformations in the attempt to perfect a rule based generative system as an imitation of the knowledge possessed by an ideal native speaker rather than the emitted sounds in speech. In the last four decades versions and revisions have emerged with exciting attempts to redefine the language phenomenon and establish theories with powerful predictive possibilities.

There have been offshoots of Generative Transformational Grammar too which range from those with specific areas of differences to competing theories that hardly agree on anything. These include:

a). Generalized Phrase Structure Grammars: Accepting the Chomskyan generative grammars, the theory does not accept the notions of deep and surface structures and therefore transformations, but instead proposes enriching the base component in order to generate the sentences of language.

b) Relational and Functional Grammars: These theories accept functional Relational and Functional Grammars concepts (object, goal, location, beneficiary etc.) as primitive universals and use them instead of Chomskyan categorical concepts in referring to sentential structures. With an enriched lexicon, they dispense with transformations. Three versions of functional/relational grammars are those by Perlmutter and Postal; Simon Dik; and Foley and Van Valin.

c) Dependency Grammars: The hallmark of these, is that instead of constituents, the basic unit in syntax is the word and the relationship between words is what is called dependency. Foundation of these are old (in medieval scholastic grammars and ancient Indian ones). The syntactic structures of sentences are set out as relations between words.

6. Macrolinguistics:

What is exemplified in the history of linguistics so far is what can be called only microlinguists. We propose the term Macrolinguistics to cover this as well as language studies in branches that are meeting points between the studies of other aspects of human life and linguistics. These include various theories in areas of psycholinguistics; sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics; and ecolinguistics, historical linguistics etc.

2 Language in Linguistics

Levels: Inherent in the entry point into language by linguists is the notion of levels which so far yield distinct though related subdiscipline of the subject in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The order in which these are listed, reflect, the development of linguistics. Phonetics, for instance, was the first to become very developed science before any of the other levels, perhaps because sound, being physical and measurable was easy to study scientifically. Phonology followed and then morphology, both prospering within structuralism with the phoneme theory in phonology and various theories around the morphemic analysis of the word. In fact syntax followed much later, taking central stage only in 1957 before which all works hoped that someone else would pick up any analysis beyond phonetics, phonology and morphology. Although language is about meaning, being difficult to be systematically predictive about, semantics remained behind the other levels except for pragmatics which is even more ambitious dealing with language where it is most difficult to systematize or reduce to

predictable scientific rules. However, there are theories specific to these levels building up knowledge in the sounds of language, the sound systems, the words forms, sentential structures, meaning and pragmatics of human language. Linguists have also theorized on the interactions of these levels. Generative theories, for example create rule systems which start with one level and incorporate the rest.

The View Proclaims the Image: Linguistic theory has been much affected by how far linguists have been committed to the modern empiricist paradigm. This has in turn ironically affected how every theorist as well as practicing linguist has come to see and define language: Traditional grammar stand apart from modern linguistics as a school that prescriptively studied chosen written literary forms as the respectable language. De Saussure's dominating principles start with definitions of language and prescription of language (other than *la parole* and *le langage*) as the scientifically viable object of study by linguists. The American structural behaviourists built up a theory on the basis that the legitimate language for study was the spoken utterances naturally emitted and scientifically collected. The Chomskyan generativists much like de Saussure distinguish between competence and performance and prescribe competence as the object of study with the reason that performance, like *la parole* and *le langage* before them could not be scientifically studied. Following the ideas of Bronislaw Malinowski who was Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics when Firth was at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the Neo-Firthians saw language as nothing if not a tool and proceeded to develop their theory of context. The Prague School, developed by Vilem Mathesius concurrently with de Saussure and American Structuralism, saw language in terms of functions of its various components (registers and styles) rather than as a unitary range of systems. The varieties available provide speakers with alternatives appropriate for use in differing social contexts or settings, thus giving language the social dimension mostly exploited currently by linguists such as Labov. A range of current functional grammars react against Chomskyan

positions to various degrees ranging from those who see the concern of linguists to include not only competence but also some aspects of performance to those who reject the rigorous formalism and want to tackle language in its function and use as verbal interaction and a mode of human communication (Robin 1989:304). Stratificationists view language (*ibid*:320) as: "a network of relations linking meaning to spoken sound".

The significant points that come from what linguists have done with language are the following:

- i) They have always all had to limit language before their theories could try to deal with it.
- ii) The corollary is that in order for a theory of language to be proposed, much of what we have defined in chapter two as part of language has had to be defined out and explained away.
- iii) It becomes like the modern linguist has had a choice between either being scientific or studying human language or an aspect thereof.
- iv) Linguists are not agreed on the definition of language, the phenomenon of their inquiry and that definition remains to date a central challenge to the discipline.
- v) Each theory necessarily blinds the linguist to other obvious aspects of language and together with the whole process prefixes the principles by which the scientist proceeds.

There are critics of modern linguistic establishment who are calling for redefinitions and a stop to figure out where linguists are heading with their quest to understand Language, claiming that the preoccupation with empiricism as defined in our time is ending up guiding us away from the real phenomenon we are trying to understand. Baker and Hacker (1989), and Davies and Taylor

(1990), find fault with the modern linguistic theories and practices fundamentally because they have not taken language as it is for their object of study. As observed already, everyone has redefined language albeit with Saussure's proposals in the C20th, to make it more manageable within their scientific methods. Saussure's definition itself did not only idealize the object of linguistic study in *la langue*, it removed all diachrony from it, rid it of all use, and straight jacketed human language as a set of linear signs that find their value (meaning) in a system of paradigms and syntagms. American structuralists chose to hold onto utterances without recourse to where they came from or indeed their meaning. Chomsky not only psychologises the idealized object of linguistic study giving authority not so much to the society as the individual idealized native speaker, but proceeds to work with and define language (competence) as a set of rules and the potentially infinite set of sentences the rules generate or make predictions about. Katz and Fodor (1963:171) explaining Chomskyan linguistics clearly say:

A synchronic description of a natural language seeks to determine what a fluent speaker knows about the structure of his language that enables him to use and understand any sentence drawn from the INFINITE set of sentences of his language, and since, at any time he has only encountered a FINITE set of sentences, it follows that the speaker's knowledge of his language takes the form of rules...

This is what Baker and Hacker (1991:569) find "an altogether misleading psychologization of the subject-matter of linguistics and a thorough-going methodological muddle". Such clear cut positions may facilitate empiricist procedures, and fulfil specified goals according to each theory, but they are creating an ideal removed from reality leaving out significant chunks of that reality and actually guiding scholarship from it.

In summary, Linguistics has grown in leaps in a short time into a complicated scientific discipline. There is, however, no unified theory of human language, and the search still continues, with

theorists curving and curling in the attempt to understand language, but within the acceptable methodologies of the scientific method. Controversies remain at both these ends even though there are also a lot that is not controversial as Hudson (1984): 15-21) has established. The greatest challenge has been and remains founding a theory that will have explanatory and predictive possibilities of language in its totality as a human resource in life. The latest theories are hitting language in life at various points of contact: the brain, the mind, human psychology etc. Structurally, concerns of language as it relates to man have been dealt with within the macro linguistic areas, encompassing such disciplines as Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics etc. The relevance of linguistics to human life situations is getting more and more recognised. This further enhances the challenge to linguists to spearhead an inclusive understanding of the language phenomenon itself. For this to happen, the yoke of modern scientific paradigms will need to be revisited, expanded or replaced to allow the bringing together all the findings and claims of all theories and scrutinize them only against the known realities of human language in life context.

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE IN KENYA

1. The Nation

The territorial boundaries of the Kenyan Nation were (largely) defined in Berlin in 1885. Those boundaries arbitrarily included the peoples, then virtually independent nationalities, represented by the languages named in the language Map in Appendix 3.

The colonial government started the integrated management of this territory which was to become a nation state in 1963. Before the integration started there were over forty peoples who lived virtually as nationalities within specific territories. The integration therefore started national development in two senses: First was the necessary growth of Kenya in terms of building up nationalism - the feeling and concomitant reality of oneness; the establishment of a unified, recognizable and accepted ethos which all within the boundaries identify with and proudly live by as Kenyans. The second is the socio-economic sense of development into a mature nation state whose resources are maximally developed and exploited for the well being of its involved populace. Kenya is categorized in the World context as young because it is only 36

years old, and developing because the two processes of development are still in progress

2. Transition

Kenya is a young nation, but not an infant one. This means that some of the development has taken place already, though it is envisaged that the goals have not yet been achieved, so the train of development is still meandering on. In as far as this is so, it makes Kenya and Kenyans a nation and a people in transition, with all that it means to be in transitional existence. Although all societies are always changing, Kenya like the other developing nations of Africa, is in transition in a rather specific way. For example, each of the forty or so peoples, though in various stages of their socio-political history, had reasonably stable cultures to govern their lives. They had known and accepted social, economic and political order. Nationally, Kenyans are still in the process of developing a similar base with cultural, social, economic and political order they understand, accept and naturally participate in, although aspects of these are already in place. For example, culturally, before the present transition, Kenyans had known and accepted rules of commission, omission and procedure that led to what was understood as a marriage within each of the communities. In the present transition, there are indications that there is room for maneuver and eclecticism: the media has reported quite a few cases in which couples even from same communities, have lived together long enough to have four or five children purportedly in matrimony only to end up in churches, law courts or funeral feuds with contests as to whether that was a marriage or not. The arguments in such contests have been very telling, demonstrating sometimes that even the couples themselves have different ideas of when a marriage is a marriage. Severally, groups and individuals in the society are obviously dislocated and groping for new support systems: the aged, the children, the aggrieved spouses etc. Economically, one observes in the villages an attempt for example, to live in a money economy rather than a subsistence one, sometimes without any clear and viable source of money.

Politically, the challenges have been loud and confusing, with an emerging representative system with not so obviously known, and shared values. We believe that this transition touches on all aspects of Kenyan's lives in degrees that vary on various parameters.

Observationally, the move is from what we might term the traditional to the modern. This dichotomy parallels the ethnic to the national, as well as the African to the Western. The Africans in Kenya fall back to their roots in ethnic communities. What is traditional is therefore defined in the final analysis by specific Kenyan communities which mark the beginning of the journey called development in our times. The end of this journey is less well defined, and probably necessarily so. However, in our times it is associated with what is Western at one level as well as what is national and therefore more embracingly Kenyan. Because the goal is rather nebulous, sometimes it is defined as innovation that is simply non-traditional.

At one level the whole Kenyan community is in transition in that the various ethnic communities are generally at differing stages of the journey. Theoretically there can be pockets that are hardly touched by the so called modern, while there can be those who are a little way ahead from the traditional, or even nearly totally modern. This clean dichotomy in development has been in our observation affected by a sort of renaissance in Africa which was marked, for example by FESTAC (1976) and by performances by the Bomas of Kenya, by schools at the Kenya Music Festivals or by traditional dancers on National Days, and which has availed the possibility of marrying the traditional with the modern in development rather than replacing the traditional with the modern. At another level within the ethnic traditional communities themselves, individuals, families, or groups of people are at differing stages of the journey. There are among rural Kenyans, those who are hardly touched by the so called modern in their fundamental ways of life even in relatively more developed societies. These mingle in life with those who have attempted to

abandon most of their traditional values. In the middle of the whole complex situation, there is much eclecticism as well as back peddling from the new to the old often moved by unbalanced variables. In the final analysis, the traditional is still a major presence in the goings on in Kenya and the ethnic communities a real base for much of the operations for development and indeed in life. What is Kenyan is clearly growing but is still often superimposed on the traditional which in turn is indigenously Kenyan.

3. Languages of the World

There are many languages on the earth's surface, currently estimated to be around six thousand. Each of the languages is or had been people based in a fundamental way, coming in the first instance with a package for a people in a specific place, obviously to facilitate their life and living. Thus people recognise and talk about languages as European, American (indigenous), Australian (indigenous) and African following the continents of the world. Below that each language gets associated with a people with a culture and their way of life. It is to this extent that even English is still often pegged on English people. Those languages which are not people based in this sense are rationalised as such, as they create their people, usually at a utilitarian level of people who use a language. Examples of these are pidgins, creoles, lingua franca, national and official languages. In time, theoretically the people can develop from the use of the language then languages still remain *people based*.

Classifying the world languages is a problematic endeavour essentially because they lack definite boundaries, existing in a continuum from sharing only accidentals and universals of language and therefore being very different, to dialects with various degrees of differences. However, Linguists always attempt to classify them typologically, genetically, areally and historically - usually according to the methods they use based on their goals (see

Heine and Mohlig 1980:36). They are at the moment believed to fall into about one hundred families.

(a) *Languages of Africa:*

Approximately one thousand of the world languages are spoken in Africa. (Tomason, 1988:18). As with other factors in life, the continent divides linguistically into the north and south of the Sahara. The languages of the north have a long tradition of writing and share more with the north and east than the south of Sahara. The indigenous languages of south of Sahara which have hardly been studied and have, in most cases, had a very short and scattered writing tradition, are often what are referred to as African languages. Areally and collectively, they have been found to have characteristics to separate them from other world languages such as clicks (African linguistic monopoly); prevalent significant tones; complex morphology and what Pierre Alexandre prefers to call "ideophones" and "impressives" of which he says the closest definition one can give for them is approximately "vocables which transmit a sensorial feeling or a complex moral emotion" (Alexandre : 1972:34-38). There have been various early attempts to study and classify the African languages by scholars such as Father Jacinto Brusciotto di Vetralla (1959); Wilhelm Bleck, the German librarian to the Cape Governor (1856); S.W. Koelle (1854); Carl Meinhof, Diedrich Westermann; Arthur Tucker and Margaret Bryan (1966); Alice Werner; Ida Ward; Sir Harry Johnstone; Clement Doke; Maurice Delafosse, Joseph Greenberg etc. Although historical comparative studies of African languages is limited by the lack of written records of the earlier states of the languages, scholars have grouped the languages of the continent into families using their present state. Greenberg (1966), classifies them into four families: The Niger-Kordofanian; Nilo-Saharan; Khoisan; and Afro-Asiatic.

Besides the indigenous African languages, Africa south of the Sahara is significantly characterized by a very powerful presence of European languages, especially those of the former colonialists such as English, French, and Portuguese. In time, pidgins and

creoles have emerged from the contacts of these and the other languages on the continent.

(b) Languages of Kenya:

The languages in Kenya may be divided into indigenous and non-indigenous ones.

The non-indigenous group of languages in Kenya is really a rugbag which will include many languages on the Kenyan landscape, some whose speakers are (insignificant) minorities that may go up to a single one, or are part of the world body of moving persons that come and go. It includes languages of formal and informal foreign residents from all over the world such as enclaves of businessmen or immigrants, and embassy staff respectively. Very interestingly and perhaps only observationally, since liberalization in economy, Japanese and Korean seem to be quite prominently in Kenya even with their scripts. Thirdly, it includes other more foreign languages adopted for use in Kenya such as English.

The boundaries between Kenyan and non-Kenyan languages is not always clear. However, there are recognised languages in the Republic which are regarded as indigenously Kenyan. Internally, determining what are dialects among these Kenyan languages is also problematic. For example, as Heine (1980:9) points out, Gikuyu, Kamba and Meru though treated as different languages are to a certain extent mutually intelligible, "and a satisfactory decision as to whether they form different languages or divergent members of a dialect continuum, i.e. of one and the same language, cannot be made on purely linguistic grounds". At the same time, Kipsigiis and Pokot are considered dialects of Kalenjin while Maasai and Samburu are regarded as dialects of Maa when they may be more different than Gikuyu and Meru. Against this background it is not possible to be linguistically categorical on how many the Kenyan languages are. What is quite clear is that the Kenyan languages generally belong to three sub-families of African languages namely Bantu in the Niger-Kordofanian family; Nilotic, in the Nilo-Saharan family, and Cushitic, in the Afroasiatic

family. Besides these, there is Sheng, a newly developed language by the youth mainly in urban areas.

(i) Bantu Languages:

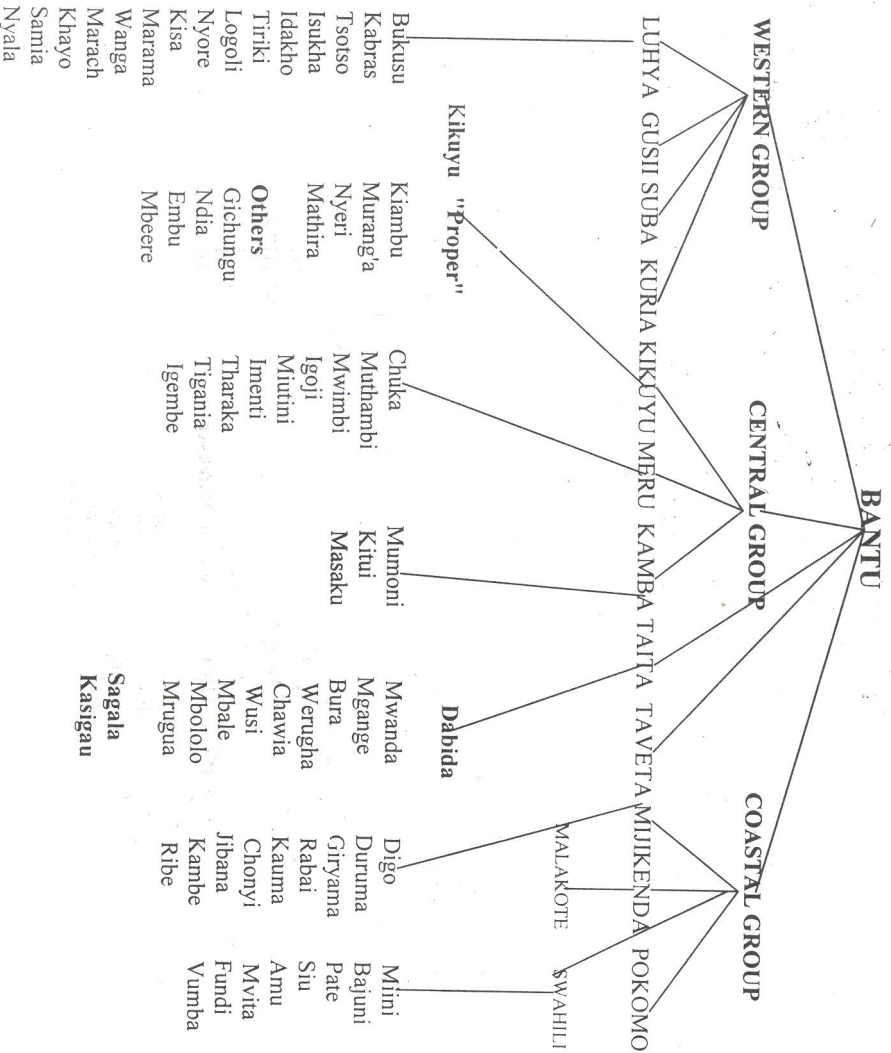
The mother tongue speakers of these languages constitute about 65% of the Kenyan population. The Kenyan Bantu languages like all the rest, are obviously homogenous, but their internal divisions into languages and dialects remain problematic. However, areally, they have been divided into Coastal; Taita; Central Kenya; and Luyia groups of Bantu languages. (Heine and Mohlig (1980:14-15). This areal internal sub-grouping is based on what they call dialectal proximity. Genetically, the Kenyan Bantu languages have been classified as in the tree diagram below.

