

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**Language Policy: The Forgotten Parameter
in African Development and Governance
Strategies**

INAUGURAL LECTURE

Delivered to the University of Nairobi and the Kenyan Public

by

D. Okoth Okombo

B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (Nairobi)

Professor of Linguistics and Communication Skills

Department of Linguistics and Literature

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (CEES)

Thursday 4 October, 2001

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**Language Policy: The Forgotten Parameter
in African Development and Governance
Strategies**

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI LIBRARY

P. O. Box 30197

NAIROBI

INAUGURAL LECTURE

Delivered to the University of Nairobi and the Kenyan Public

by

D. Okoth Okombo

B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (Nairobi)

Professor of Linguistics and Communication Skills

Department of Linguistics and Literature

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (CEES)

Thursday 4 October, 2001

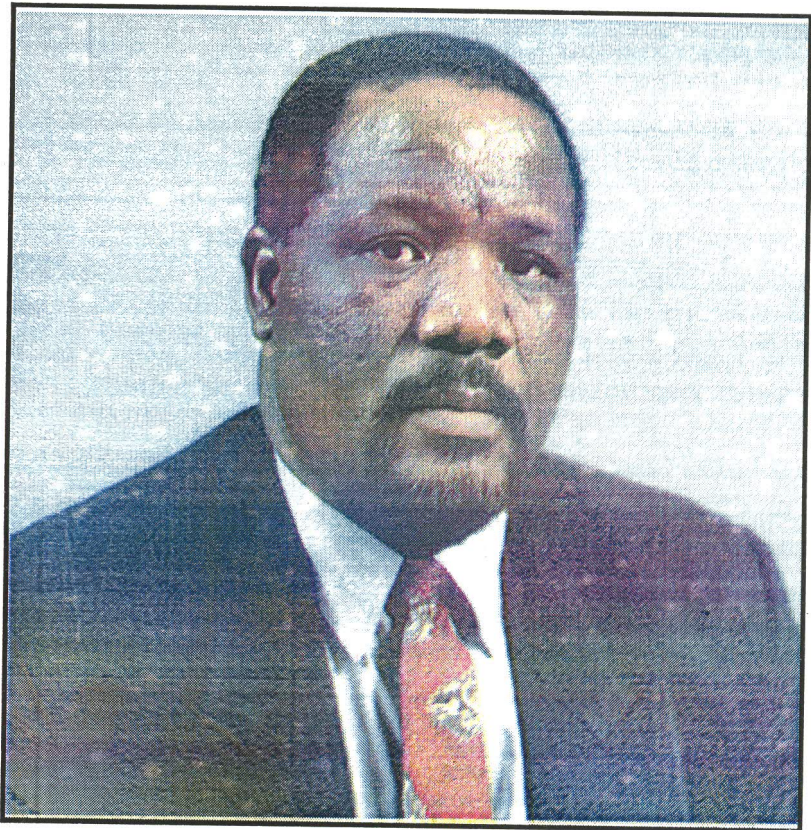
Produced by the University of Nairobi, October 2001
Courtesy of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor

Conventional academic use of this publication involving quoting, paraphrasing and/or citing the text of the publication in any permissible way shall not require special authority, provided that such use conforms to the general requirements of appropriate and adequate acknowledgement of sources.

All enquiries regarding other uses of this publication should be addressed to the author through the Office of the Registrar, Academic Division, University of Nairobi, P.O. Box 30197, Nairobi, Kenya.

Typeset and printed in Kenya by the School of Journalism, University of Nairobi,
P.O. Box 30197, Nairobi

PROFESSOR D. OKOTH OKOMBO



A Profile

By the testimony of his father, Duncan Okoth Okombo was born on 8th November 1950 at Kaswanga Village, Rusinga Island, Suba District, Kenya. He was born the first (and only) child of the second wife of his father, Mzee Elisafan Okombo, the son of Owuato, the son of Pundo, the son of Mzaza, the son of Wakiaga, the son of Kimko, the son of Mianza - the acknowledged progenitor of the Kaswanga clan.