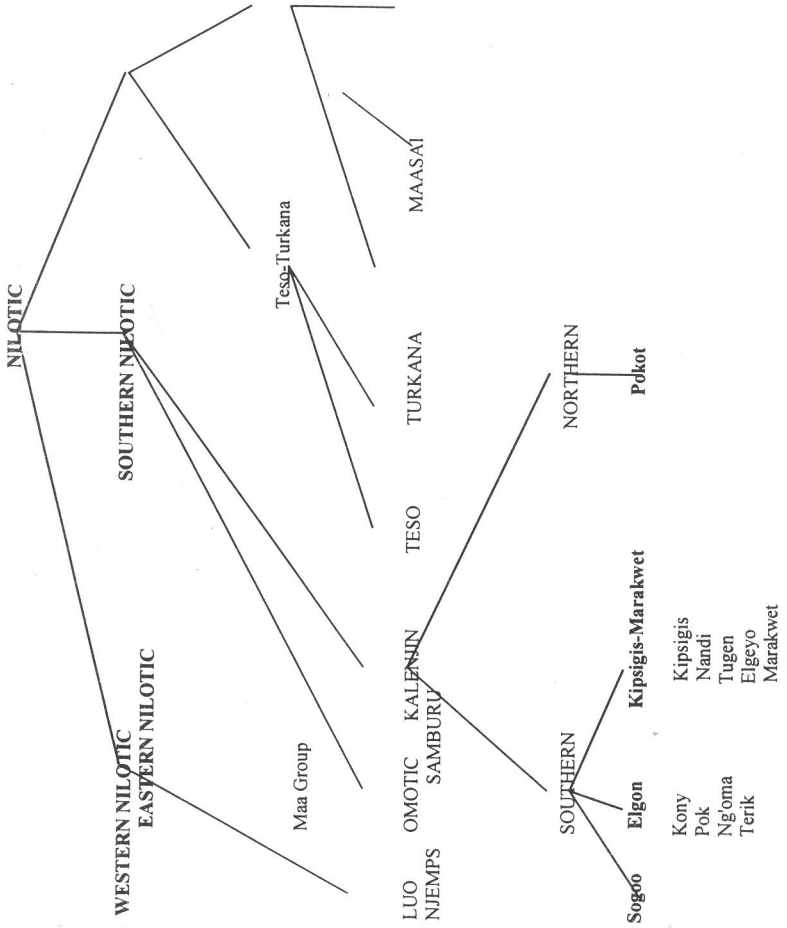
(ii) Nilotic Languages:

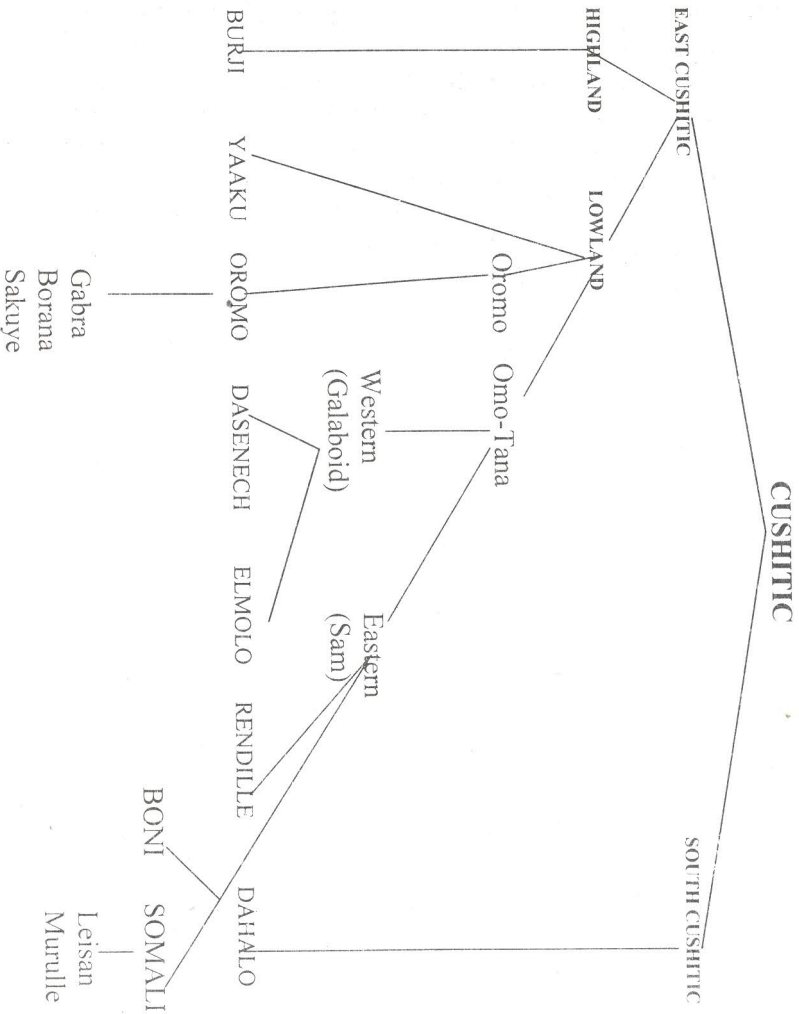
The people who speak Nilotic languages in Kenya make about 30% of the population of the nation. The languages have been found to fall into three sub-families: namely, Western-Nilotic; Eastern Nilotic and Southern Nilotic. As Heine and Mohlig (ibid:53) explain, "These are basically historical terms referring to earlier settlement areas of the Nilotic-speaking people". The earliest classification put these languages in sub-families - Nilotic (equivalent of purest Western Nilotic) and Nilo-Hamitic (which put together Southern and Eastern Nilotic). Another more recent classification replaced Nilo-Hamitic with Paraniotic (Tucker and Bryan 1966). (For the arguments of present day classification see (Heine 1971, Tucker and Bryan 1956 and 1966). The sub-families of Nilotic in Kenya is represented in the genetic tree diagram below.

(iii) Cushitic Languages:

Cushitic language speakers in Kenya comprise about 3% of the Kenyan population. What languages they are and how they relate is seen in the genetic diagram below.







The point about making families and sub families of these language groups is that those grouped separately are different and those put together are similar. The lower down the tree, the more similar the group of languages. The degree of similarity depends on the genetic distances between the languages. Thus, although they are found in Kenya, languages in the three families of Bantu, Nilotic and Cushitic are very different in their phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and even pragmatics. Internally, in Bantu Samia and Khayo are more closely related than, for example, Ragoli and Samia; in Nilotic, Kony and Pok, are closer than Kony and Kipsigis; in Cushitic, Gabra and Borana, are closer than Gabra and Leisan. Within each family, however, indicative of the cohesiveness is often presence of physically similar words with same meanings, similarities in syntactic, phonological, morphological and semantic structures.

Structurally, the language families differ rather obviously. For example, while a Bantu Language like Kiswahili has a five vowel system, the Nilotic languages like Turkana, Maa, and Luo have upto ten vowels. The typical word shapes are different, and the words are put together to form sentences according to differing rules. They also differ in their macro systems including the living areas. Naturally, the sub groupings within the language families, upto the individual languages or idiolects indicate that whereas there are similarities at a level, there are significant differences as well, otherwise they would all be one language.

The classification of indigenous Kenyan languages given here is the currently most widely accepted by Linguists. In its history, however, Bantu has been regarded as autonomous language family before Greenberg made it one of the four sub divisions of the Bantu-Congo with five other sub families of Niger-Congo family. Eastern and Southern sub branches of Nilotic were previously classified as Nilo-Hamitic and ParaNilotic (Tucker and Bryan). Somali has been classified before Greenberg as Hamitic.

Geographically the Linguistic terrain of Kenya is such that the indigenous Kenyan languages are distributed in such a way that they are concentrated in rural parts of Kenya traditionally associated with their speech communities. To this extent, using these languages, therefore we can divide Kenya reasonably clearly into Linguistic regions like Turkana area, Luhya area, or Kamba area which then constitute the rural traditional environment for the speakers of these languages. In Kenyan cultures these are designated as the home areas of the mother tongue speakers of these languages with the African sense of home that is both fixed and permanent for some of the communities. In this respect, Bantu language speakers occupy traditionally 20% of the national territory; Nilotic language speakers, though only 30% occupy about 35% and Cushitic language speakers though only about 3% occupy nearly 40% of the Kenyan territory. However, the languages are to be found too in the diasporae of their speech communities which will be urban centres or settlement within the Republic. As a rule, all the other languages are to be found only in the urban areas, and often only the major ones.

Generally, all the Kenyan languages have ethno-cultural bases because the speech communities are usually ethnic groups that recognizably live within their individual cultures. The languages can be described thus as native in the sense that English native speakers in Kenya are English as Kamba native speakers are ethnically or culturally Kamba. It can be assumed then, that the Kenya languages are mother tongues in this respect, and that those who speak them as such often live together in the same place and/or conceive of themselves as belonging together, and are recognized as such. Major exceptions to this rule are Kiswahili and English whose distribution is influenced by their role in the Kenyan society and whose distribution go beyond the mother tongue one to be superimposed on the mother tongue distribution reflected on the map in Appendix 3.

4. Language Acquisition in Kenya

There are essentially three ways in which Kenyans acquire competence in the languages they individually know. First, the mother tongues are acquired in what we can recognize as the normal natural way from the family and its environs as the context in the process of human development from birth. The assumption is that this is everyone's first language and mother tongue in which they achieve what linguists will recognize as Native Speaker Competence – the complete unquestionable intuitive knowledge of a language that gives the individual the express ability and subsequent power to judge with authority what is correct in his language and what is not thus constituting the final litmus test in the scientific description by linguists. For example, Kenyan English people are assumed to individually have native speaker competence in English; Gusii people have native speaker competence in Ekegusii; and the Turkana have native speaker competence in the same way in Turkana. Nobody ever can know the entire language in their life time, because, for example, each language is a conglomeration of sub-languages and varieties such as dialects, or special registers used in churches, courts or medical practice. But within such constraints, every native speaker of her language has a definitive knowledge of the language in its cultural context acquired from the natural total experience with the environment of her speech community.

Secondly, like everyone else, Kenyans acquire second language or languages where necessary and possible. The first mode of acquisition of non-first languages is the informal acquisition that happens, for example, at the borders of two or more speech communities as the communities meet, interact for one reason or another, and thereby need to create a common language to facilitate life for themselves. The same would happen in the urban centres when people with differing first languages live together and need a language for their living. Analytically in such situations, the solution is either that one or the other of the people learn others' language which then become their common one or

they both acquire or even develop a third language. They can also learn all the languages. The second way of acquiring a second language in Kenya, which is the third way Kenyans acquire language is through formal language teaching and learning, usually done in institutions such as schools and colleges.

The type and amount of language acquired in any second language acquisition will vary according to the needs, facilities, abilities and opportunities available. Potentially Kenyans can have knowledge of a second and subsequent language ranging from just enough 'to greet' or 'ask for water', to even mother tongue competence like knowledge. On the ground, English as a second language is learned almost invariably from the formal school system. How much English a Kenyan knows will depend largely on how long they spent in school in its wider sense. This is particularly so because the formal education relies heavily on English as a medium of instruction and thus its learning gets reinforced in the process. The knowledge of English in Kenya will therefore vary largely from what is acquired from a few years of primary education to that knowledge developed up to authentic British Universities. The Kenyans who get secondary and university education in Kenya will acquire a good command of the language on the average. For those who continue education outside Kenya, their knowledge of English will depend on where they go. In the final analysis, Kenyans who know English, as a matter of fact have different and so far unknown measures of competence in the language. Kiswahili is learned at school too today, and depending on the period of one's education, it can be assumed that going to school avails an opportunity for Kenyans to learn the language. In Kenya's history, however, the teaching of Kiswahili has been on and off, and it has only stabilized in the last ten years when those who graduate from secondary schools can be assumed to have had the opportunity to know Kiswahili as they knew English. In addition, Kiswahili is also the *lingua franca* in Kenya. This means that it is often chosen and acquired as the common code when people do not have a common language. Characteristically, its

acquisition outside formal education has been and continue to be associated with living in Kenyan urban or settlement areas. Again, Kenyans who know Kiswahili have different and unknown measures of competence in the language. A new language in the linguistic ecology of Kenya is Sheng, whose knowledge is, as far as is known, associated with youth in the urban areas, who are also the creators of the language. Japanese and Korean seem to be preeminently present in Kenya today.

5. Patterns of Language Knowledge in Kenya

There are no up to date patterns of the actual language knowledge in terms of specific second languages and their combinations known by individuals. The only record is Heine and Mohlig (1980) whose data was in fact collected between 1968 and 1970. We give the findings because they will give us a relative view of a pattern of language knowledge even if the figures have changed. Heine and Mohlig (Ibid:61) found that Kiswahili was the second language known by the majority of Kenyans at 65% of the population followed by 16.1% who speak English, and 13.1% the various mother tongues. The combinations are given in the following table:

Second Languages known	Percentage of Kenyans
1. None (= monolinguals)	33.7
2. Vernacular (second languages)	0.5
3. Swahili	42.0
4. English	0.3
5. Swahili + vernacular	7.7
6. English + vernacular	0.2
7. English + swahili	10.3
8. English + swahili + vernacular	5.3
Total	100.0

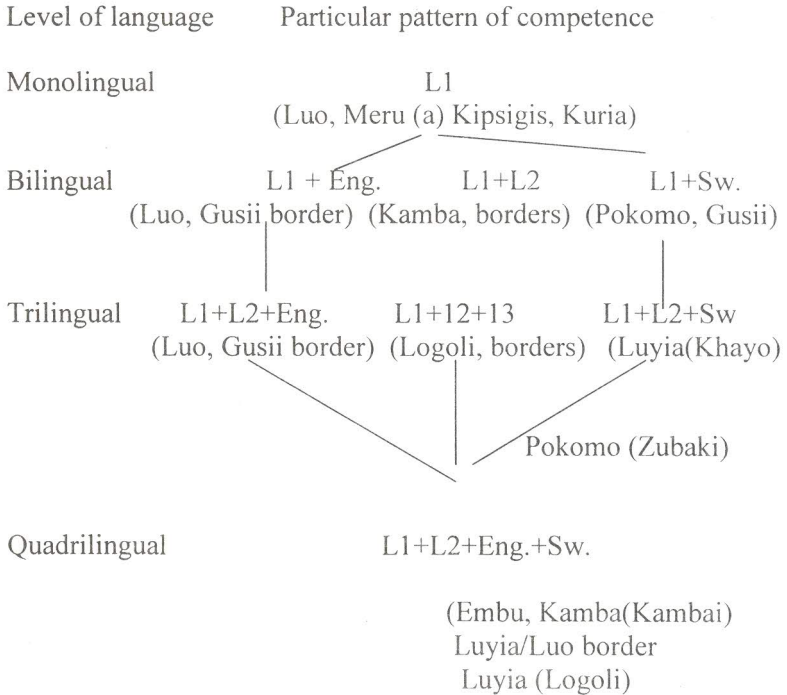
Knowledge by Kenyans of Kenyan mother tongues other than their own was found to be as follows:

Second Language	Percentage of Kenyans
1. Luo	2.7
2. Gikuyu	1.9
3. Luhya	1.8
4. Kalenjin	1.0
5. Gusii	0.8
6. Luganda	0.7
7. Maa	0.6
8. Kamba	0.5
9. Turkana	0.4
10. Arabic	0.4
11. Teso	0.3
12. Kuria	0.3
13. Pokot	0.2
Other languages	2.1

Significantly Heine and Mohlig obviated facts such as the following:

1. An average Kenyan has a second language competence of 1.001.
2. The second language is not always the same.
3. Swahili was the most widely known language.
4. Urban centres had the highest knowledge of second language.
5. More men than women spoke second language especially Swahili and English.
6. More younger than older people spoke Kiswahili and English.
7. Approximately 30% speak only their mother tongue
8. Second language was more predominant in some geographical regions than others.

Whiteley (1974:54) from data collected approximately the same time as Heine and Mohlig give a summary of the knowledge of language in Kenya as in the Chart below:



In analyzing second language knowledge, it is in both cases assumed that each Kenyan has a mother tongue. The distribution of these mother tongues is such that those speaking Bantu languages were 65%, Nilotic languages 30% and those Kenyans who speak Cushitic languages 3%.

What Heine and Mohlig say nothing or little about is the level of knowledge of the languages known by individuals. Whiteley however attempted to incorporate the level of competence in their

questionnaires and presents the information in detailed Charts (pgs.38-47). His sample was very little, but he corroborated what is to be expected that knowing a language has many meanings from the point of view of the amount and quality of that knowledge. Whereas the acquiring of the first language is not rationalized, that of the second and subsequent languages naturally need to be. Whiteley (*Ibid:35*) puts it rather well as he says:

It is particularly important to find out what are the incentives which, in Kenya today, impel men and women to learn, and speak, other languages than their first language. Like other skills it is acquired in order to be able to deploy it to one's own advantage in the game that is everyday living.