Under the tutelage of his grandfather, Okoth started his preparation for adult life as a herdsboy, before joining Kaswanga (D.E.B.) Primary and Intermediate School in 1958. From there he joined Mbita Secondary School in 1967 and, after his East African Certificate of Education (E.A.C.E.) examinations, proceeded to the then Kenyatta University College in May 1971 for a three-year training course as a secondary school teacher (Mathematics and English). Upon the completion of this course in May 1974,

Okoth was posted to Nyambaria Secondary School, Kisii District. In the same year, he got special admission to the University of Nairobi's Faculty of Education. However, after one year of study in that Faculty, Okoth was transferred to the Faculty of Arts to major in linguistics within the provisions of the then 3:1:1 course pattern.

At the end of his undergraduate programme, Okoth graduated with a B.A. (First Class Honours) degree, winning both the Gandhi and Shell Best Student Prizes in the Faculty of Arts. In the same year, after teaching briefly at Lwak Girls Secondary School (Siaya District), Okoth re-joined the University of Nairobi to study for a Master of Arts degree in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages. He graduated in October 1979 and was immediately appointed Tutorial Fellow in the same department. He was promoted to the position of lecturer in 1984, when his research towards a Ph.D. in the same field was already in progress. Okoth submitted his thesis on *'The Functional Paradigm and Dholuo Constituent Order'* in 1986, and formally graduated the following year with a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Linguistics and African Languages.

In 1988, Okoth was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer. Later on, that same year, he was appointed on horizontal transfer to the newly established Department of Linguistics and English Language (Faculty of Social Sciences) at the College of Education and External Studies, popularly known as the Kikuyu Campus of the University of Nairobi.

He served as Acting Chairman of that department for several months before being substantively appointed Chairman of the Department of Linguistics and Literature (the result of a merger of his department and that of Literature in the same Faculty, following a Senate decision to that effect).

In 1991, Okoth was appointed on promotion to the position of Associate Professor in the same department. Eight years later, in January 1999, Okoth was appointed on promotion to the position of Professor. The following year, April 2000, he was elected Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, occasioning his retirement from departmental headship. He is still serving his first term as Dean of the said Faculty.

Professor Okoth Okombo has a dual distinction as a distinguished scholar in the area of Sign Language Research and Development, and the field of Nilotic Language Studies. He is generally regarded as the founder of the scientific study of sign language in Africa, and widely acclaimed as one of the leading scholars in sign language studies in the world. In Kenya, Professor Okoth Okombo is the founder and director of the Kenyan Sign Language Research Project, based at the University of Nairobi. The project has led to various scientific publications on the structure, vocabulary, and sociological properties of the language of deaf Kenyans. The project has consequently given tremendous recognition to the Deaf as a language community in Kenya, leading to the use of Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) in schools, the electronic media, court proceedings, hospitals, church services, and many other domains of life where deaf Kenyans are involved. Professor Okoth Okombo has been involved in guiding the establishment of similar projects and research activities in other African countries, including Uganda, Tanzania, Swaziland, and South Africa. In all these places, his work and ideas have opened up new opportunities in life for deaf people, and created new career paths for hearing people, who are increasingly being trained and employed as sign language interpreters. Professor Okoth Okombo's achievements in the field of sign language

research and development have been recognized by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), which elected him International President of the WFD Sign Language Scientific Commission for the period 1992 - 1995.

In the field of Nilotic Studies, Professor Okoth Okombo has made significant contributions in research and publications, especially on Dholuo - the Nilotic language of the Luo community of Kenya and Tanzania. Alongside the study of Dholuo, Professor Okoth Okombo has played a key role in the research which has given local and international recognition to the hitherto little known Suba language of the Western Kenya Bantu group of languages. As a result of his collaborative work with the renowned Nilotic scholar, Professor Franz Rottland of Germany (now retired), the Suba language is now heard on radio broadcasts, and has literacy materials both in the bible and school texts.

Apart from his two major areas of focus as outlined above, Professor Okoth Okombo has concurrently been a prime mover in the African efforts to pay attention to indigenous African languages in the area of language policy. In 1994/95 he led a high calibre African team of language scholars in the evaluation of the place of African languages in language-of-instruction policies in Africa. Between 1995 and 1998, he served as a Unesco/Government of Kenya expert in language policy deliberations that took place in Accra, Harare, and Cape Town, leading to some of the current fundamental guidelines on language policy in Africa. In the year 2000, he was invited to join the team of international experts assisting in the formulation of a national language policy for Malawi.

Currently, Professor Okoth Okombo is a member of a number of local and international scholarly organizations, including the Amsterdam-based Functional Grammar Foundation, the Kenya National Academy of Sciences, the World Congress of African Linguistics (of which he is a member of the Executive committee), and the World Federation of

the Deaf (of which he is the Sign Language Regional Expert for Africa).