In summary, language knowledge in Kenya needs to be based on the distinction between mother tongue and non-mother tongue knowledge. As mother tongues, the majority of indigenous languages are spoken by the 80% or so rural population who are geographically concentrated and can be said to have the environment natural to mother tongue acquisition. It is a fair assumption that 80% or so of indigenous African Kenyans have a native speaker competence of one of the forty or so languages. For English, it can only be assumed that those who have passed through Kenyan schools have a knowledge of the language which ranges from a diminishing little for those who leave school early and do not need it, to near mother tongue for those who have used it much in education up to experience with English universities and continue to need it in their jobs. The individual command of Kiswahili will range from mother tongue of those who are Waswahili, to just a little by way of lingua franca. The concentration of knowledge will naturally be in the multi ethnic regions encompassing largely urban centres.

Three points must be made as significant in language competence in Kenya:

1. Most Kenyans will share a mother tongue competence of a language with only a small fraction of the population in the republic.

2. Those with the knowledge of English and Kiswahili will not have the same measure of competence for any specific endeavour.
3. In the process of the formal educational acculturation of the Kenyan youth, they tend to break the acquisition of their native speaker competence in their mother tongues, and even lose what they have acquired.

6. Language Use in Kenya

We have already attempted to break-down the role any language plays in the life of both the individual and its speech community. Suffice it here to remind ourselves, first, that every language in Kenya is the perfect tool that its speakers have for those and other functions. Secondly, every individual in Kenya requires and has a natural right to a language as the tool for the performance of those functions as part of living a human life. Thirdly, the Kenyan community and communities need language as the perfect tool for the performance of the tasks necessary for sustenance and survival. Subsequently, as we already know, there are many languages in Kenya for the fulfillment of these functions, and besides, the Kenyan society which is virtually a supra-society, has many subsocieties that use the languages, and from which individuals function in their daily living and necessary use of language or languages.

The major questions about language use in Kenya arise out of the now obvious fact that Kenya's landscape is characterized by the existence of very many languages. As we have seen, many Kenyans acquire more than their first language or mother tongue, and we can reasonably assume that this individual bi- or multilingualism is essentially motivated by life needs of the people. This is not to say that national or individual multilingualism is either unusual, or inherently unnatural. To begin with the monolingual nation is today more the exception than the rule. The concept of one language nation state of the nineteenth is really not relevant today. Further, even within the so called

monolingual nations, the inherent variations in any one language still gives the individuals needing to live together the parallel burden of needing to cope with varieties of the language as it divides their community.

Even more interesting is the realization that there can infact be a society in which multilingualism is the unmarked, the norm. Ronald Wardhaugh cites the Tukanos people of Northwest Amazon as example of a people to whom multilingualism is the social norm. This fits in with their life whereby people must marry outside their tribes (speech communities) so that to marry anyone who speaks your own language is considered incest, and the children are born and bred in a multilingual set up in which there is the language of the men; that of the women from neighbouring tribes who have been married into the men's tribe, and some *lingua franca*. The speaking of many languages is taken so much for granted that "they cannot readily tell an outsider how many languages they speak, and must be suitably prompted to enumerate which languages they speak...". But where a nation is monolingual, the questions to be asked related to the use of its varieties such as dialects. Where a nation is bilingual, or multilingual, the same questions can be asked with respect to each of the languages. So, for Kenya, questions of language use will relate, at the level of individual languages, to the use of dialects and other varieties of the languages like Kamba, Kikuyu, Kidawida etc. The speakers of these languages use varieties of it in different circumstances for different reasons. Multilingual societies have over and above these the alternative choices of the various languages before considering their varieties.

Language use in Kenya covers the complexity of the choices for use of the varieties of the Kenyan languages each in its own right, and the choices of the languages themselves. In each case the question to be addressed can be summarized as "who uses what/which language, where, how, and why in the enterprise of living?" The answers will be as complex as they are fascinating to the scientist, telling of the life in the society, and useful for

management of the people. There have been attempts at studying language use in Kenya – or aspects of it. For some details of aspects of this the classic is Whiteley's *Language in Kenya* where topics such as the following are treated: Use of Kenya's African and Asian Languages; Problems of multilingualism in Nairobi; Some patterns of Language use in rural Kenya and high school children, primary school children, and the teaching of language in Kenya schools. Bernd Heine has researched some patterns of Language use in Kenya too. In Heine and Mohling (1980:61-78), he gives a picture of language use in Kenya, providing figures of which speech communities use what other indigenous Kenyan's languages as second languages; where and who uses Kiswahili and to what degree, or the extent to which the various members of Kenya's speech communities use English in various domains of their lives. In Heine (1970:80-105) he discusses who uses Kiswahili and in what domains. There is really no up to date comprehensive study that gives information on the pattern of use of all the Kenyan languages and their varieties in the lives of their speakers. However, a general pattern is recognizable both from experience and the studies that have been done.

The Languages of Kenya fall into three categories from the point of view of their use. These are the Kenyan indigenous languages, Kiswahili and English. This categorization often leaves out the other Kenyan mother tongues such as the Asian languages. They can, however, largely fall in with the African languages as mother tongues of their various speakers together with all the other mother tongues of the Republic. Kiswahili and English stand apart as the designated national and official languages respectively. As the official language, English is the language of government, administration and education. Kiswahili, as the national language is generally the language of wider communication sometimes including even some official roles. It is also the lingua franca per excellence being most widespread in the urban areas. The mother tongues are predominantly the most widely used languages in the family, in rural areas, occasionally functioning as *lingua francas* for instance along common speech community borders, and

sometimes being used in the most elementary grades of education as the media of instruction.

On this apparently neat pattern of language use is superimposed a more complex practice of language use predicated on innumerable factors in the business of life in the republic. As Whiteley (1974:390) says:

Language use in many speech communities in the country is obviously affected by historical events, and geographical facts too complex to be facily enumerated; and by economic forces such as the development of urbanization, industrialization and consequent social stratification, and of networks of transportation, and by social goals and values such as nationalism.

Above the statutory prescriptions where a language is used in Kenya is, for example, dependent on geographical factors. There is the urban rural Kenya parameter whereby Swahili and English are used more in the urban than in rural areas. In rural Kenya one expects and finds the indigenous Kenyan languages predominantly used. Which of the languages most used where in the Republic depends on the geographical regions. Within those regions, as in the urban areas, it still matters what parts because, for example the border will present different patterns from the centres. How a language is used might more obviously relate to whether it is written or spoken. A fuller account of the how would include whether it is used competently or not. There is also the possibility of mixed codes in the widely practiced phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing - Kenyans for various reasons switch from one language to another in a single speech act sometimes even without realising. (For studies of these see Scotton 1993). Why Kenyans with a choice use one language rather than another will depend on who they are involved with in the communication act and more intricately, their goals in the act and the

concomitant judgement as to which language will help them achieve their goals during the occasion at hand. This choice must be further constrained by competence in the languages in question.

CHAPTER FOUR

LANGUAGE AND LIFE IN KENYA

We think according to nature, we speak according to rules, we act according to custom.- Francis Bacon English writer (1561-1626).

1. Historical Background and the Language Debate

Language could not be taken for granted right at the birth of Kenya. Much of how it functions in the life of Kenyans today is thus rooted in history. At the arrival of the colonialist, like in a meeting under water where the breathing in of oxygen is not automatically carried out, talk for life became a matter for thought and conscious action. The missionaries whether English, Scottish or Italian by tribe had to make the decision as to whether they facilitate communication in the language of their targets, their own language, or a third language. Their decision was unanimous if also magnanimous. They chose the language of the target populations. Subsequently the missionaries had to master, study, design orthographies for and use these languages to write the Bible as well as other Readers. They even used them for teaching in formal classes. That decision enabled the Kenyan people to keep their languages as it denied them the opportunity to learn a European language as a mass of people, which we must realize, they could have been made to do. How and why this decision was taken can be an interesting topic for research. Some rationale have become popular knowledge. The missionaries are said to have had a reason that is particularly relevant to our topic: for their goal of conversion, they needed to know the African effectively, reach him at the essence of his life with the new message, and thereby

fundamentally influence his world view. This could only be done through the people's own language which the foreigners with a message had to therefore learn fairly competently. The British position had the backdrop of the basic policy of bringing the native to some sort of maturity rather than assimilating them like the French are said to have done. (Rottland 1995: personal communication) points out that it is indeed documented that the Germans chose not to use German with the natives because they did not want their language, German, to be known by the Africans - they did not want their privacy in the monopoly of their language interfered with. Before the missionaries, the spread inland of a language of the Coastal people of Kenya took place as the traders in all sorts of goods made their decisions in a similar experience to that of the missionaries to foster and use Swahili as their trade language. Again how and why they did this needs to be researched. We must remember that like the missionaries, they might have decided to trade in their own language or those of the sources of their goods and thereby fostered the same. Their decision put Kiswahili on the Kenyan linguistic terrain in a special way beyond the Coast where before this, in Chittick's (1968:117) words: 'the impact of this civilization on much of the mainland Coast was slight, and inland non-existent'.

When a governor was appointed for Kenya in 1906, as instruments and institutions of government such as the legislative council and administrative arms were established, naturally all under the British Colonial office with British members of these bodies in the majority, they decided to, or perhaps just naturally began the task of governing Kenya in English. Gorman (1974:403) supports this as he asserts that "Decisions on language policy were naturally affected by the fact that the members of the administration, the judiciary, and the great majority of the settlers were of British origin". Again these people could have made different language decisions and choices. They were in the minority, and if they thought the same as the missionaries, they might have chosen any language to make the tool for government. They had the power to do it. Perhaps they chose to govern in a language they knew in

order not to be disadvantaged, and secondly to continue and not be de-linked from their homeland. Their decision established the presence of English in Kenya as the official language and availed it for the debates and subsequent decision on what languages were most appropriate for specific roles in the lives of Kenyans that unlike the governors did not naturally speak English. Close to the foundations of language and life in Kenya was also the sort of economy developed by the new settlers which characteristically came to depend on migrant labour. The resultant migrations removed languages from their traditional geographical regions, thus spreading them in Kenya, and creating situations that raised the question of "*Shall we use your language, mine or another one?*", both with respect to the employee-master and among the workers themselves. Whereas there was a little learning of each other's language, Kiswahili rather than English, or another Kenyan language became the usual medium of communication and thus, urban and rural economic centres became the heavens for acquiring Kiswahili, the *lingua franca*.

A trilingual pattern of language use was established in Kenya very early in their history. The missionary enterprise only further reaffirmed it as they introduced and sponsored most of the new formal western-type of education in the first couple of decades of this century, and became architects that not even White Hall could take for granted. As the colonial government became firmly established, and began to bear the responsibilities of the lives of those in the new colony, their policies about language had a background in which some of the premises were fixed. Significantly, all concerned recognized a critical need for a language policy in a situation where a major tool in the colony's life was not in place. For example, when, after the First World War the British colonial authorities became more concerned with education of those in the territories under their control, the language issue was categorically addressed with serious concern. This can be seen in the discussions and recommendations of various commissions that were formed both locally and from Britain, whether to discuss the developments and planning

generally, educational issues or indeed language matters. Gorman (1974) gives a detailed account of these: There were the Commission on Education in the East Africa Protectorate in 1919; The Phelps-Stocks Commission which visited East Africa in 1924; the East Africa Commission of 1925 under chairmanship of Ormsby-Gore; Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa in the same year; Advisory Committee of the colonial office of 1927; Educational Conference in Dar-es-Salaam of 1929 for the Directors of Education in the East and Central Africa Dependencies; The Joint Select Committee on Closer Union in East Africa of 1928 etc. All the recommendations from these bodies recognized the "triaglossic" nature of the language situation in Kenya then. The language choices they made for education in the colony rotated around the mother tongue, Kiswahili and English for various sections in the education system, in varying combinations and for sometimes even conflicting reasons.

Lively debates apart, and changes in detail sometimes, there seem to have been a point of agreement, partly in accordance with then prevailing theory that a child is best educated at least initially in its mother tongue. They all tended to decide that "vernaculars must be used in the first stages of elementary education", (Gorman *ibid* : 413). This creed was best put in the Report of the Culcutta University Mission (1919:244-5) which asserted:

...it is through our vernacular, through our folk speech that most of us attain to the characteristic expression of our nature and of what our nature allows us to be or to discern. A man's native language is almost like his shadow, inseparable from his personality ... hence in all education the primary place should be given to training in the exact, and free use of the mother tongue.

The same thread of thought governed and lead to the position that mass education and literacy be in the mother tongues, and to the practical move of establishing the East African Literature Bureau in 1948 to help facilitate the realization of this ideal.

What remained then in the great language debate was on the choice between English and Kiswahili. These two languages seem to have won and lost in being the medium of instruction, or a subject taught in schools on and off. To summarize, English eventually won in schools, taking even the position of mother tongue in the first years of education as reports quoted in Gorman (*ibid* : 436) gives justification such as:

...on purely educational grounds there are strong arguments for using English as the medium as soon as possible [because]...if English is the only medium, then the incentive to learn English becomes greater, the transition to the full use of English becomes quicker and general progress in the higher classes where English must be used, is likely to be faster.

What eventually became known as the *New Primary Approach* whereby the medium of instruction in Kenya schools became English from the child's first day at school at least officially was in many schools in Kenya by 1963.

Much on the same basis as the preceding commissions, the first commission considering education in independent Kenya recognized very much the role of language. Considering the issue of education for unity in the new nation, the Ominde Commission found the difficulty to be largely linguistic. Unlike the other Commissions, the Ominde Commission in fact interviewed a cross-section of Kenyans on the issue of the language question in the educational lives of their people. From the findings, Kenyans preferred using English from the start, in line with the *New Primary Approach*. Kiswahili was recognized as of a unifying national influence, with Pan African relevance and was therefore recommended to be a compulsory subject in primary schools. Ominde Commission found that Kenyans had a divided opinion as to the role of the vernaculars in education while the Commission itself had the following to say: (Quoted in Gorman 1974: 441):

The vernacular languages are essential languages of verbal communication and we recognize no difficulty in including a daily period for story-telling in the vernacular, or similar activities, in the curriculum of primary I, II, III.

They stated clearly that they saw: "no case for assigning to them a role for which they are ill-adapted, namely the role of educational medium in the critical early years of schooling".

A subsequent commission (Gachathi 1976) reversed the Ominde report position and the current Kenyan Educational Language Policy is such that officially in linguistically homogenous areas, the appropriate mother tongue is the language of instruction for the first three years while Kiswahili and English are taught as subjects. In heterogeneous areas, Kiswahili or English are the media of instruction, while they are, at the same time, taught as subjects. From the fourth year onwards, English becomes the medium of instruction, the mother tongues disappearing, and Kiswahili remaining a compulsory subject up to secondary school.

As we review the foundation of language and life in Kenya, we must realize that every decision any of the committees and commissions made was a life decision with far reaching consequences of yet unknown limits on the lives of the individual Kenyans as well as the nation itself. Whereas, whatever policy will technically be implementable, it creates specific and pragmatic problems. However, for instance, when a six-year old has to abandon a language and pick up a new one at the beginning of its formal education, it must be a major challenge. Of course it can be done, as long as nature is appropriately subsidized. But each person or child will have a different predisposition to the feat: not every one will want or be able to do it and do it to the same level with ease or success. This must have serious consequences to the individual and societal life even though they have remained unresearched, unknown and brushed aside. When Ominde report for example, reverses the spirit of the Culcutta University Mission,

or the Gachathi report reverses the position of the Ominde report on the use of the Kenyan indigenous languages in formal education, they are tossing with the life situation of the nation as well as individual Kenyans.

It is interesting too to note that throughout this history, language has only been dealt with as an incidental problem as something else such as education, is being addressed. Indeed the space taken by language is negligible in the reports and none of the commissions were set up to discuss language either in the Colony or the Republic.

2. Language in Life

Language is an essential tool in human life. Unfortunately, because its fossils can only be accessed since the invention of writing about six thousand years ago, and even then only for some languages, the evolutionary history of human language remains unclear.

But whether we subscribe to the Darwinian transformationalist or the alternative creationist theory of evolution, human language stands out uniquely as a facility whose entry into the life of man must have had an impact easily comparable to that of physical tools of stone age. In it, even though other species of life have their languages, is a phenomenon different from any other and therefore, one that now helps define the human race. Linguists have reason to believe that man has a capacity for language which no other creature does: Man's speech organs have also, perhaps basically, biological roles. But it has been found that they have become particularly adapted to efficient use in speech. According to O'Grady *et al* (1989:9), for example:

The vocal folds, ... are more muscular and less fatty in humans than in non-human primates such as chimpanzees and gorillas. Because of a highly developed network of

neutral pathways, they also respond more precisely to commands from the brain. The same extensive set of neutral pathways allows a high degree of control over speech organs such as the tongue, palate, and lips. Such control exceeds anything found in even our close primate relatives. ...unlike the breathing of survival respiration, speech breathing shows higher lung pressure and a longer exhalation time than respiration ... evolution has produced a refinement both in degree and in kind through a long interplay between demands of language and the development of the human speech producing apparatus.

Indeed the very human brain has identifiable language centres responsible for the reception of auditory input (Wernicke's area), and responsible for organizing patterns of speech in articulation (Broca's area). Further, it has been observed that human language itself differs considerably from all other known languages, possessing characteristics unique to it such as specialization to communicational; semanticity; discreteness in the combinable units; arbitrariness in the way the elements have meaning; productivity; reflexiveness; prevarication whereby it for instance allows lies; learnability, and interchangeability in that everyone can both receive and use language; displacement which allows for reference to temporally and specially remove events; feedback which means that speakers can correct what they said.

Thus, human language is essentially intertwined with human life: It does not ordinarily exist independent of man and its absence is a definite handicap. In normal circumstances, which we might regard as the unmarked life situation with respect to language, it is no wonder that it is taken for granted as it functions efficiently for the individual and her society, itself remaining flexible so that both the man and his language remain well adapted to the understanding and management of their environment. To use Dil's (1971:119) words, in that situation: "The fundamental role of language in making possible that accumulation of learned behaviour which we call culture and which is the distinctly human mode of adjustment is appreciated by all anthropologists and social scientists in

general". Perhaps the unmarked situation is that where a speech community uses their language in their daily life according to their culture in their geographical environment. In this situation everyone has enough competence of the language for what they want to do with it. Linguistic development takes place naturally in every normal child as the child develops in other respects into an adult and eventually an elder. Although there will be varieties of the language, for example, by way of regional dialects, or professional registers, and no one will either know the whole language or speak exactly like anyone else, members of such a community have reasonable amount of linguistic equilibrium at least within their own sub community that speak the same variety. Using language is then like breathing which no one thinks about nearly all the time.

To summarise, we find that:

1. Language is a basic essential tool in the life enterprise of every individual.
Children are naturally predisposed to acquire language as they grow and acquire other physical and eventual abilities.
2. The acquisition of language by children is programmed by nature against a socio-cultural background that provides exposure much as it natures the baby in all other respects.
3. Adults will acquire language with need and exposure.
4. Language teaching is a developed art that facilitates non-natural language acquisition.
5. The socio-cultural exposure is essential to the natural process of child language acquisition.
6. Language is a basic need for interaction in and management of every society.

7. As human beings perpetuate their species through biological reproduction, human societies need language not just to facilitate interaction, but to perpetuate themselves as it (language) provides the container for the essential socio-cultural foundations, the reigns for management, and the wisdom for survival.
8. Culture is what defines a human society.
9. Language is the major factor on which culture is predicated both horizontally and vertically.
10. Though flexible and changeable, each language and culture has both conscious and unconscious hold on those who use it.
11. In everyday life, every human being needs an adequate amount and type of language to skillfully put to use in the variety of facets in the enterprise of living.
12. By extension, every nation or society, requires an adequate amount and appropriate types of the necessary language shared by the relevant populace in its everyday endeavours and responsibilities. Each nation needs the right amount of the right language in the right place at the right time everyday.

It is finally our hypothesis that human success in any endeavour in life is directly proportional to the amount of competence in the required language and the skill with which it is used. This hypothesis is subject to a personal philosophical proposal that success in life depends more on how weaknesses are managed rather than how strengths are used.

3. Life with Multilingualism

i) Diaglossia: Linguistic work on the social or societal aspects of multilingualism have observed patterns of language use and attempted to rationalise or understand them. The critical matters here relate to language or code choice. A recognized situation is where the use of languages or codes is separated in such a way that each language is used in a specific set of circumstances. This is called a diaglossic situation. It is a stable situation in which two languages or varieties are functionally kept quite apart.

ii) Language choices: A natural consequence of living in a multilingual society and being multilingual is having to make choices as to which language to use in what situations where there is no formal or diaglossic prescription. The interesting question is what makes a person use one language rather than another in a specific situation? Sometimes, in fact, the languages are mixed in the same speech event in what is termed code switching and code mixing. Wardhaugh (1986:102) suggests that the motivation include solidarity with listeners, choice of topic, and perceived social and cultural distance. He proceeds to say:

...in other words, the motivation of the speaker is an important consideration in the choice. Moreover, such motivation need not be at all conscious, for apparently many speakers are not aware that they have used one particular variety of a language rather than another or sometimes even that they have switched languages...

A study by Heller (1982) quoted in Wardhaugh (*ibid.*:102) involved the use of English and French in a Montreal hospital and found that asking what language an individual preferred to use at a public service encounter was not effective because the choice involved too many factors to allow a simple choice. As Heller (*ibid.*:112.)proceeds to say:

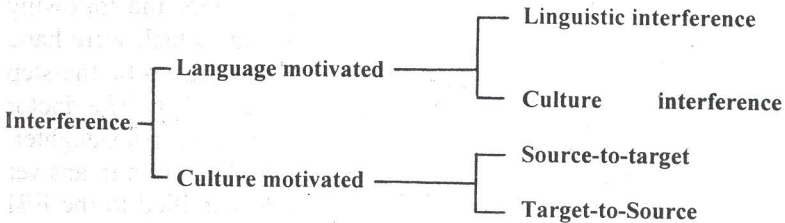
The negotiation of language has to do with judgements of personal treatment, that is, how one expects to be treated in such a situation. But such judgements are dependent upon social knowledge, knowledge about group relations and boundaries and ways of signaling them, and knowledge about other social differences e.g. status.... This negotiation itself seems to redefine the situations in the light of on-going social and political change. In absence of norms, we work at creating new ones. The conventionalization of the negotiating strategies appears to be a way of normalizing relationships, of encoding social information necessary to know how to speak to someone (and which language to speak is but on aspect of this).

A number of experiments have shown that the code or language we chose to use depends on how we wish to be perceived by others; and how we are evaluated and judged by others is determined by what language we use. Further, listeners judge what is said partly by the language used in saying it. People have linguistic prejudices and they perceive and use them with the language. An experiment to determine this, called the matched-guise experiment, was designed by Lambert, a Canadian social psychologist. Essentially the experiment makes one person use two languages for exactly the same purpose in the hearing of judges that do not know it is the same person. The judges then proceed to judge the person from the voice in terms of intelligence, kindness, dependability, ambition, leadership, sincerity and sense of humour. It is perceived that since the only variable is the language, their judgement is in fact group evaluation of the speakers of the language as a stereotype. Lambert used this experiment on Canadian subjects who spoke French and English with very interesting results about how English and French Canadian judges viewed speakers of these languages. For instance, it was found that "the English Canadian listeners viewed the female speakers more favourably in their French guises while they viewed the male speakers more favourably in their English guises". Wardhaugh (*ibid*:110) reports further that "Many other investigators have used the machedguise technique and report results which clearly

that listeners partly judge what is said by the code the speaker chooses to use." The situation in Kenya cannot be any different, and therefore we are constantly affected by the language we use in every situation.

(iii) Linguistic Pluralism and Communication Interference: Linguists have found that for various reasons related to the nature of language, its relationship to culture, and its use in communication, the languages spoken by a bilingual interfere with one another. Such interference in this case is understood as the transference of the features of one language to another when the languages are different with respect to those features. Technically any language in the repertoire of a bilingual or a multilingual can interfere in his use of another. Usually, however, because the mother tongue is the language presumably best known, it is usually the one to interfere in the use of second or subsequent languages.

Ayo Bamgbose (1994: 90-94) characterizes interference in multilingual communication as in the schema below given that language is culture based and culture can only interfere in communication through language.



The interference can thus be linguistic or cultural. The linguistic interference is when linguistic features of one language in a bilingual are transferred into another. In second language, it usually arises out of low proficiency in the language resulting in

such errors for example in English of pronouncing *l* for an *r* or saying *Borrow me a book* instead of *Lend me a book*. Although Bamgbose by these examples claim that "a native speaker of English will easily recognize and accommodate such errors in a communicative encounter" (p.95) it has been reported that linguistic language motivated interference in cross cultural communication can impede communication and is thus not always as easily or appropriately accommodated. It can in fact result in miscommunication. A lot of such interference is caused by poor competence of the language used but it has also been reported that even people who speak the second language with a near mother tongue competence can suffer the interference of their mother tongues especially under certain conditions such as stress or duress. A case study by John Gumperz (1990:163-195) illustrates such a possibility. The article reports a case study in which a Philippine doctor who spoke Aklan and some Tagalog and near perfect English in the USA had occasion to treat a 16 month old child in a US Navy hospital in 1978. It turned out that the child had been abused though the doctor treated her for sunburn at emergency room and let her go with the parents. The child was brought back six hours later, saw another doctor who determined severe dehydration and third degree burns. She was sent to a hospital for burns but died on the way. The burns had been inflicted by the step father. The Philippino doctor the following day gave a brief report to the FBI on the events which were hand written by the officers. The father, who turned out to be the step father of the child was charged with murder and tried. The doctor testified at the trial and the father was convicted of manslaughter. Sometime later, the doctor was called back to California to answer a charge of perjury on the basis that what he admitted to the FBI differed from what he said in evidence at the step father's trial. In what had drawn a lot of public outcry, one of the defense noticed what he saw as 'funny' use of pronouns by the doctor, so a linguist was called to analyze the data of his evidence and defense for comprehensibility. The perjury case was finally dismissed on miscommunication argument because the linguist:

demonstrated that many aspects of Dr. A's behaviour can be explained by his linguistic and cultural background. The features in question are automatic and not readily subject to conscious control. They do not affect his written performance, yet they are likely to recur whenever he is faced with complex oral communicative tasks, so that, in spite of the fact that he speaks English well, he is more likely than native speakers of English to be misunderstood in such situations.

In this case, the 'crux of the matter lay in prosodic signaling processes in the doctor's first language and their transference into his English especially under stress. As this was deducible from his language at his trial, it meant that the FBI could have misunderstood him. The presence of many languages and cultures in the Kenya society can thus play havoc with communication and life therein because of inherent differences in the languages and their interplay individually and societally.

Language-motivated cultural interference involves the transfer of aspects of the culture of one language into the other as it is used. Bamgbose gives the example of the coordinate noun phrase. In Yoruba, when they coordinate the first and second person they do it in that order *emi ati iwoe* (I and you). In English, they coordinate in the opposite order "You and I". A Yoruba interacting using English can have Yoruba interfere so he says I and you. This is likely to get him misunderstood in terms of his arrogance or politeness not only by native speaker expectations of English, but by other Nigerians using English but whose coordination of Noun Phrases can be different from the Yoruba one. Many Kenya languages including Kiswahili fall in with Yoruba in this structure and culture. There are also many other similar examples in Kenyans' languages. Therefore some misunderstanding is to be expected.

Culture-motivated interference is caused by the transfer of cultural concepts, habits or practices through one language into another. It is characterized as source to target when a bilingual transfers his

cultural habits into his second language. As Bamgbose says (*ibid*: 92) "This sort of interference is the commonest feature of a bilingual's performance in a second language". Examples of such interference abound in very ordinary, common, and significant aspects of daily life such as expression of respect and idioms and proverbs. For example, many African languages have greetings specific to what the addressee in an interaction is doing. So in Cibemba the greeting to someone who is eating is *Mwalileni Mukwaye* ("How are you eating Sir?").

Similarly in Yoruba there are greetings for all activities and occasions. So on the bus the Yoruba will greet on entering "Greetings on being on the bus". Transferring this to a London bus, a Yoruba speaker stunned everyone even though he improved on his culture and said "Good morning everybody". It must be appreciated that the fact that the whole bus load will obviously think the Yoruba man is mad, and he will find them cold and unfriendly, will cause attitudes and behaviour that extend into the daily life and human relations. Bamgbose gives an even more interesting example of source to target cultural interference. "A woman wrote a letter to her brother-in-law who was a student in a teacher training college addressing him as "My dear husband...". The white missionaries opened the letter and concluded that, contrary to the college regulations, the student was married. She was therefore expelled". We know that in many African cultures, the woman might have addressed the letter the same if the 'in-law' was a woman.

Target to source interference works in the same way except that the cultural norm of the second language is misinterpreted according to the speaker's own cultural norms. It is most illustrative to quote Bamgbose (*ibid*:93) too: "Another example of such interference is an incident reported in Sukwivat (1981) of a hostess in 1949 postwar Southern England asking a foreigner guest on which day of the week he would like to have his bath. Although the guest understood every word of the question, he could not offer any

answer, as the idea of a weekly bath was entirely alien to his culture. As a result, there was a complete breakdown in communication!

iv) Cultural Conflict: Because language is deeply rooted in culture, and every culture has its norms, we must ask how come people appear to get along communicating in spite of their cultural differences. Linguists believe that this remains possible because of inter-cultural similarities in language behavioral norms (Bamgbose 1987:39); universal terms of conversational contract (Fraser and Nolen 1981:94, and Hymes 1986:63-4); and because a bilingual tries hard as part of acquiring and using the second language to understand the culture of that language. We might add that human beings as intelligent animals would usually be aware of the cultural differences with interactants and therefore be accommodative within their limits. In any case, by the time two people start using a language that is a second language to both or either, there is already need for communication and one can usually assume that need for cooperation is taken for granted, if not just the need for interaction. However, languages are not neutral, so cross cultural communication has always the potential for divergent presuppositions and expectations the contradictions of which easily lead to undesired or unintended situations. Some aspects of life are more delicate than others. But at the baseline, for example, every culture determines what is appropriate behaviour and what is not - linguistic behaviour included. Godard (1977) cited by Bamgbose (p.97) report that when the French make private telephone calls, they start by verifying the number and identifying themselves, while the Americans do not. What can follow is well summarized by Godard (1977:209):

as a French woman living in America and having to get used to the American practice ... I have sometimes been irritated and even insulted and I have often been amused.

Many studies have shown that how politeness is expressed in various life situations is complex and language as well as culture specific. This means that for every situation, the way one language expresses politeness will differ from another. Generally languages effect politeness through words or verbal expressions such as please; various syntactic structures; manipulation of tones and intonation patterns; facial and paralinguistic expressions such as holding the right lower arm with the left hand in greeting; the volume of voice and stress in speech; general body language etc. These are used simply and in various combinations. Paramount, however, is: ***doing it right according to the cultural demands of every situation***. Interference in the area of politeness will mean that the bilingual may in his second language be judged not to be polite enough; hypercorrect, which makes the bilingual seem unacceptably overly polite; and obligatorily polite when he transfers the norm of politeness from the first language to the second language thereby imposing the norm of one language on to another. (Bamgbose (199:95-96). In exemplifying hypercorrectness Bamgbose says the following:

Second language speakers of English from different cultural backgrounds often ignore the degrees of politeness expected in making requests. For example, they may use an imperative or an indicative sentence for making a request instead of an interrogative, e.g. "Give me an orange" or " want an orange" rather than "Can I have an orange?" In a study conducted by Fraser and Nolen (1981) of the different sentence types which can be employed for making requests, conditionals were considered to be more polite than indicative, interrogative and positive models more polite than negative ones. When bilinguals speaking English as a second language use the least polite forms for making requests, they invite negative attitudes... .

Hypercorrectness is exemplified by over use of *please* by second language users in expressions such as Bamgbose has heard in Nigeria where a civil servant went round saying "*Good morning please,*" or where he quotes Scarcella and Brunak 1981:62) about

"an Arab who when greeted 'hello', replied, 'Hello, Welcome!!'". Obligatory politeness may be exemplified by ladies from some communities in Africa who courtesy or kneel down as they greet some people in English or other languages. These language behaviour will not portray their users in the fair light with respect to their personalities and can at one end remain unappreciated, and at another be offensive. Even more objectionable is the lack of expected mode of expression of politeness.

v) Language Planning: Language planning is by definition the consciously organized strategies to solve language problems (Bamgbose 1991:109). Given the Babelian theory of multilingualism, and the fact that no society can be either totally independent or linguistically homogeneous, language planning is perhaps a necessary enterprise for every society. In Kenya conscious planning was and remain mandatory. The strategies to manage the language problems have grown with the nation just as they have remained rooted in the nation's history. Policy and implementation decisions about the status, use, and corpus development of Kenya languages have had to synchronize with the complete national landscape in its historical evolution. With reference to Kenya, Bamgbose's (1994:111) finding that "Language policies in African countries are characterized by one or more of the following problems : avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation, and declaration without implementation," can be explained in these terms. Faced with the very complex language situation in an otherwise complex nation in transition, the most desirable policies might just be obviously not practicable. Sometimes inaction might be, all considered, the best course of action. At times, to balance divergent views for purposes of desired integration, policies have had to remain vague; or to serve momentary interests they could be pronounced in a way that is obviously or that turnout to be obviously impracticable. However, whatever approach to language planning, life has had to go on in Kenya with her many languages, and this means that in certain areas of life such as governance, administration, services including education, there have had to be clear decisions and bold

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pragmatism. From the policy and practice, what has emerged in Kenya's linguistic landscape can be characterized as follows:

1. Kenya has had a clear language policy position with respect to specific aspects of life. The issue of language in formal education has been particularly constantly addressed.
2. As far as it is known, the nation has never had a comprehensive document on language and languages in the lives of the people and the nation.
3. Kenyans have complied with the language policies when it has been possible.
4. For communication, the strategy has been the three-language model typical of sub-Saharan Africa where the languages are English, Kiswahili and the mother tongues.
5. The roles of English as the official language is much as it was inherited at independence. Its role in education was perhaps more stabilized after independence with the Ominde report. In life in Kenya, English is the language in which children are taught most of the time. It is learned at school so a person's knowledge is usually directly proportional to educational attainment. The English they acquire will naturally be essentially that from books and formal teaching. With constant use outside school, the interference from the various other languages, especially mother tongues means that a Kenya variety of English is emerging. However, there is still the vision of Standard English as the target language to be approximated to. How much a Kenyan is able to learn English will depend, apart from educational opportunity and level on matters such as motivation, quality of teaching, materials used and even aptitude of the individual. These combinations depend on where the individual lives in the republic, what parentage she has, and what school she goes to.

The use of English as the official language means that it is the language of the managers of the Kenya society at the highest national level, who are by definition, the educated Kenyans. It must also mean that English marks the higher echelons of Kenya's society from the lower, the governed. This must be what Heine (1979) as summarized by Bamgbose 1994:53-4) means when he says of what he calls LWCs: "They are learned through formal teaching and as a result of prescription or incentives, they are associated with the elites and hence their use implies prestige, authority and social distance; there being a long written tradition, there is strong pressure to conform to the norm and structures on deviations from the norm". Thus, in Heine's terms in this article, English is characterizable as the language of vertical communication in Kenya. What has to be communicated, whether it is laws, policy, services, information, questionnaires or developmental matters start in English and get vertically communicated downwards to the base of a pyramid. Thus, for example, the constitution, the highway code, the road signs, the various government forms etc. are in English.

6. The role of Kiswahili is a legacy from pre-colonial times in as far as it was a lingua franca and language of trade. Its role in Kenyans' lives has been very much augmented by nationalist support and practical steps to teach it in schools. The recent definite policy to have it as a compulsory language throughout Kenya's school education has expanded and continue to expand its spread. In daily life, those who speak Kiswahili will vary in the type of Kiswahili they speak. From schools, the majority of young Kenyan Kiswahili speakers will have acquired it according to the variables mentioned above for English to various amounts of competence in the language. It is a fact of life that those who have acquired English in recent times at school also speak Kiswahili. For older people, because of the fluctuations in colonial times about teaching of Kiswahili in schools, one cannot be certain though those who speak English

will perhaps speak Kiswahili too because they will have needed and had the opportunity to acquire the language.