In spite of his busy menu of local and international activities, Professor Okoth Okombo is a dedicated teacher and researcher in his fields of specialization and interest. He has published 5 academic books, several school books, and over 35 papers in the form of journal papers, book chapters and conference proceedings. He is a frequent guest speaker at local and international seminars and conferences.

Preamble and Acknowledgements

This lecture represents a synthesis of my thoughts, research conclusions and debating positions with fellow scholars and policymakers on the plight of indigenous African languages and the fate of the broad African masses who use them as their home or primary languages. This interest is a late development in my career as a language scholar. I started off with a keen interest in matters of form and structure, an interest which was given wings by my earlier training and proficiency in Mathematics. In that regard, the Chomskyan revolution in linguistics - maturing just when I was an undergraduate - was a godsend to me, bringing to linguistics a mathematical orientation and vocabulary that made me feel that now I was studying language and Mathematics rolled up in one package.

It all started soon after completing my Ph.D. I came across a thoroughly oppressed language group - the Deaf Community of Kenya. My initial reaction was to think that their visual-gestural communication could not possibly be a language in the same sense that spoken languages were. I was wrong. As I was soon to find out, language was a far more puzzling phenomenon than I or my lecturers had ever imagined. As usual, I started with looking at it in terms of form and structure. However, it did not take long before I realized that the main

problem of the Deaf and their language was not in the language itself. It was in the societal institutions, structures and attitudes within which the Deaf community operated as a language minority.

Still in love with matters of form and structure, I found myself developing a bi-focal view of language issues: on the one hand, there were those based on the nature of language itself; on the other hand, there were issues based on the dialectics of the interaction between language and society.

It soon occurred to me that spoken African languages were not much better off than the sign languages of our deaf people. With that realization came my waking up to the reality of the African situation: it was (and still is) the story of a people under-performing and under-achieving because their creative energies were fettered by lack of thought and expression in languages of which they had a perfect mastery - what Noam Chomsky was calling a **native speaker's competence** (without any pejorative connotations). It became clear to me that whoever gets serious about the African situation will have to give serious thought to the question of language (and communication) in Africa. Otherwise, it will take a miracle to develop a continent in which the creative energies of the masses are under arrest.

In my growth in thought and scientific investigation regarding these issues and many others in the wide field of language, I have had the benefit of counting on the support and encouragement of many friends locally and abroad. A number of senior scholars in Kenya, East Africa, and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa have read my writings and listened to my conference speeches with a lot of interest, always challenging me to work harder. In Europe and America, especially in the German Universities of Collogne and Bayreuth, I have found some of my most valuable friends and research colleagues. To be sure, these people have not always liked my adventures in thought and research,

but they have always blessed, encouraged and supported - even marketed - me to the best of their capabilities. For all that and a lot more, I owe them a great deal of gratitude.

As I remember the advantages I have had in scholarship by having more experienced and resourceful friends in various parts of the world, I want to remember also my younger colleagues who never miss an opportunity to stop me at the most unexpected times and places and challenge me over this or that utterance I have made in the corridors of academia. I believe that it is such interactions which keep me alive and alert in scholarship. As I develop my own feet and depend less and less on more experienced friends, I hope these interactions with younger colleagues will become the more dominant and lasting relationship in my intellectual career.

Finally, allow me to give special thanks to my deaf friends here at home and all over the world: those in the Deaf Associations of East Africa, those in the Southern African Region, those in Scandinavian countries - especially Sweden, Finland and Denmark-and those in the Secretariat of the World Federation of the Deaf. **To them, my deaf friends of the international community, I dedicate this lecture.**

D. Okoth Okombo, 6 September 2001

Table of Contents

	Page
(Presenter's) Profile	iii
Preamble and Acknowledgements	vii
1.0 Perceptions and Concerns	1
1.1 Bemoaning Africa's loss of the 20 th Century	2
1.2 Investing in people	5
2.0 Insights and Directions	7
2.1 National multilingualism: curse or blessing?	9
2.2 Are African languages equal to the task?	13
2.3 The constitution as a capacity-building instrument	17
3.0 Applications and Implications	21
3.1 Fishman's typology of policy options	21
3.2 Nida and Wonderly's functional typology	23
3.3 Towards a compromise	25
3.4 Towards a modified three-language structure	27
3.5 What it means for the Deaf of Africa	31
4.0 Summary and Conclusions	34
5.0 Endnotes	36
Cited Sources	38
Appendix 1: Summary of University Education and Career Profile	42
Appendix 2: 12 Check-points on the Way to this Inaugural Lecture	43
Listener's Notes and Questions	45

Language Policy: The Forgotten Parameter in African Development and Governance Strategies

by

D. Okoth Okombo

... nobody who has an interest in modern society, and certainly nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language.

- Norman Fairclough [Language and Power]

The time has come to address the marginalisation of the indigenous languages of Africa. The linguistic disadvantages suffered by Africans who do not speak the so-called powerful languages must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

- L.P.H.M. Mtshali, South African Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (1998).

1.0 Perceptions and Concerns

It is often reported that the great anthropologist Levi-Strauss once remarked that "to say language is to say society." (cf. Duranti, 1997:337)

That single poetic statement captured the most fundamental truth in the evolutionary history of the human animal: that human society as

we know it would be impossible to create without the facilitation of language, and that human language as it is known to us would be impossible to develop without the stimulation of society.

The symbiotic relationship between language and society is such that these two human institutions could only have evolved together, for neither of them can flourish to a significant extent without the other.

The significance to us (humans) of possessing a language is captured (though not exhaustively) in the following words of Duranti (1997:338):

Having a language does not only allow us to make sense of what we see and hear out there. It also allows us to look inside our mind and soul to ask such questions as: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Why are we here?

One important question left out by Duranti (loc. cit.), which language enables us to ask is: **How can we survive here?** It is an important component of my thesis in this presentation that language not only gives us the capacity to ask how we can survive where we are, but also facilitates our conception and expression of the relevant answers.

While no one seems to doubt this fact, there is every reason to believe that it is not getting adequate attention from African public thinkers in the areas of development and governance.

1.1 Bemoaning Africa's loss of the 20th century

The dominant perception of the African situation among enlightened African public thinkers is that, as a continent, Africa lost the 20th century (cf. Okoth 2000). This perception is behind such ideas as the African renaissance - the thinking that Africa now has a chance of being born again in a better shape - though it is not clear whether what Af-

rica needs (in the metaphor of being born again) is a renaissance or a baptism.

In bemoaning Africa's perceived loss of the 20th century, the implied question is: What are Africa's chances in the new (21st) century? This question is asked more explicitly in the World Bank's (2000) publication whose title reads: **"Can Africa claim the 21st century?"**

The World Bank experts give a qualified 'yes' in response to this question. They say (p. 103):

Africa must solve its human development crisis if it is to claim the 21st century.

The concept of human development has dominated development discourse since the advent of the 21st century. The discourse gives governance a key role in shaping the human condition and influencing the quality of human life.

UNDP's Human Development Report 2000 clearly defends the case for politics in the following words:

An adequate conception of human development cannot ignore the importance of political liberties and democratic freedoms. (UNDP, 2000:20)

Moreover, human development discourse places emphasis on democracy as the form of governance that is equipped to facilitate human development. On this point, the UNDP Report 2000 (p. 56) has the following to say:

Democracy is the only form of political regime compatible with representing all five categories of rights-economic, social, political, civil and cultural.

The Report quickly links this observation to human development by saying:

The process of economic policy - making for human development should honour the rights of participation and freedom of expression. (UNDP, 2000:69)

What seems to link human development to democracy is the conception of human development as involving the ability to make choices. As an earlier Human Development Report says:

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living.... (UNDP, 1995: 11-12)

As Africa is presented as a continent of poverty, it is also pointed out that the real problem is in the distribution of resources. Africa's wealth is concentrated in few hands, leaving the majority in misery and hopelessness. On this point, the World Bank (2000:92) advises:

To be effective in fighting the depth of African poverty, development strategies have to address inequality and exclusion.

The clear message here is that increasing wealth in economic terms does not necessarily improve the conditions of individual citizens. Unesco (1996:78) explains this point more clearly than many other authorities. The problems of perceiving development in terms of production and per capita income have:

led the relevant United Nations bodies to assign a broader meaning to the concept of development, transcending economics and encompassing its ethical, cultural and ecological dimensions as well.

This point will now be developed below as we look further at the perceptions and concerns emerging from the reviewed discourse.