7. According to Heine and Mohlig (1980) there are other *lingua francas* in Kenya other than Kiswahili. These are Kenya's indigenous languages learned by speech communities other than their native speakers for various purposes such as trade, and social interaction at the borders. These are languages which Heine says are used for horizontal communication which he finds to be as stated by Bamgbose (1994:53): "typical of indigenous languages which are acquired spontaneously, freely learnt out of choice, associated with masses, egalitarian and hence a symbol of solidarity, essentially oral and...with which a speaker's performance is not subjected to normative evaluation". How freely the languages are learned, of course may differ as sometimes what seems to be free might be a result of coercion by the realities of life around a speech community. What can be firmly said is that the languages are not formally taught and form part of the community in the isoglosses that divide languages on the same border.

8. Besides some of them sometimes functioning as *lingua francas*, the indigenous Kenyan languages have what might be called mother tongue roles in the republic. They are the God given languages for the individual, expected to be acquired first and naturally. It is in recognition of this that there is the official attempt to give every child literacy in the language. They are the languages through which the children acquire a specific culture, and experience their basic world view. It is through these languages that individual Kenyans would be expected to acquire their fundamental and basic values for their lives - the values that come with the mother tongue competence in both micro- and macro-language. In terms of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), these are the languages from which the Kenyans achieve the height of competence that gives them "the metaphors they live by." In overwhelming majority of cases, Kenyan monolinguals speak only one of

these languages as their mother tongues; bilinguals will have one of these and either another of them, Kiswahili, or English as the second language; a trilingual the mother tongue, Kiswahili, and English, or another one of them; and a quadrilingual will have the four possibilities. Socially these are the languages for life in the ethnic monolithic enclaves of the Kenyan society. They are the languages of acculturation and daily communication. The languages thus give identity to speech and ethnic communities. Though they have been seen as the languages of egalitarian horizontal communication, there is a sense in which they in fact integrate the horizontal to the vertical plane of the Kenyan society: Those who are kept off as second or third language English speakers have those languages as their mother tongue that integrate them at the base level, as the monolingual community gets connected to its governors. The use of English and Kiswahili in the society is superimposed on the use of these mother tongues and is to alleviate or neutralize their divisive effect. Kiswahili, particularly is expected to function in the whole Kenyan community as these languages do in their various communities.

- 9) Kenya has other mother tongues of its population other than the indigenous languages. These in fact include English and Kiswahili that will function as mother tongues to various English speaking communities and Kiswahili respectively. Many Asian mother tongues have a definite function to their speakers who in fact as a result have remained culturally distinct inspite of their being highly multilingual with a norm of four languages (Neale 1974:264). Many other communities live in Kenya with their languages much as the indigenous Africans do. This can be seen in the way they are able to facilitate and operate, for example in their own schools using their own languages. There are foreign nationals' schools such as German, Swedish Japanese etc. These speech communities live by their own languages and cultures at home, and are making the effort to facilitate the development of the same in the development of their youth through formal education.

In the final analysis, Ann Obura's (1991:23) survey gives the general picture of language in the lives of Kenyans:

The Kenyan triglossic model of language use in society is not an unfamiliar one. Briefly, anyone of more than forty mother tongues are used in the home and the villages; the lingua franca and designated national language is Kiswahili, spoken and written in varying degrees of proficiency by an unknown but large proportion of Kenyans; and the designated "official" language, the language of administration, of big business, of prestige, is English.

We can observe that policy (status) planning, much of which has been with reference to education, has both established and followed this pattern, making statements of prescription of use of English, Kiswahili and the mother tongues, as well as designing a system for their acquisition where necessary.

In her short life, Kenya has had to deal with corpus planning of her languages especially on the areas of orthography design and production of language materials. Again, much of the production of language materials has been associated with education and literacy in the contexts of formal and adult literacy education programmes. The Kenya Institute of Education, for instance prepares reading and teaching materials for the indigenous languages to be used in primary schools. The design of orthographies has tended to be dominated by Christian Missionary effort from the very beginnings, and continue to be largely handled currently by the same efforts of individual and private organizations particularly with reference to the indigenous mother tongues. In pre-independent Kenya, much of such work eventually became coordinated through local language committees constituted of religious community and administrative personnel which worked together with the bureaucratic hierarchy of the system right up to White Hall. For example, as detailed in Omondi (1990) before the present Dholuo Orthography was established, it was designed and discussed in detail by Luo Language Committee.

Their proposal was sent to the Governor of Kenya who sent it to the Foreign Office in London. Before the Foreign office reacted, they consulted the specialist at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London for professional advise, so that their reaction to the governor of Kenya included suggestions from Prof. A.N. Tucker. The Governor got the same language committee to incorporate the specialist suggestions before the Orthography was finalized and released for use. Subsequent to that, all work produced in Dholuo for publication had to be passed through the language committee to ascertain compliance and therefore standardization of the written language. I believe that this was the way all the languages had their Orthographies established then. Today, much of the known work of establishing orthographies of Kenyan languages is done somehow in a similar way by non-governmental Christian based organizations such as Summer Institute of Linguistics, or Bible Translation and Literacy. Official coordination of these bodies or individuals who go into the heartland of the speech communities, organize committees with the people and proceed to reduce the languages into writing providing initial literature as well lies in the process of research clearance in the Office of the President. Rather like in the colonial times, that coordination relies on the Kenyan experts at the university for advise before they go to the field, and evaluation when the projects are completed. The danger in the present system lies only in the possibility that the professional advise might be concerned too much with only the academic and thereby overlook the practical issues involved in the design of an orthography within a geographical area as well as within a language family. Besides, the departments will usually be evaluating what has already been established without the facility to follow-up and demand compliance to establish the desired orthographic practice. The colonial method had its problems too. The state of the art in Linguistics was even more eurocentric than now, and many of the facts of African languages were rather new. Although those involved understood the facts and pressures, they followed principles such as "Consonants as in English, vowels as in Italian", and ignored properties of Kenya languages such as tone. We

therefore have clearly inadequate orthographies for a Kenyan language like Dholuo where ten vowels are represented by five in writing, and tone is not marked for example, to the extent that reading demands prior acquaintance with the text at hand. Since these orthographies were established, there have been follow ups for reform, and some of them, such as the Kikuyu one has been improved. There is a proposal for the improvement of the Dholuo one too (Omondi 1990). These have mainly been happening still as private enterprises of individuals and organizations.

The interesting thing about language planning in Kenya is that in spite of absence of a unified comprehensive planning document, both the public and private involvement has produced a visible development in certain aspects that might have been perhaps more difficult with a loud pronouncement. Kiswahili, for instance, has taken its place as the national language spreading slowly but effectively. The other indigenous Kenyan languages have had attention for reform and other corpus development rather unimpeded if because it is not always strictly coordinated. They have emerged as the languages for national cultural performances such as songs and dances, a role they now share with Kiswahili. To a large extent, the trilingual pattern of languages inherited by independent Kenya has thrived within the 'pragmatic language' planning that has operated in Kenya.

Interested observation sees a sort of fear to address the language issue directly. The nuisance value appears to be played up with respect to any languages in Africa. The little planning therein focuses on the acquisition of Kiswahili and English basically within formal education system. First, their acquisition gets affected by the problems related to that education (costs, facilities, commitment, drop outs etc.). Secondly, that acquisition in turn interferes with the mother tongue acquisition and mother tongue linguistic development in the individual child. Thirdly, there is no visible plan to make the two languages together or separately replace the mother tongue for the individual as well as society. The inevitable result is that the indigenous languages which

constitute mother tongues for the majority of Kenyans either do not get properly mastered, or get threatened with extinction. Yet mother tongues are a resource to the Kenyans perhaps closer to their lives and daily living than any colour rhino or any tree anywhere the deaths of which arouse armies to war. The environment no doubt is a fundamental resource to people on earth (animals and trees included). It is difficult, however, for a linguist to see how the international and national meetings are going to make the Kenyans effectively join even in the preservation and improvement of the Kenyan environment when what happens with the languages in our lives leave us disabled to the extent that we are generally unable to name the trees, the shrubs, grass, insects, birds, houses, stars and spaces around us leave alone the animals in the remote forests and parks in any language at all. By the Whorfian hypothesis, the environment has been being made irrelevant to Kenyans from the colonial times when they began to reach out for relatively remotely set agenda at the expense of immediate resources such as their language and what comes with it.

(vi) Language Competence for Life: Given the facts of how and where the various languages are acquired by Kenyans who speak them, it can be deduced that.

(a) Those who are brought up and live in the monolingual enclaves acquire native speaker competence in their languages. The majority of these are the often quoted 80% of the population that live much of their life naturally by these languages, but they include all other mother tongue learners.

(b) Those who speak Kiswahili, other than its native speakers will know only as much Kiswahili as they have had opportunity to acquire which will sometimes be tied with how much they have needed to use it. Hence, an average Kenyan who has gone through the school system in recent years will have studied Kiswahili at school for twelve years. If they were well taught and they continued to use the language thereafter, they will retain, and even

improve the knowledge of the language. If they did not learn it very well at school, and they do not need it much thereafter, they will know less than they learned at school after sometimes, and even forget it. Those who pick up and use it frequently as a lingua franca will know as much as they have been able to acquire within their special area of life experience. We can deduce that in the final analysis, competence in Kiswahili in Kenya will range from zero to mother tongue. In between, there is no obvious way of determining how much Kiswahili any Kenyan who speaks the language really knows.

(c) The knowledge of English is more constrained in that nearly everyone who speaks it has learned it from school. However, if all were equal all the time, the individual's competence in English would be measurable by the school syllabus and how far they went in school. To some extent, one can say that those who proceed up to University in Kenya are more competent in the language than those who leave in primary school. But again, the competence in English will range from zero to near mother tongue, among the majority of Kenyans to which it is not a first language. In between, the English speakers in Kenya have various degrees of command of the language and in every day life when it is used, there is no way of knowing how much of the language is available in the competence of the users.

(d) Those Kenyans who speak Kiswahili and English as first or only languages will really have learned the languages outside their cultural bases, and usually at school from books. They therefore can be said to have learned mostly the micro-language, and even then of a formal type books usually teach. How much else, naturally depends on the level of education generally and in English or Kiswahili in particular. Much of the macro-language in this situation will usually be learned from wide experience of their native speakers' literature, history, politics as well as other aspects of their lives. This is why in teaching a language, attempt is made to teach all those aspects especially at the higher levels when the basics of micro-language have been learned. In the final analysis,

there is no guarantee for the necessary adequate language competence for communication especially at national levels.

(vii) *Language Use*: From the facts that can be deduced so far, language use in Kenya, both for the individual and the society is characterized by mutual complementarity on the part of the languages. In other words, for the individual trilingual who speaks a mother tongue, Kiswahili and English, we can deduce that the three languages complement one another in his life, and he needs them all to complete the intended natural functions of language in a person's life. Unlike a speaker of only Ekegusii, for example, the trilingual will enjoy effective or some communication in public rallies addressed in Kiswahili, as well as parliamentary debates carried out in English. Beyond that, the languages become part of him, being present in his cognitive and thought processes and world view with effects that are yet to be understood properly. We hypothesize that when he uses the English or Kiswahili he has acquired from school, he does so on the background of his Ekegusii culture and world view by which he has been brought up to native speaker competence. The interference that can be seen in his pronunciation or broken grammar are an indication that both potentially and actually, all that is Kisii that is acquired with the language lingers on the plane from which English is used and consciously or sub-consciously merges with that use to a degree and in a manner yet unknown.

For the Kenyan society, all the languages on the landscape complement one another in a similar way. As each language is used in specific sometimes prescribed situations, all the languages must bear the function of language that would be fulfilled in a monolingual society by one language. So, the languages are not just media of communication for the cooperation of various sections of society at various times and places; they separately and together influence the values of Kenyans that they propagate and pass on to their youth; they have various symbolic significance at the lower as well as national levels; they embody what is Kenyan and they provide what Kenyans find their group and national

identities from. The fact that Kikamba is a Kenyan language is something that every Kenyan who is aware of it uses as part of his image of the nation with which he identifies; he may know he is not a Mkamba, but he knows this is Kenyan just like the baobab tree that may not grow in his traditional region is a symbol of Kenya for him. For Kenya society, the trilingual situation already described means that the three languages or sets of languages work together, as a Kenyan language would and complement one another in that. As codes it is easy to understand how this is done in communication of various sections and contexts in the society. With respect to the other functions of language it remains still unstudied how this works. But the development of Kenya has been with these languages, and life remains closely tied to the facts of their presence with sometimes positive sometimes negative effects.

The problems they raise affect the thinking and the functioning of the nation; the roles they play facilitate life in the nation. They are realities on the landscape.

(viii) Code-Switching: Code-Switching is the use of more than one code, where code is language, in one communicative language incident. Intellectually, the practice has been of interest to theoretical and descriptive linguists, anthropological linguists, socio-linguists and psycholinguists. It is a process in which multilinguals break down the boundaries of the languages they speak, build up a new language or one that is mixed and use it drawing maximally on their linguistic resources to communicate. According to Heller (1988:3) Scholars:

have tended to approach code switching as a structurally-unified phenomenon whose significance derives from a universal pattern of relationships between form, function and context (Genesee and Bonshis 1982; McClure 1981 ; Pfaff 1982). Increasingly, students of code-switching ... approach it as a form of verbal strategy (Valde's 1981; Scotton 1976; Heller 1982, Gumperz 1982)...

Basically, the attempt has been to explain the reasons for switching, and the explanation has tended to be psychological, social, or even linguistic. Scotton (1988:180) for example, using data from Kenya suggests that code-switching has more to do with social consequences as the speakers judge it than social factors or interactional features. Whatever the actual reasons for code-switching which speakers have been found to do without realizing, the practice which is very common in Kenya, would seem to confirm our suggestion that the languages of the multilingual individual or a community form, at some level, are a single resource, or a resource that begins to merge to function as, or even instead of each of the individual resources that constitute the multiplicity.

(ix) *Language Handicap*: Language handicap can be defined as the lack of adequate necessary linguistic competence in a human life situation. As the inadequacy of the necessary competence in a language it can be experienced even with the mother tongue. It ranges from where interpretation is needed to more subtle situations when it is not even realized at all. For the unmarked mother tongue situation, the handicap will be usually in new areas and the competence will expand through normal strategies to cope. When one has to use a *lingua franca*, (or an official language, or indeed both) when their acquisition cannot be as guaranteed as the mother tongue situation does for language and everyday life the handicap will be in the realm of daily needs in life. Kenyans who have to use Kiswahili or English, or indeed any other non first language they have not acquired adequately go through life with language handicap whose effect on the individuals and society is yet to be studied. Given how a trilingual Kenyan learns English and Kiswahili, and how the domains in which these languages must be used are determined by either statutes or pragmatic needs there will be Kenyans in situations where they will need more or aspects of the languages that they do not have proper command. Such Kenyans have to live by a limited knowledge of the two languages and they will be in situations where neither language is

enough because the necessary competence has not been acquired. Sometimes this will be realised but perhaps most of the time it will not. From observation and intuitive personal experience, some of the prevalent code switching in Kenya is in fact motivated by language handicap in available codes rather than a free strategy for achievement of certain social goals like distance, closeness, authority etc. that all known literature cite. We as Kenyans often switch to mother tongue, Kiswahili, or English because we do not have the competence to say what we want to say in the language we are speaking.

Further, it can be observed that some of the Kenyans living with the handicap in Kiswahili and/or English in fact lack the mother tongue competence in their purported mother tongues. What has been outlined as the way Kenyans acquire the languages they live by, and the language policy and practice in education in Kenya will produce and has produced young people, perhaps a generation without a mother tongue competence, rooted as all languages are, in a culture. The individual, societal and national effect of the language handicap involved in these cases requires further research but it must be fundamental. May be a significant mass of able players in various life situation games (Parliament; *Barazas*; *ad hoc* challenging situations) are locked out by the handicap. May be much of the wisdom, values for the moral fabric, knowledge or indeed words for life interaction and thought processes are locked up in the lives of one generation (parents and grandparents) never to reach the next

4. The Language Issues in Kenyan Society

Neither management nor the individual can be independent of the society. To that extent, what affects either will necessarily affect the society. However, we can still abstract and look at the implications of the linguistic realities in Kenya to the socio-political body of its people.

The first and a characterizing fact about languages in Kenya is that the society is highly multilingual. Many of the speech communities are also ethnic. This makes the Kenyan society multi-cultural with the languages as major indicators of these cultures. The languages that are supra-ethnic in their Kenyan uses have acquired their own social connotations and associations. The English, and to a lesser extent, the Kiswahili speakers have tended to be vertically different, standing above the speakers of the Kenyan mother tongues which operate on the horizontal plane.

(i) *Divisiveness*: A major issue at the end of all this is the view that the languages are divisive. Not only that, but because a young nation like Kenya is still integrating and building up unity which is essential for national survival, the languages have been suspected of impeding national integration. Often it is the indigenous languages that are seen to be the culprits in this. Schwarz (1965:39) openly claims that: Differences between indigenous languages keep the people apart, perpetuate ethnic hostilities, weaken national loyalties and increase the danger of separatist sentiments. Alexandre (1972:88) makes the same claim:

each local language is, moreover, intimately related to a tribal culture, thus use of a local language reinforces attachment to a tribe, thereby going against the current national sentiment, which is only slightly developed.

(ii) *Unifying*: In the three language system that has been adopted in much of Africa, the national and the official language are usually viewed as more unifying and even as facilitators of national integration. These would be English and Kiswahili in Kenya. Whereas this cannot be denied, as a logical consequence of the claim that those who speak a language are united by it and divided from the others, and the fact that not everyone in Kenya speaks Kiswahili or English, those who speak these languages may not form a speech community but they stand apart from those who do not as they use the languages. Where and how the languages

are usually acquired reinforce the differentiation to make it cumulatively and relatively vertical (see Bamgbose 1991 :53-4 and Heine 1979). There is a hierarchy of status from speaking English, Kiswahili and mother tongue.