1.2 Investing in people

“People,” says the World Bank (1989:63), “are both the ends and the means of development.” From this and the development discourse already reviewed, it is clear that we need people to make development come about and we need to make people benefit from the fruits of their involvement in development activities. This is not only a requirement for development; it is the very essence of development.

The recurring themes in this discourse are:

- participation
- freedom of expression
- taking control
- inclusion (as opposed to exclusion)
- equality (as opposed to inequality)
- making choices
- acquiring knowledge
- having access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living.

One concept that summarizes most, if not all, of these themes is **democratization**. Potter (2000:368) defines this concept (democratization) as:

Political change moving in a democratic direction from less accountable to more accountable government, from less competitive (or non-existent) elections to fuller and fairer competitive elections, from severely restricted to better protected civil and political rights, from weak (or non-existent) autonomous associations to more autonomous and more numerous associations in civil society.

In a sense, therefore, democratization provides the environment in which we can meaningfully invest in our people. One thing assumed by both discourses (on democracy and on development) is that the people have the necessary awareness to benefit from the opportunities provided. This is a wrong assumption. There is ample evidence to show that lack of the necessary awareness can make people fail to benefit from development opportunities made available to them. Education is therefore a fundamental aspect of investing in people since it opens the doors to other development activities. It is a way of preparing people to participate more meaningfully in the affairs of their country, including participating in acquiring more knowledge. This is why Unesco (1996:78) stresses the role of education in human development by saying:

One of education's principal functions is therefore that of fitting humanity to take control of its own development. It must enable all people without exception to take their destiny into their own hands so that they can contribute to the progress of the society.

The amazing thing in all this discourse is that it tends to remain quiet on the means of educating people, the means of participating and expressing oneself, the means of making choices, etc.

In other words, the discourses on development and governance tend to ignore the fact that just as it is true that "to say language is to say society", it is also true that to say society is to say language.

The beautiful recommendations made about development and governance mean nothing if they are not related to corresponding policy recommendations on language and communication. In what follows, I will concentrate on language issues.

2.0 Insights and Directions

Can Africa's decline be reversed? The simple answer is yes. It can be and must be. The alternative is too awful to contemplate. But it must happen from within Africa. Like trees, countries cannot be made to grow by being pulled upward from the outside; they must grow from within, from their own roots. But Africa will need sustained and increased external support if it is to meet the challenge without unreasonable hardship.

- The World Bank (1989:194; emphasis added)

The perceptions and concerns regarding the African situation in the last decade, spilling into the 21st century, have been outlined above. They all concern human development and are perceived within an admixture of developmental and governance principles. The main concerns have to do with what is seen as inadequate investment in people and its consequences in the areas of participation, freedom of expression, taking control, inclusion, equality, making choices, acquiring knowledge and having access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. It has been suggested above that such concerns have a direct relationship to language issues. This point will now be addressed more substantively. (1)

Whether we focus on language issues or address a broader scope of development and governance concerns, the key question in Africa's devel-

opment efforts is how to benefit from both internal and external resources in a healthy, synergistic pooling of all the relevant resources. No doubt, too much reliance on external resources fails because it often runs into counterproductive conflicts with African realities. But insistence on exclusively African resources is expensive, generating progress at a pace that is too slow to cope with the rapid development demands of modern Africa. Wisdom, it looks, lies in finding the golden mean: a non-antagonistic combination of indigenous and non-indigenous resources.

The challenge of this lecture is to find such a happy balance of resources in the area of language policy, especially for African countries that have Kenya's sociolinguistic character: an environment in which a number of indigenous languages are spoken by the broad masses, controlled by a small national elite that overtly operates in a non-indigenous ex-colonial language and claims links to the broad masses through a national language in which they (the national elite) and a sizeable proportion of the masses are hardly competent.(2)

The investigations and reflections that informed this discussion were based on the following premises:

- Effective participation in development and governance activities requires a good degree of proficiency in the language of the market and the public platform.
- Freedom of expression can be effectively exercised and enjoyed only when one can address and make sense to the relevant civic audience.
- Citizens can take control of their destiny in matters of development and governance only when they are able to participate effectively in the discourse pertaining to their private and public interests and enterprises.
- Inclusion in matters of development and governance presupposes participation and is curtailed by any discourse limitations that curtail effective participation.