(iii) Communication Issues: The language situation in Kenya is such that there are a multifold of Kenyans who have no common language and who can therefore not communicate much or directly with each other. It is easy to understand that from the point of view of just communication, sometimes this does not matter. It may, for instance, not matter that my Luhya grandmother cannot speak with my friend's Taita grandmother. Indeed when it matters that my Luhya grandmother speaks with my Luo grandmother, either will learn the language of the other or they will learn each other's languages and proceed. However, as Bamgbose (1991:52) puts it, "communication in the linguistic sense of verbal and non-verbal exchange is ... crucial to the well-being and functioning of a state". There will be times when it matters that some Kenyans do not share the facility for this sort of communication. It must surely matter when the child in its first day at school does not have a common language with its teacher. It may be inevitable, it might also be eventually overcome, but it seems to matter. In the attempt to provide justice in the law courts, there are strategies to deal with the situation, but it matters when the judge, the accused, the prosecution, the advocate, and some of the jury do not have command of the same language. It will matter if a divisional officer has no common language to speak with the inhabitants of his division. That it matters in such situations is made obvious even by the introduction of coping strategies such as translations and the attempt to acquire a second language. Even a District Commissioner in Kenya who works among a people whose language he does not know often attempts to and if he stays long enough speaks the people's language. It matters that when the Kenyan African language speakers of Kibera enter Uchumi market at Woodley, they may not have enough English or Kiswahili to either discuss their purchases with the shop attendants or decipher the written communication on the shelves or the goods themselves.

These people have a handicap much like the hunchbacks, the blind and the deaf, and they cannot carry out their shopping as naturally as those who do not have the handicap.

5. Pragmatics of Life in the Linguistic Landscape of Kenya

The nineteenth century concept of a monolingual state is hardly relevant in the twentieth century. Linguistic homogeneity in states today might be an ideal which remains more a myth than a reality (see Connor (1972:320) Kelman 1971:34, and Bamgbose 1991). However, national multilingualism such as is found in Kenya has a high nuisance value in the normal events in the life of the state and its people. Nations which are homogeneous linguistically by any definition might still suffer some of the constraints brought about by language variation, but the degree to which the variation becomes an impediment will surely be lower than in a full blown multilingual society. There will, for instance be matters that either do not arise or that are easier to handle in the African states such as Botswana where 97% of the population speak one language, Setswana; Somali with 98% speaking Somali or Burundi with 99% Kirundi speakers. Even countries which have what Bamgbose (1991:17) defines as a predominant language spoken by less than 90% of the population like Tanzania (Swahili) Togo (Ewe) or Malawi (Chichewa) will have a comparatively reduced nuisance value in certain areas of linguistic relevance. Kenya is among countries with more than one dominant language. Some of the nuisance will indeed emanate from this very fact though at the bottom line language variation in multilingualism governs the society in real terms as can be demonstrated by some of the areas in which the presence of many languages have to be directly faced or consciously avoided:

(i) *Planning*: In the linguistic landscape of Kenya, language planning becomes necessarily parallel to and in addition to other planning in the nation. There are language problems, and language planning means the conscious and deliberate programming geared towards solving those problems. Kenya has to face and deal with

what linguists call status planning which is to do with roles of various languages in the society, as well as corpus planning which involves working on the languages themselves individually like preparing orthographies, expanding the vocabularies etc, so they can be adequately equipped for whatever roles they are to play. Naturally this calls for policy as well as implementation, and both have their problems. For example, following the principle that every child is better off being literate in its mother tongue, Kenya has a policy that children should be taught in the first three years in their mother tongues. This is status planning. Before this is implemented, whoever is in-charge has the burden of corpus planning of all the mother tongues before implementation can follow policy.

(ii) Education and Acculturation: Subsequent to biological reproduction, every society perpetuates itself by educating its youth in the widest sense of education. Language is the critical medium in this and in what we might regard as ideal situation where the speech community has a reasonably stable culture, this takes place naturally. Much of what we learn for life is acquired with language. In a nation like Kenya the burden falls in formal education and the many commissions and what they have had to say and do about language shows how much of a nuisance it has been to work out a policy that will be right as well as possible.

(iii) Literacy: To get Kenyans to be literate becomes a saga because language planning must take place before implementation. If a nation just wants to give functional literacy to its adults, in a monolingual situation, it should be an easy process. In a multilingual set up like Kenya it becomes a massive operation with multiple operational impediments.

(iv) Development Communication: Kenya as a developing country has a lot of need for vertical communication. Any nation relies on vertical communication from the managers to the beneficiaries of the management in any case. There are the usual matters of responsibility and obligation of the governors to the

governed (Policy, bills, laws, general call to single purpose like war or reaction to a national challenge). Or it might be some revolutionary ideas on a fundamental issue such as the number of children considered good and appropriate for every couple. It may be the management of a life/death matter such as the HIV-AIDS pandemic etc. Without a common language everything has to sizzle through with a variety of strategies, with risks of miscommunication. Effectiveness of such communication will cease to depend on the language per se with its manouvers to depend instead on the sophistication of the strategies of manipulating multi-lingual barriers. This needs special expertise, more time, and therefore more resources.

(v) Expenses: The multiplicity of languages in Kenya has obvious repercussions to the cost of any endeavour in which language and language communication is relevant. All the above considered pragmatic issues will increase costs beyond what it would be in a monolingual society even when the language issue still remains inadequately addressed. Policy and implementation of language policy will be highly constrained by financial realities, for example. If we regard expense to be more than money, there is always a cost too to the nation and its people as a result of what cannot be done that ought to be done.

(vi) Attitudes: Subsequent to all these potential and actual problems that multilingualism is seen to create language related attitudes often complicate the landscape and life therein. There are attitudes towards the fact of multilingualism itself. Characteristically, African nations have tended to show what Bamgbose (1991:16) calls distrust of multilingualism. Besides the problems herein outlined, this often emanates from the fear that the multiplicity of languages impedes national integration which, given their history, is a major dream for these nations. Perhaps following this, there will then be attitudes to the languages themselves. Ominde report clearly illustrate attitudes to English that had to determine the policy to be followed, particularly as the attitudes both emanate from and reinforce real life issues

dependent on the language. A very positive view of English has tended to mean a negative view to Kiswahili and especially the indigenous mother tongues. Beyond this at the third level, the language related attitudes focus on the people - the speakers of those languages. Speaking English, for instance, becomes associated with a certain type of person who is generally and specifically regarded in a certain way. Similarly those who speak only their Kenyan mother tongues arouse a certain regard. Somewhere at the end of all this when language is confused with ethnicity, attitudes develop not just about the speakers of the languages individually, but the speech communities of the various languages.

(vii) *Management*: Language will present issues in the management and life of every modern nation first because there will always be internal variation even if the nation is monolingual, and secondly, because every nation will always need to deal with other nations which will usually speak different languages. After all, the world has become a global village. The language issues in Kenya will compare closely with other African nations too, as the factors on which the issues are predicated are similar or even the same. It is significant to understand that the facts that give rise to the issues often work in combination, sometimes both horizontally and vertically in society to the extent that it may not be possible to relate each issue to a specific fact or factor. We therefore proceed to discuss Kenya's language issues against the general background which emanates from what has been given already in this work.

(a) *Official Management Issues*: The linguistic issues which relate to official management are of two types: the management of the linguistic landscape on the one hand, and the resultant issues of socio-political management on the other. The Kenyan linguistic situation has always needed official management. From birth, Kenya was never able to get on using language without considering what language to use for her government. As can be deduced from what has been discussed here, the colonial government had to address the language issue, make decision, and

take actions to make management of Kenya viable. The many commissions and reports attest to this. Their involvement in the designing of writing systems of at least some of the indigenous languages is further evidence. Faced by a colony where the government was divided from its people, and the people divided about forty fold among themselves by the tyranny of language which ironically lies in its very usefulness, language was a core issue in Kenya which became even more significant at independence when there was to be more involvement with the governed. The Kenyan constitution had stipulations on language use, saying, for instance, what language will be used in parliament. Nationally, before anyone offers themselves to be elected to parliament, they must therefore demonstrate the necessary competence in the language of Parliament. For certain categories of people to be naturalized or registered, they must constitutionally have adequate knowledge of Kiswahili or English.

The governing of Kenya requires a policy position with respect to language. At the core are the issues simply of what language will be used, where, and how their acquisition is to be ensured given that one can only use a language one has acquired. Since independence, Kenya has followed rather a pragmatic path in this, building on what it inherited and ending with a situation in which English is the official language, Kiswahili the national language, and mother tongues the languages of other aspects of life. For the acquisition of English and Kiswahili, the educational system has been central. Indeed, much of the official discussion of language issues have been in the context of educational policy, regarding not just what languages should be subjects of learning at school, but in what language should the children of Kenya be given all the knowledge they need to exist in harmony with their environment both immediate and wider. When Kenya want to facilitate literacy to its population that missed it at school, the same language questions arises and must be addressed, whatever the expenses in the pragmatics of teachers and the materials to be used.

Language management has therefore been, and continues to be, an extra agenda in the lives of Kenyans influencing the daily lives of everyone either directly or indirectly and for better or for worse. For the managers of the affairs of state, they add expenses and pragmatic problems that complicate the process of governance in both obvious and subtle ways.

After the language policies and the machinery for implementing those aspects that need it are in place, those with the responsibility to govern Kenya and manage her matters public and private, still have to live with the practicalities on the ground. At the general level, just how does a government maximize its efficiency in a situation where matters of language for daily everyday use cannot be taken for granted? How do the governors make sure that those who have passed the language test for Parliament have enough of the necessary language to really effectively legislate together for the nation? When they agree on laws and policy, these need to be passed on to the people so that they can understand and live by them. The various institutions of government need a known language to operate with. Public service institutions have to constantly bear what is obviously the burden of linguistic facts in Kenya. When there is significant wave of change which needs to carry the citizens the same direction with their governors, communication is a saga. Quite obviously the management of Kenya can be described as post-Babel when "the whole earth had one language and few words" (Gen. 11:1); and all the people could organize themselves, cooperate to build themselves a City, and a tower with its top in the heavens in order to make a name for themselves lest they be "scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Even more significantly, nearly all management in Kenya can be described as constantly countering the Babelian curse, as stated in Genesis (11:6-8).

And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do : and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to Go to, let us go down, and confound their

language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth : and they left off to build the city.

The strategic counter even link has been developed in what we might call the polyglot elite. It is easy because the leadership has been mainly created by formal education which has provided the language or languages of government. So far, the majority of those leaders in their generation had a near perfect grounding on their mother tongues. In the model that has emerged in the last thirty years, we can see the village chap become a minister, dealing in English in Cabinet and Parliament; addressing national Kamkunjis in Kiswahili if he can; but finally holding the group of his constituency in his mother tongue. This model is virtually built on the colonial one, differing only in that the colonial local leader had to learn the language of the people of the region under his jurisdiction.

(b) *Individual Level Issues:* The first issue at the individual level in Kenya relates to the matter of mother tongue competence. Every individual is entitled to a mother tongue competence in a language that would then be called his/her mother tongue. In the Kenyan landscape, it may be necessary to ask whether this is an issue or not. Presumably the majority of Kenyans who live in the monolingual enclaves of their speech communities are born and brought up in a near natural situation as already described. They acquire their mother tongue such that by the time they are six years old they have mastered it in terms of its phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics (see O'Grady *et al* 1989:269-288). For this acquisition, as far as is known, the child needs parental speech, its own cognitive development and perhaps some inborn device. Of necessity, however, in Kenya, first, the child might have to spend much of its time at a school of one sort or another from age three or even earlier where the care is given in a different language. But secondly, further in primary school, the tendency becomes the development of the official language

English, and perhaps the national language Kiswahili. Statutorily there should be three years of mother tongue literacy, but often other pressures mitigate against this.

Thirdly, what a child has acquired at six years is perhaps only the microlanguage, and that just enough to cope with a very restricted ecology. The expansion into the macrolanguage, for the child who continues with the formal education is as it were trekked in for new language and new demands. For the children from bilingual and multilingual areas like cities, towns and settlements, the mother tongue development begins to break down much earlier. In fact, some parents, perhaps in recognition of this, even proceed to as a matter of policy pass their second or third languages to their children. Whereas there is no magic or genes in the mother tongue a child acquires from its parents, it is questionable as to whether parents with only limited competence in a language like English or Kiswahili, by using only that language with a child, give it mother tongue competence in it.

At the baseline of this, we are talking for example, of individual who cannot naturally be said to be at home with their environments. For instance, do we and our children know the names (in any language) of the most common birds in our homes or around us?, Can we name the nearest shrubs, trees and even grass to where we live. If we cannot name these things, are we ever thinking or relating to them in any meaningful way? If this line of thinking is valid, then there is a danger, that at the extreme, there are Kenyan youths whose formal educational system, can have the effect of significantly de-linking them from their environment. One might argue that this is inevitable change or indeed necessary development. However, what would development really mean if it pushed its targets to find that they have gaps in the knowledge of where they actually are. Closely related to individual acquisition of his or her macrolanguage is the issue of language and behaviour. As in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, human behaviour is governed by societal values. What is natural in human behaviour is dictated by customs embodied in the people's culture.

Every human being, to remain acceptably human must learn in good time, for example, for every situation:

What they must do.

What they should do.

What they can do.

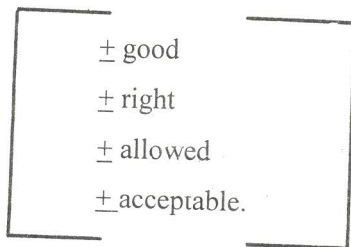
What they cannot do.

What they should not do.

What they must not do.

What they never, never do.

The knowledge of these, as they vary with circumstances, age, and roles in society constitute the principles, by which we are expected to live. It is my observation that much of this is acquired with language - macrolanguage. It is further my observation that language is the most effective and effortless medium for perpetuating these. This is to say that telling a child "do not steal" because it is bad to do so is much less effective than bringing up a child to acquire the totality of a language including the condemnation and discouragement of thievery. In the final analysis this will be true of the whole control system that restrains the animal in human beings. To use a language I have studied much, the acquisition of macro-Dholuo will include a tripod control system, encompassing the concepts of *chira*, *numba* and *kuwer*. These concepts are predicated on the general moral as well as legal behavioural parameters with feature analysis as below:



Naturally the behavioural parameters are not always absolute but run on a cline. So far, for example, bad behaviour will range from negligible through tolerable to intolerable.

On the feature, this will parallel not recommended through not allowed to forbidden.

Kuwer describes what is forbidden, encompassing the meanings of both taboo and allergy in English. That which is *kuero* is that which is never done. Numba and chira are the repercussions of breaking a kuwer, at the extreme end and also ordinary wrong doings.

The point is that this categorization of behavioural possibilities is acquired as part of growing up to maturity with the language - in its vocabulary, grammar, proverbs, riddles, literature as the philosophy by which a people must live. The acquisition of these, and equivalents in all human languages, puts the governors in place for each individual so that general conformity might be taken for granted and deviant behaviour recognized as such. If we are right in our suggestion, the failure by an individual to acquire mother tongue competence in a single macro-language hazards the possibility of not having the necessary appropriate controls in the system to govern behaviour in daily life. If this is so, then, in Kenya it is possible that we are churning out educated adults into the society with gaps in this very critical area.

(viii) The Acquisition of Other Languages: The obvious strategy for survival in Kenya is to acquire and be able to use more than one language. Indeed the official position is geared to allowing individuals to become trilinguals. I find basically three issues arising from this. The first issue is that a monolingual Kenyan is a nationally handicapped person. This is because what language or languages a Kenyan speaks will naturally to a large extent determine where she speaks at all and who she speaks with. Further, *de-facto*, a monolinguals' job and service opportunities are naturally restricted. An English speaking monolingual is for instance restricted to have only a certain type of public jobs - he

cannot be a chief, for instance. A Kiswahili speaking monolingual has perhaps larger scope than the English speaking one. However, he is still handicapped in many areas up and down the social scale of jobs and service – he cannot even be a professor of Kiswahili!

For the other languages, the largest group of which are the indigenous Kenyan ones, a monolingual's handicap is perhaps nationally maximized. Such a monolingual is likely to spend all his life just speaking to other members of his speech community. Situations where he might need to speak with others, say through translation are places such as courts or hospitals because of policy or pragmatic facts of doctors that do not speak his language. Such situations naturally raise problems in his life - language problems. The fact that a monolingual speaks only his language is in itself neither a bad nor a good thing. But even the situations that may need translation as we have cited, go to show that the one language does not equip him to operate fully as a Kenyan. Irrespective of how gifted he is as a leader he can only function at the grassroots level, and even this is changing with more candidates for that level that are not monolingual. Of course the handicap is enhanced because of other facts which follow the linguistic diagnosis automatically. A Kenyan monolingual has obviously not gone to school long enough or at all so he is uneducated in terms of modern Kenya. But the fact still stands that lack of other languages restricts his operandi. The language contribution can be very basic.

The second issue has to do with the effects of bilingualism or multilingualism on the individual. A bilingual is understood to be a person who is able to use two or more languages. Especially because linguists know that any one language is a code with many varieties, they observe that monolingualism is a much rarer phenomenon than is realized. Wardhaugh (1986:100) says., for example:

Most speakers command several varieties of any language they speak, and bilingualism, even multilingualism, is the norm for many people throughout the world rather than monolingualism.

Usually for a bilingual, one language will be the dominant one over the other weaker language although it is technically possible to have a perfect bilingual whose command of the two languages are equally mother tongue. That position varies on a cline to a bilingual whose second language competence is minimal. In Kenya, one dares say that it is even possible to find bilinguals neither of whose language is mother tongue. The scientific question to ask is: *How does being a bilingual, or having to be a bilingual affect the individual?*

One possible area of effect of bilingualism is in the areas of language acquisition. Linguists have suggested that there is what they term the critical period in human life when language acquisition is easiest and beyond which it becomes more difficult to acquire a language. The span of this period has not yet been strictly determined but it seems to go up to the early teens of the child. It coincides with neural plasticity in the child's development. Children readily acquire language during this period and all they require is exposure. Studies show that any normal child exposed to more languages than one will automatically become a bilingual, even speaking each language with the right accent (see Taylor 1976:240-241). When the child acquires the two languages from the same people, it might in fact not know that the languages are different for some time, and might therefore be confused before the languages fall into place as it grows older. This problem is overcome if in the family different people speak the different languages consistently with the child. Significantly, if a child acquires more than one language and one of them falls into disuse for whatever reason within the critical period, it will forget the language except for some residue in the mind that can make the later learning of the same language easier.

When children are taught a language like at school, they still find it easier to learn a second language within the critical period. They are also helped by the fact that they are less conscious when imitating sounds, and they are less set in their ways, leaving them room to accommodate the learning of another language. After the critical period, people still learn second language in late childhood and adulthood, but then, some individuals will learn languages faster than others as it is understood that there is aptitude for language learning which is not equally shared by all individuals. Similarly like in all other learning, motivation plays a significant role. For a Kenyan child acquiring English and Kiswahili at school, all these variables complicate the very basis of his educational success which has so far been equated with life in Kenya.

The second place to look for the effect of bilingualism on the individual in Kenya is in the cognitive development of the bilingual child. As reported by Taylor (*ibid:*) researches have shown that early bilingualism has no ill effect on the child's cognitive as well as linguistic development. Although some researches have shown superiority of performance of the bilingual in both, this remain controversial and largely speculative. In Kenya we only therefore rest in hope that linguistic practices have no adverse effect on the cognitive development of our youth.

The third area of concern has to do with the relationship between bilingualism and intellectual development. Taylor (*ibid:* 242-246) reports various experiments on bilingualism and the intellectual development of the child, particularly at school. The researches seem to suggest both negative and positive results in the use of second language as a medium of teaching. For example, he reports a study involving Welsh-English bilinguals in which Sear (1923) compared 1,400 monolingual and bilingual children and found (p.243), "The bilinguals were inferior to the monolinguals, and their inferiority became consistently greater with each year from 7 to 11 years." In this project, however the inferiority was only in rural but not in urban areas and therefore the results might have been due to limited competence in the relevant Language -

English, rather than to bilingualism. Positive results have been in Canada where French-English bilingualism has attracted many research projects. In south Africa, and in the United States, similar researches have found favourable results in Afrikaans speaking children being taught in English and Spanish children being taught English respectively. In these instances, the children did not suffer anything for being taught in a second language. (See Taylor (1976:245). Taylor points out in the same place that the prestige of the two languages is a necessary condition for this success. Given that English which is the relevant language in Kenya is still prestigious, perhaps we can hope by teaching our youth in English we give them a head start in intellectual development.

Linguists have concerned themselves with other issues affecting bilinguals such as the effects of language switching; language processing and storage; the links between the known languages as they are used including what they call interference; and personality changes as they speak the different languages. Taylor summarizes the findings in these areas (p.259-274). Briefly, bilinguals may be coordinate or compound depending on whether their use of the language is separated or fused. Language switching involves complex phonological processes with the dominant language often intruding into the weaker one. A bilingual has a complicated semantic storage system organizing his words by language or by meaning as well as by both. Words, sounds, and grammatical rules of one, usually the stronger language can interfere in the use of the other. For Kenya, we therefore say that bilingualism, or indeed trilingualism, though prevalent in the world must have its costs in the rations of the verbal operations of the individual. We do not know properly what the effects are, but we sure know and can in retrospectively feel complicated processes in the mastering and use of more than one language.

The third issue emanating from the facts that Kenyan individuals have the need to be bilingual has to do with whether in the process of second or other language acquisition the individuals acquire enough of the languages concerned. We can even be specific and

say that it has to do with whether Kenyans acquire as much English and Kiswahili as life in all corners of the republic is likely to demand of them. The basic assumption must be that the competence in a language determines its efficient and effective use. A Kenyan whose command of first, second and any other subsequent languages is limited, lives with a language handicap. It is of course possible at one extreme to have Kenyans speak three or more languages with mother tongue competence and be fluent users of the languages. But at the other extreme, it is possible that in the landscape of Kenyan languages there are individuals with no mother tongue competence in any language, people who are denied the full bloom of those aspects of their life and performance that depend on the communicative competence in a human language. In between is the possibility of various combinations of linguistic competence in differing languages.

We have a policy in Kenya that English is the official language. To bring the point home, this means that the Vice Chancellor of the University of Nairobi runs this University in English. He communicates in the simplest meaning of that term to and with all of us and anyone else he has to communicate with as Vice Chancellor in English. It is expected that when he writes to the professors on official matters he writes in English. Similarly, if he needs to communicate anything to the administrators, messengers, cleaners, and the *askaris* of the campus, he **does** it in English. As a policy and in practice, Kiswahili as the national language is however available all the time, especially for verbal communication where deemed appropriate, and even for translation in case it is clear that English which has to be used is not understood by the target.

The nation has put in place the arrangement that Kenyans acquire these languages in school or through formal education. The first point to observe is that the educational system has not been consistent in its policy and practice with respect to the teaching of the two languages. The relevance of these languages is haphazardly scattered among the Kenyan pioneers in education.

For instance, not all Kenyans who have been educated since the beginning of education had the opportunity to learn Kiswahili at all, or for the same length of time. The second point is that the Kenyan educational system has always been pyramidal, tipping at the top with the most educated and remaining heavy at the bottom. If everything were to remain equal, it is logically fair to assume that the competence of educated Kenyans in the two languages is pyramidal too. Quite obviously, a Kenyan who has studied any subject, leave alone English itself, to Cambridge University has quite a different competence from one that left school in standard four, even though they both know the language. Thirdly, there is a lot of variation in educational standards in Kenyan schools. This becomes a relevant variable in the competence of the products of the system. Fourthly, language teaching is an expensive affair. To be done effectively it requires a lot of resources to facilitate well trained teachers, equipment, and books. The way it is taught in Kenyan schools, it also requires a lot of time. Kenyans therefore, who have the opportunity to learn these languages learn them against a background of forbidding constraints the effect of which have naturally been perpetuated in the circle that produces teachers from the same system. To rely on this for the acquisition of languages by which the people are expected to live is obviously problematic. Further, as has been said, language learning is subject to many idiosyncracies which are both specific to the learning of languages and to the process of learning itself.

The point from all this is simply that Kenyans need to use English and Kiswahili as the official and national languages but we had no way of ensuring that the necessary acquisition of the same will always be adequate and even. The issue is not so much that Kenyans' English or Kiswahili will be good or bad. In fact when some Kenyans have argued that there are people that achieve so much and speak English very different from the standard one that we aim at in Kenya such as the Japanese, they miss the point, which is that whatever language you choose to use like we use English and Kiswahili in Kenya, the individual needs a good command of it. There are many reknown scholars and other

example, but they will have a full command of whatever language they live by and work with.

The acquisition of English and Kiswahili in Kenya though closely related to the formal educational system need not be completely tied to it. Those who proceed from school to institutions of higher learning have opportunity to keep acquiring more as they use the language to train in their areas of specialization. In many of the work places the language will be used and thereby developed. Similarly, anyone who lives in places where they use Kiswahili will have opportunity to acquire more. This gives the people opportunity to even specialize in their language acquisition. For instance, lawyers will develop legal language; and bankers financial English. The corollary holds too at the opposite end: Those Kenyans who leave formal school at any level and recede to monolingual enclaves will tend to forget even what they learned at school.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

And so what about language and life in Kenya? From the facts observation and discussions above we have seen that Language in the national and life situation in Kenya is in a transitional mode. It is very much like something is going to happen that will be permanent. Analytically, there are three possibilities:

1. The present situation remains permanent and institutionalised. If the inadequacies we observe are real, then this possibility is unlikely because even nature would take care and ensure the necessary change occurs.
2. The situation may grow into what might be called Monolithic Unity: As English and Kiswahili are taught in Schools, a time can come when these languages are spoken by all Kenyans within a shared cultural base. This would make the indigeneous languages redundant and cause them to die natural deaths. Whereas this can happen naturally, it would need a clear hand of man to, for instance ensure that all young Kenyans go to school and acquire these languages and the old die out, and a new civilization emerges.
3. The situation may grow into what we might call Unity in Diversity. This is very much like the status quo better

developed and established. The indigenous languages would remain within their cultures, so that every Kenyan is well grounded in one of them as a mother tongue. More and more Kenyans would acquire English and Kiswahili and know them for national purposes. In the meantime, a Kenyan culture would grow to enhance the usefulness of the official and national languages in communication etc and to co-exist with the rest of the languages and cultures harmoniously.

For life, every language is as good as another. Every individual has a right to a language they can live by. To this extent, a mother tongue competence in a language should be regarded as a human right. There seem to be no studies on the effect of lack of mother tongue competence, which it has been observed that some of our educated youth may be experiencing. Given what comes with language we can hypothesize that anyone who has not acquired a mother tongue competence has not acquired some of what comes with it. How the resultant handicap affects the life and behaviour of the individual, and how it all collectively affects the society has not been researched either. One can imagine, however, that there would be some element of frustration which may or may not be conscious, which can easily create a certain type of personality or evoke a type of behaviour. When there are inadequacies in known languages for the necessary tasks in life, the cumulative effect must surely build up to contribute significantly to the character of the society that emerges. Lack of communication, miscommunication, differing presuppositions, lack of critical perspective and concomitant values, crave for enough language to sharpen or express thoughts and or emotions, void in aspects of cultural base, complexes from failure to acquire English or Kiswahili, using or knowing only the mother tongue etc. must be major hindrances to achieving what it takes to develop and realise the goals such as individual confidence, national pride, shared ethos and isms, strong moral grounding, and the necessary cultural holding that makes everything from the running of the state, to management and interaction at individual thought, normal, rather than subtle challenges.

A Glance at Examples

(i) Insider - Outsider Syndrome

Generally language will divide people into insiders and outsiders with the in between as always a possibility. In Kenya English does this vertically, and Kiswahili does the same to a lesser extent. For both, the top is multiply advantaged or perceived to be so above the bottom. The disadvantages of the in between which may be more serious remain subtle and sometimes even unrecognised. The mother tongues divide the Republic into caucases strengthened and empowered by ethnicity of the speech communities and the (emergent) geo-political structures and practices such as constituencies and elections. The language based divisions in Kenya are therefore real and relevant all the time requiring therefore constant cognizance in order to maximize on the goals in life. Those who have the language for the immediate traditional, as well as the wider relevant context have a great advantage in life and even more seriously determine the fate of the nation as they join the centre to its whole body.

(ii) The Judiciary and Justice:

The Kenyans who have reasonable potential capacity to understand the law and its due processes are those who deal in English, the language in which they are proposed, discussed, enacted, and reinforced. Actually, for the majority of Kenyans, law seems something that ambushes one when caught and observationally remains out there for the Kenyan individual as it is focused on him (or forced) by the few who deal in it like the police, the lawyers, and the judges etc. We all know this is very far from the intention. What creates this impression would need to be studied, but we hypothesize that the lack of integration of the individual's language and culture with her laws has a lot to do with it. The law is alien, the language is alien, the practice is alien; the law breaker is therefore an ignorant criminal where ignorance is no defence, a frightened individual with no notion that the same law that makes him a criminal is there to fully protect him. One gets a persistent

impression that the public views the police as an enemy inspite of all the hard work they do, the lawyers as crooks who can get blood from a rock in matters legal, and the judges as remote figures from another planet when they are the superior among us with the objective scale of justice in their hand for us to run to for what is truly fair. The impression makes one remember with envy a cartoon in a British news paper where an officer and a convict are poised to enter a "Black Maria" and each simultaneously says to the other: "*After you, Sir.*"

To know how to address a judge or a magistrate must be learned, in fact crammed from school, because it is no part of any Kenyan's life. (A list of address terms was in a book called Students Companion). So when in court, Kenyans say and hear "*My Lord*" etc. one wonders linguistically what is happening; The standard swearing in with the Bible or Koran might be not so real a swearing to people who live by their own concepts of oaths and their binding capacity. Those not properly rooted in any culture have no concept of taboos from which the practice gets its effect outside the dry law itself. Surely all these must have started as significant integrated communication structure in some courts elsewhere. In Kenya, they will seem like rituals without meaning or significance sometimes to some people. The robes, the gowns and the hard top wigs must be meant to communicate something but what this is remain moot and beg for research.

The official language in court is not spoken by a large majority of Kenyans. Therefore, in any trial, those involved will have in addition to no common language, different languages rooted in different cultures with different communication strategies and presuppositions. From what is known so far of how language is used in communication, this is fertile ground for miscommunication and misunderstanding. Politeness, for example, might be a very significant attribute to show in the context of an accused. If his expression of politeness is not appreciated or misunderstood, he would be inadvertently offending when he is trying to do the opposite. There is the cultural values

by which communicants in every situation form opinions on each other: for instance, in some Kenyan communities, it is a mark of uprightness for a young person to look away and show politeness by being shy as he makes his point. For ordinary human beings a mix up here can create deep prejudice which may even be stereotyped. The obvious way to deal with lack of a common language is to have translators. So the typical situation is that the accused would be speaking in for example Ekegusii which is then translated for the benefit of the rest of the court into English. The relative effectiveness of this will depend highly on the competence of the translator in the languages involved and his professional preparedness. His unmeasured handicap creates havoc in the communication and is likely to sometimes remain undetected with obvious effect on justice to all concerned. Even where all involved speak English, because of interference from the other languages, and cultures and the differences in competence, communication cannot be taken for granted in Kenyan courts. For example, in simple matters of syntax, in English the answer to a *yes-no* question is always no in the negative and yes in the positive whether the question itself is negative or positive. In Dholuo and some other Kenyan languages, Kiswahili included, it is different: To the question: Did you steal the cow? if you did not steal the cow, the answer is yes and no if you did. In English the answer is no if you did not steal the cow and yes if you did. It has often been observed in reports of court proceedings in Kenya that while speaking English, Kenyans often operate with the syntactic and semantic rules of their languages. From English point of view, they therefore say no when they mean yes and vice-versa. They do not do this consistently perhaps because they operate with rules of more than one language. What this means to the judges and the cases would need research, but it is enough to show the problem exists enough to threaten justice. There is this joke about an old Luo *mzee* who came to a court to listen to his relative's proceedings. Being a little late, he entered a room full of people but eerily quiet. He looked round and, lifting his hat the best way he knew how, said "Oyawore uru jobura." , "Good morning Councillors". The next thing he heard was a something sounding

like a hammer on the table, some harsh, speech from 'the Magistrate' which was Contempt of Court, and the orderlies dragging him out of the courtroom to somewhere else. As he went, he loudly wondered: "*Maru ni ok mosie ji!*" "In this one of yours people do not greet!" We can all laugh at this but it should surely make us think. The Magistrates and Judges are trained, able and sensitive; but considering the complexity of language and levels at which miscommunication can occur, the language challenge can be quite a nuisance.

(iii) *The Doctor and the Patient:*

When sick people go to see a doctor, ideally they go through either phatic communion or serious chatting for creation of the necessary environment. The patient, when asked what the matter is relates how they are feeling and where they are hurting. The doctor notes this asking leading questions, as she forms an opinion from what she hears, what the complaints may be symptoms of. She decides what is necessary and gives a prescription or medicines. In this process effective language communication is central to the success of the enterprise. First, the doctor and the patient need a common language, which they may not have. Secondly, the patient needs enough of the language to properly describe what are internal fine feelings to guide the doctor to a diagnosis. If we introspect, we shall all find that even for a Professor of Linguistics it is difficult to state the headache or the stomach-ache precisely in English. One can therefore wonder what happens with patients who dropped out of primary school but still speak English with their doctors. Given the language competence patterns of Kenyans, and the language by which the doctor is trained as well as operates (usually English and Kiswahili respectively) there is a very high probability that at least some of our encounters with doctors move very close to veterinary medicine in the diagnosis procedure. Further, instructions on medicines and disease management give similar challenges. "Three tea/table spoonfuls twice a day", mumbled in a hurry or scribbled on a little bottle or envelope can easily end up with all sorts of interpretations. The English concept of time is different from the African one. Instructions such as

give to the majority of Kenyans. From an insensitive doctor it may not even be 'heard' by the patient even if it were to be translated into the mother tongue. It must all be much worse where the demand for medical attention outstretches the supply such as busy public hospitals. It must surely be possible that someone somewhere in those circumstances is going to get it wrong basically for language reasons.

(iv) ***Child Upbringing and Values for Life***

The first generation of Kenyans to go to formal schools and enter the language situation herein described was initially well rooted in their cultures. They were few and many of them did not venture far into the second or third languages. The European instead learned the mother tongues and the cultural, moral values remained largely intact in the Kenyans. The second generation or the first generation that went to high school and even to college and University observationally suffered a breakdown in the build up of values for life in that they, early in life outgrew the traditional schools of their uneducated parents and thereby acquired modern education at the expense of traditional ones. For them however, the support system was still there at home, and they had enough opportunity to pick up the language and the culture in good measure for life in both the immediate and wider environment. Observationally, the children of this generation would seem to suffer lack of firm rooting on values for life because (i) of cumulative handicap from the parents (ii) lack of the traditional supportive infrastructure in macro-language and culture; (iii) interference for some of them in the available global media with its bombarding world or alien culture and language; (iv) the total confusion in the transition we are living in. There is the attempt to make up within formal education by teaching ethics etc. with the controversies they raise. Children tend, in the circumstances to reach their teens before acquiring what even their parents begin to expect them to show, for them to be judged and accepted as proper and upright in the society. Many of us start lecturing our children already in their teens on how they should greet and behave in the

presence of their elders; what will be expected of them as husbands and wives; the importance of this or that virtue; special relationships with maternal uncles, mother in-laws etc; the taboos and other dos and donts. When they ask why, and we can only say that is the tradition, or "because I say so" it is no wonder we cannot get far. The acquisition of much of this for life is done more naturally with the total language in a stable mothertongue situation, as the culture is acquired too.