- Equality in opportunity and the enjoyment of services is unrealizable where such opportunities and the provision of services are pegged on language requirements which can be met only by a small minority in a given population. By a slight stretch of imagination the same can be said with regard to making choices, acquiring knowledge, and having access to the resources needed for a descent standard of living.

In general terms, the goal of involving the African masses in development and governance processes and the related activities cannot be achieved through a national communication network (including educational communication) based exclusively on non-indigenous languages.

2.1 National multilingualism: curse or blessing?

Failure to deal conclusively with the language-related problems of Africa is usually attributed to Africa's multilingualism. (3) Attempting to depict the extent of this multilingualism, Heine and Nurse (2000:1) make the following remarks:

Excluding languages introduced over the past two millennia or so... [African languages number] just over 2,000 [which] breaks down into four large philia: Niger-Congo 1,436 languages (including the Bantu family, which itself is often said to have 500 members), AfroAsiac 371, Nilo-Saharan 196 and Khoisan 36.... If we believe this figure of 2,000, then it represents nearly one-third of the world's languages.

These 2000 languages may be said to belong to the approximately 50 countries in the Sub-Saharan region. (4) That gives us a mean distribution of 40 languages per country. However, most of the countries in this region have an uneven share of the languages, ranging from ap-

proximately one language (as in Rwanda and Somalia) to over 400 languages (as in the case of Nigeria).

Numerous development and governance problems related to this multilingualism have been identified in the relevant literature. For example, Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:4) identify four language-based problems, namely (5): (Their use of bullets is retained in the list below.)

- restricted access to knowledge and skills;
- low productivity and ineffective performance in the workplace;
- inadequate political participation by the public, manipulation, discrimination, and exploitation by the ruling powers, national division and conflict;
- linguistic and cultural alienation.

As these writers (*ibid*: 3) point out in an attempt to explain the exact nature of the identified problems:

Language-based problems are not actually language problems...Rather, they are problems in the domains of education, the economy, politics, or social life, but with a clear language component... language plays a central role in their occurrence.

Indeed, the whole idea of language planning as a policy matter belongs not to the restricted domain of language but to the wider field of public policy, dealing with language only as a factor in national development and governance concerns. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998:85) explain this point as follows:

Language planning is usually part of wider social engineering and is used in order to achieve other goals such as political participation or national integration.

As in the classic case of Tanzania, language planning interventions are normally geared towards reducing multilingualism at the national level. This tendency arises from fears that multilingualism and, in general, multiculturalism may lead to civil strife. Unesco (1995:25) acknowledges this fear but proceeds to indicate that the feared consequences of multiculturalism do not follow unavoidably from the existence of cultural plurality.

A country need not contain only one culture. Many countries, perhaps most, are multicultural, multinational, muttiethnic and contain a multiplicity of languages, religions and ways of living. A multicultural country can reap great benefits from its pluralism, but also runs the risk of cultural conflicts. It is here that government policy is important. (Emphasis added.)

The question, which suggests itself immediately, is: what can a government do by way of policy intervention in a multi-cultural country? Unesco's answer (loc.cit.) is as follows:

Governments cannot determine a people's culture; indeed, they are partly determined by it. But they can influence it for better or worse and in so doing affect the path of development.

Since the conflicts attributed to the supposed inability of people to co-exist peacefully in a multi-cultural country are usually attributed more directly to conflicting ethnic rather than language loyalties, it is important to observe that even ethnicity does not necessarily engender conflict. The conflicts usually associated with ethnicity are normally caused by interests that are fundamentally non-ethnic but find ethnicity an easy symbol for triggering such conflicts. Unesco (ibid:73) thus states:

Ethnicity acts as a trigger for violent conflict only when it is mobilized and manipulated to do so. There are many policy approaches

to ethnic diversity, such as constitutional formulas, different types of electoral systems, bills of rights, and economic and cultural policies. Attempts at "nation building" through making all groups homogeneous are neither desirable nor feasible.

As in the general case of multi-culturalism, there is a growing body of consensus that national multi-lingualism, viewed and cultivated as a resource, can be of great use to both the nation and the individual. Fasold (1984:8), after noting the commonly mentioned problems of linguistic pluralism, concedes "In many ways multilingualism can be seen as a resource." He then proceeds to outline the following advantages of multilingualism (pp. 8-9; listing bullets added):

- ... multilingualism can at least be a temporary solution to nationalist-nationalist conflicts in language policy. The use of both a colonial language (for nationalist reasons) and a national language (for nationalist reasons) as official government languages can be one solution to nationalist-nationalist conflicts at that level. (6)
- ... societal multilingualism can contribute to a more dynamic society. A multieθνic society, possibly with concomitant multilingualism, is arguably a richer society than a nation with only one dominant ethnic group. The multiplicity of life-styles and worldviews can make such a nation a more exciting and stimulating place to live.
- At the individual level, multilingualism serves as an interactional resource for the multilingual speaker.

The multilingual nature of African countries gives the majority of them no option but to pursue policies which accommodate multilingualism (or, at least, bilingualism). As concluded by the IDRC survey of languages of instruction in Africa:

Considered together, the African language situation and the corresponding [Language of Instruction] issues ... portray a sociolin-

guistic scenario in which many policymakers may opt for some type of bilingual or multilingual education.

In considering such issues as addressed in the field of education, one must not lose sight of the fact that what is done in the classroom has consequences for life after school. Educational language policy has a direct influence on the opportunities available in life to the products of a given education system. To underline this point, Goldthorpe (1975, 1984:2) says:

...a government's policies about the national language, schooling and the mass media of communication all affect its people's career prospects and cultural life...

2.2 Are African languages equal to the task?

The feeling is often expressed that indigenous African languages are expressionally inadequate to handle the challenges of modern communication. Such are the feelings that lead to the kind of situation bemoaned by Gibbe (2001:64) in relation to the use of Kiswahili in Tanzania:

The number of subjects taught in English as compared to those offered in Kiswahili gives the impression that English is a more favoured, powerful and more prestigious language educationally.

It is instructive to observe what is happening to Kiswahili because it is (excluding Afrikaans) the most privileged indigenous language in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is even more instructive that the situation described is in Tanzania, arguably the most progressive Sub-Saharan African country in the use of an indigenous national language.

In considering the adequacy of indigenous languages for certain functions, it is useful to start by looking more generally at the functions of language in society. Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:2) identify two major “social functions of language”, namely the instrumental and symbolic functions.

In its symbolic function, language serves “as a symbol of identity... like the national flag or the national anthem of a state.” (loc.cit.)

The instrumental function is a cover term for a number of functions in which language is used “as a tool, an instrument...”(loc.cit.)

The various specific instrumental functions include the following (loc.cit.; bullets and colons added in new punctuation):

- the informative function: [for] giving or receiving information or expressing emotion or desires.
- the binding or separating function: as an instrument which people use to group themselves together or to separate themselves from others.
- the participatory function: as an instrument that allows people to participate in activities and enjoy certain privileges.

Although these (and any other) functions of language are universal, each culture determines the precise nature, for example, of the kind of information to be passed and the kind of emotions or desires to be expressed. To the extent that each language does what its culture assigns to it, languages are said to be equal, i.e. equally effective in bearing the functional loads assigned to them by their individual cultures. That, for example, means that just as the French language is adequate for the communicative demands of the French culture so is the Maasai language for the communicative demands of the Maasai culture.

Moreover, each language grows and shrinks with its culture. As a culture grows, it places new communicative demands on its language, and the language expands (for example by introducing new words/expressions) to respond to the new challenges. This is the point made by Obanya (1999:484) when he says:

...a language grows by being used. Using a language for education, for business, for socio-cultural activities, for administration, etc exposes it to challenges. Like human beings, languages also adapt, invent, and innovate to meet new challenges.

However, when the speakers of a language suddenly adopt a foreign culture, partially or completely, their language finds it difficult to respond immediately to the new communicative demands placed on it by the foreign culture. The most natural response strategy for a language in such a situation is to adopt some expressional tools and strategies (words, stylistic devices, etc) from the language of the foreign culture. Unfortunately, some speakers resist this natural tendency, insisting on trying to say everything in the new culture using the expressional tools and strategies of their indigenous language. This attitude is called **purism**. It badly curtails the ability of a language to respond promptly to the challenge of accommodating a foreign culture. As Edwards (1985:27) states:

...the notion of keeping one's language 'pure' and free from taint reveals a profound misunderstanding of the dynamics of all natural languages.

It is the spirit of purism that often makes us feel that our languages are not ready for certain communicative functions.(7) That, for example, is why a Kenyan *jua kali* (informal sector) mechanic repairs a car talking about its parts using nativized English words, e.g. *kabreta* (car-

burettor), while motor mechanics teachers say they cannot teach in local languages because they would have no words for parts such as 'carburettor'.