(v) *Development Communication:*

As a young nation in transition most of the goals of planning and governments can be termed as development. Characteristically the desired new is usually also alien. The time for effecting the change is often supposed to be very short. Structurally, there is usually the developer who has purportedly understood and accepted the new thing which he therefore wants to propagate to the recipients to achieve specific goal or goals for communities in it. It is the observation that without conscious address, and strategies to deal with the described language situation much of the efforts get frustrated or even foiled at birth. What must take place proceeds slowly at a natural pace for the majority while the elite class of developers with respect to a specific matter spend a lot of time and other resources speaking to themselves in a language they understand. Examples of these that come to mind include the following: In Governance, right from independence in Kenya as in the rest of Africa, those who had reason or opportunities to be enlightened about a certain system of government have had a great burden of responsibility to carry on as the majority experience that system and as they try to educate the populace about the instruments and structures of the system. It would make a very interesting and useful study of what Kenyans in total know and understand by democracy within their cultures and acceptable way of doing things. There are more complex matters that need to be effectively communicated by the enlightened politicians to their electorate in the districts so that in whatever political system, the national presupposition and expectations are reasonably merged. The issues can be quite fundamental. Observationally when

Kenyans talk about democracy and civil society, one wonders if everyone is talking or acting about the same thing all the time. It is not so much that Kenyans need to be able to define democracy or any other ism; the issue is that either the major tenets should be already in place in the minds of the people, or there should be a language in which they can be reasonably easily and effectively communicated to the people as part of change.

In other matters of development, it is observable that Kenyans have required more effective communication than they have had a common language to communicate in. Family planning had broad background that touched mankind and Kenyans at their very creation. Some of the messages that tended to come out in translation virtually condemned large families as unhappy while small families were happy, publicly laying blame of economic and other woes on parents too little too late. One could not help suspecting that that message had something to do with incidents where parents killed their children and then themselves for what was reported to be poverty or inability to provide.

The meaning of otherwise sacred documents such as *title deeds*; *wills*, or *marriage certificates* still appear to by-pass many Kenyans to whom they do not yet form parts of a culture. Communication and life about them pass either with conflict or as if they did not exist. Up to now buying rural Kenyan land, say at an auction, and acquiring a title deed is even dangerous because the paper and the actual concept of land ownership has hardly been reconciled beyond the laws and those who deal effectively in it. Written wills hardly bind when they contradict natural laws within a culture of a Kenyan community.

(vi) Conflict out of Miscommunication:

Conflicts have surfaced in Kenya as a result of lack of effective communication, miscommunication and misunderstanding of words, concepts and practices within cultures both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally between one culture and another, for example, differing understanding of marriage with the rights,

responsibilities, and obligations it comes with to all concerned keep causing conflict at critical times. When a man takes a woman to his relatives and friends and says, "This is my wife" in English, what is understood in totality depends on the culture of the man. If the woman comes from a different culture, she probably has no full understanding of what is said even though they both speak English. When death separates the two, the conflict may become more pronounced. In English the marriage has ended, for example, in some Kenyan cultures, nothing else changes. Many Kenyans marry each other in churches, exchanging rings with the Judeo-Christian, Western sense of marriage when for practical purposes, the groom is marrying the bride who can only get married rather than marry the groom in turn. As one observes and hears the discussions of some of the issues tied to various cultures, another dimension of wrong interpretation comes in so people can have seminars discussing issues from premises that are not factual simply because of the rendering in various languages. One such example is what comes out popularly in English as wife inheritance in some Kenyan communities. Whether the practice is right or wrong, bad or good, what happens to widows for example among the Luo and Luyia is neither a remarriage nor an inheritance. English simply does not have a word for it and to usefully deal with related problems, one would need to understand it like one seeks to understand scenes from Shakespeare or Pope before usefully commenting on the issue. Yet it is very easy to make lives of a family including children miserable with a conflict based on miscommunication. Talking of such issues, sometimes people cannot resolve arguments because they have different presuppositions without realising and the premises of arguments and judgements are based on either different 'facts' on the same issue, or misinformation and differing prejudices. A politician was once reported to have annoyed a Provincial Commissioner in Kisumu by telling the Provincial Commissioner "You are nothing". If this was a translation or interference from the politician's mothertongue, its meaning imputes nothing regarding the personality of the Provincial Commissioner.

(vii) Choice of Language:

The first strategy in language communication in Kenyans' life is more often than not the choice of which language to speak in a specific situation and with specific people. This choice is very significant. It can be very sensitive both horizontally and vertically. Which language Kenyans choose rightly or wrongly will categorize them before their hearers. When ordinary Kenyans meet in everyday situations, in the mental search for the common appropriate language, if a speaker attributes a wrong mother tongue to the other person, it remains unpredictable as to whether the reaction will be positive or negative. It is really like giving someone identity, whether your own or another and they may like it, be neutral or be angry to various degrees. Vertically, for example in an office situation where the officer represents authority, the unmarked available language choices is between English and Kiswahili. Either choice can elicit offence. When a visitor walks into an office, the officer has to quickly decide whether it is the 'normal' situation where he can communicate in English, or the visitor might only speak Kiswahili. At the moment English has a higher status and those who speak it are usually more advantaged socially than those who can speak only Kiswahili. The choice the officer makes is thus closely paralleled by a purported judgement on social status. How the officer judges the visitor in a split second is the test. Often dress and general demeanor give some guidance, but this can be misleading too. When an Engineer, perhaps straight from the workshop not only casual but a little soiled, walks into a Professor's office with a deep grievance, and the Professor starts to talk to him in Kiswahili, it visibly adds insult to injury. The engineer will feel demeaned. If the visitor turned out to be a mechanic who does not speak English and the Professor speaks to him in English, he will feel ashamed. When all this is tied to life goals, the necessary juggle with language choices in Kenya is a significant pawn in the game that it is.

(viii) The Service Desk or Counter situation:

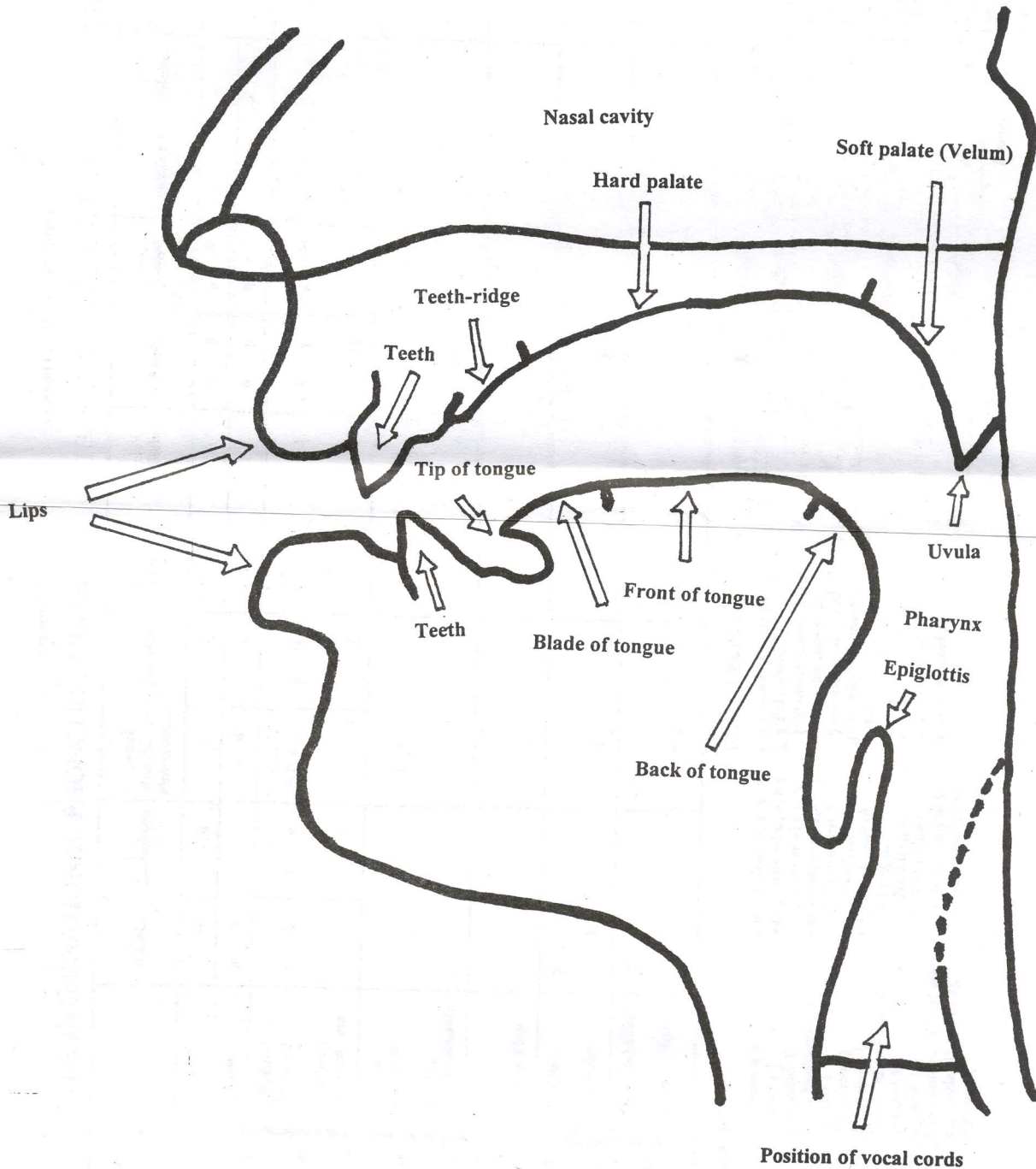
This concerns situations the reception desks such as in offices, the service in aeroplanes, or even the telephone service. For all practical purposes, the counter determines how the majority views and therefore regards what is behind it. This may be a company, a public or private institution and ultimately the nation itself. Language related problems have been observed to abound, and cause unnecessary and unintended conflict. Because of what has been outlined in this lecture, it is difficult for both the guest and the receptionist/secretary/air host or hostess know instinctively and automatically what to say or do with every person. Using English, there is obvious lack of quick brisk and efficient phatic communion language shared that is ordinarily acceptable. One often gets inroad expressions such as Yes; what is it?; What do you want?; Can I help you? Sometimes, it is done with paralinguistic noises. Built into all this is always the mother tongue interference of the parties, together with their handicaps in the language they are using. Observationally, many of the quarrels on the counter situations are occasioned by language based misunderstanding. Repercussions of this affect industries, and can be very expensive. Considering how long it can take to communicate effectively with telephone exchange, for instance, or with the secretaries at the other end, real money is wasted in the process.

3 Conclusion

From what we have discussed in our linguistic glance, it is evident that Kenya has been greatly challenged by the facts of her language situation. These challenges are by no means unique to Kenya. Much of the World is suffering the same and even worse. There are African nations with documented language policies which are so rejected by the people they are unable to progress in the matter. There are even developed nations which are now suddenly just waking up to similar challenges to what has been observed here. After all, we are essentially glancing at the effect of the curse of the Tower of Babel. Given where Kenya started, she has gone a very long way in tackling the language problem.

It should be observed that not having a written comprehensive policy has perhaps helped Kenya move towards spreading the knowledge of Kiswahili and English, and carrying along the indigenous languages without much ado. This lecture has attempted to show where Kenya is with respect to language and life of the nation and its people. The way forward in the next millennium can easily follow with well thought out intervention to push the frontiers of what we already have and to influence the development towards the envisaged and desired goals towards envisaged success and stability of the language situation.

The Organs of Speech



THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

(Revised to 1979)

	Bilabial		Labiodental		Dental, Alveolar, or Post-alveolar		Palato-alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Uvular		Labial-Palatal		Labial-Velar		Pharyngeal		Glottal	
Nasal	m		ɱ		n		ɲ		ɲ		ŋ		ɴ									
Plosive	p b				t d		t̪ d̪		c ɟ		k ɡ		q ɢ		p̚ b̚		ʙ				ʔ	
(Median) Fricative	ɸ β		f v		θ ð s z		ʃ ʒ		ç ʝ		x ɣ		χ ʁ		ʈ ʡ		ʕ				h ɦ	
(Median) Approximant			ʋ		ɹ		ɻ		j		ɰ				ɥ		w					
Lateral Fricative					l ɭ																	
Lateral (Approximant)					l		ɭ		ʎ													
Trill					r		ʀ						ʀ									
Tap or Flap					ɾ		ɽ						ɾ									
Ejective	p		β		t						k'											
Implosive					ɗ						g											
(Median) Click	ɔ				ɰ		ɱ															
Lateral Click					ɰ		ɱ															

(non-pulmonic air-stream mechanism)

(pulmonic air-stream mechanism)

DIACRITICS

- Voiceless ɸ ɸ
- Voiced ɸ ɸ
- Aspirated ɸ ɸ
- Breathy-voiced ɸ ɸ
- Dental ɸ
- Labialized ɸ
- Palatalized ɸ
- Velarized or Pharyngealized ɸ
- Syllabic ɸ
- Simultaneous ɸ (but see also under the heading Affricates)

OTHER SYMBOLS

- or • Raised e, ɘ, ɚ, ɞ, ɟ, ɠ, ɡ
- or • Lowered e, ɘ, ɚ, ɞ, ɟ, ɠ, ɡ
- or • Advanced u, ɪ, ʏ
- or • Retracted i, ɪ, ʏ
- Centralized ɪ, ɪ, ʏ
- Nasalized ɪ, ɪ, ʏ
- r-coloured ɪ, ɪ, ʏ
- Long ɪ, ɪ, ʏ
- Half-long ɪ, ɪ, ʏ
- Non-syllabic ɪ, ɪ, ʏ
- More rounded ɪ, ɪ, ʏ
- Less rounded ɪ, ɪ, ʏ

STRESS, TONE (PITCH)

- ˈ stress, placed at beginning of stressed syllable
- ˌ secondary stress
- ː level pitch, high tone
- ˑ low level
- ˒ high rising
- ˓ low rising
- ˔ high falling
- ˕ low falling
- ˖ rise-fall
- ˗ fall-rise

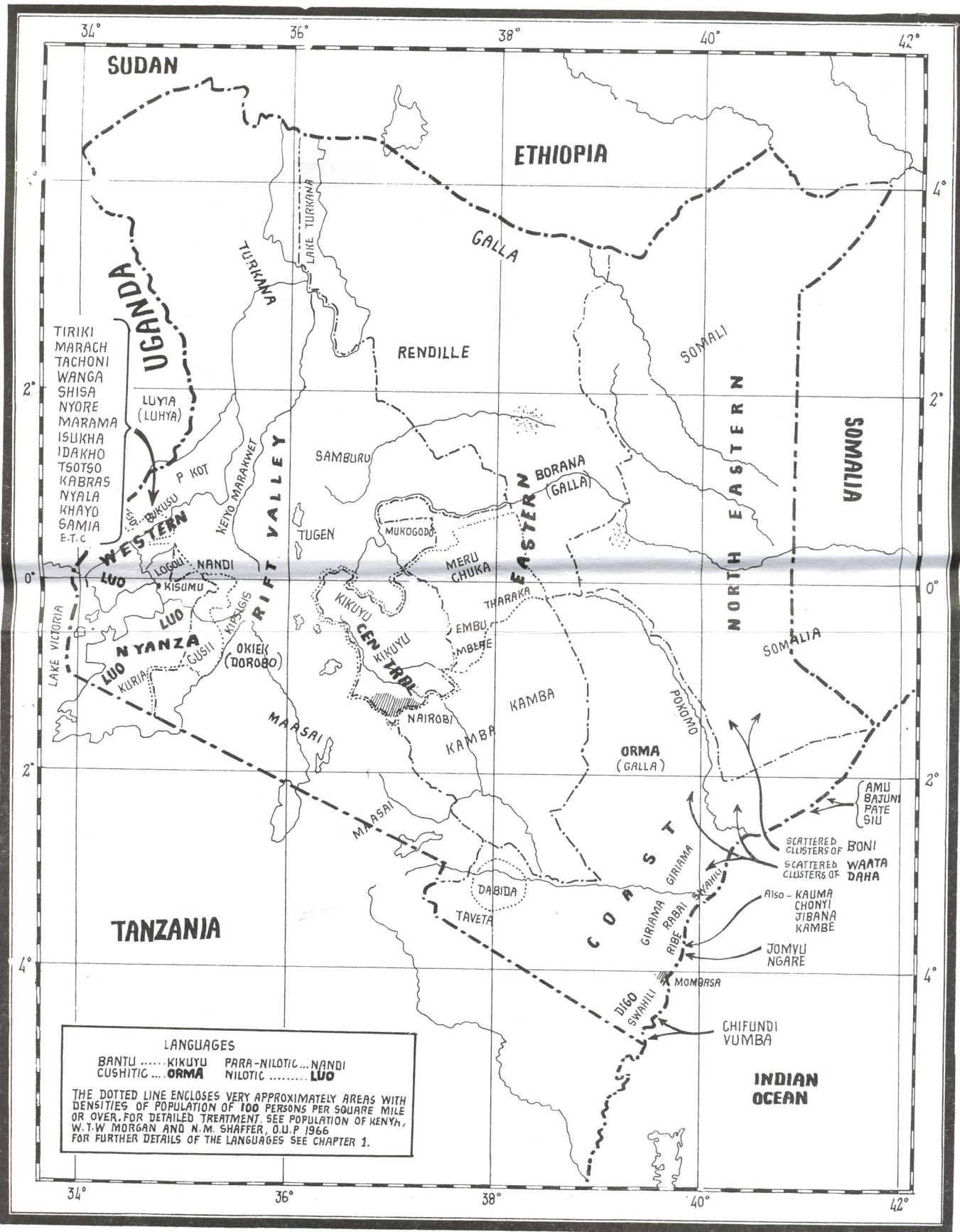
VOWELS		STRESS, TONE (PITCH)	
Front	Back	Front	Back
i	ɨ	y	u
ɪ	ɯ	ɤ	ɔ
e	ɘ	ø	o
ɛ	ɚ	œ	ɞ
æ	ɶ	æ	ɶ
ɑ	ɑ	ɑ	ɑ

Close Half-close Half-open Open

Unrounded Rounded

• AFFRICATES can be written as digraphs, as ligatures, or with slur marks; thus ts, tʃ, dʒ; b tʃ dʒ; tʃ dʒ; c, j may occasionally be used for tʃ, dʒ.

KENYA A LANGUAGE MAP



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