From what we have seen in the histories of successful languages, an indigenous language can grow and adjust itself to accommodate a new culture alongside a dominant foreign language, which is progressively replaced by the indigenous language. No experience makes this point better than the story of the English language - which, today is the chief predator in the jungle of human languages. By adjusting itself to new communicative challenges through borrowing and various other word-formation processes, English (Anglo-Saxon) survived the cultural onslaught of other languages, e.g. Latin and French, which were for many years the languages of conquering cultures. (cf. Barber, 1999). In a similar manner, the pre-Kiswahil Bantu languages of the East African coast survived the onslaught of Arabic, Spanish, Hindi, Portuguese, etc. What it all means is that, with the appropriate policies put in place, the present developmental stage of indigenous African languages would not be the reason for leaving the African masses out of the processes and activities relating to development and governance in their respective countries.

It is the absence of such policies that leads to the situation graphically depicted by Abrahamsen (2000:347) in the following words:

Power ... is increasingly located outside the political community as conventionally defined by democratic theory, and outside the reach of the democratic control of Africa's citizens.

That is, the non-involvement of the African masses in matters of development and governance is against the spirit of democracy. Moreover, as we have argued in the preceding sections, it is a fundamental contributor to the low levels of human development in Africa. The

point made in this section is that Africa's pluralism (in language, culture and ethnicity) is not necessarily a problem for development and governance. Nor, as we have argued immediately above, is the developmental stage of Africa's indigenous languages.

Just as the right policies can build on our multilingualism to enhance our achievements in development and governance, so can the right policies build on our multi-ethnicity. As Sandbrook (2000:66) tells us:

If socio-economic levels in a plural society are not widely divergent along ethnic/regional/religious lines, the chances of reconciliation are enhanced. Conversely, marked inequalities along communal lines ... arouse suspicions and lower the prospect that democratization will enhance power-sharing and reconciliation.

It is my conviction that, for both language ethnicity, this line of argument is correct. I will now proceed to look at its possible application in actual policy formulation.

2.3 The constitution as a capacity-building instrument

The general conceptual framework within which the language issues discussed here find relevance is that of a capacity-building approach to development (including governance). Citizens are capable of supporting themselves, supporting their public sector and playing all their civic roles if they are empowered to use their individual and collective creative resources. Eade (1997:24) explains this approach to development in the following words:

A capacity-building approach to development involves identifying the constraints that women and men experience in realizing their basic rights, and finding appropriate vehicles through which to strengthen their capacity to overcome the causes of their exclu-

sion and suffering.

As we support our people to raise themselves above the poverty line and to make their will known in civic matters, we must consider the capacities they need to do so. No doubt such capacities include their linguistic resources.

Since a constitutional provision fortifies such capacities, it is important and necessary for our national constitutions to recognise and spell out our language rights. In this regard, one lauds the efforts made by few African constitutions, e.g. the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which give due recognition to the indigenous languages of their countries, including the sign languages of their deaf citizens. For example, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa places provisions on languages among the "founding provisions" (Chapter 1, article 6) together with provisions on "the Republic of South Africa, Supremacy of the Constitution, Citizenship, National Anthem and the National flag."

The following are some of the key provisions on the languages of South Africa as contained in the said constitution (loc. cit.):

Languages

6. (1) The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.
- (2) Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.
- (3) a) The national government and provincial governments may use any particular official languages for the pur-

- poses of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages.
- (b) Municipalities must take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents.
- (4) ... Without detracting from the provisions of subsection (2), all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably.
- (5) A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must;
- (a) promote and create conditions for the development and use of -
 - (i) All official languages;
 - (ii) The Khoi, Nama and San languages; and
 - (iii) Sign language; and
 - (b)

This example is given here not to say that the contained provisions on languages are perfect as a matter of policy, but to demonstrate how a national constitution can be used to fortify acknowledged people's needs and rights in the use of their languages. The actual needs and rights, which are to be fortified by a given national constitution, are identified and defined in relation to the sociolinguistic character and realities of that nation.

In contrast to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, where provisions on languages are placed among the "founding provisions" (op.cit.), the Constitution of Kenya (Revised Edition, 1998/1992) addresses no language issues except in relation to language use in the National Assembly (Chapter III, Part 2, Section 53) and qualification

for election as a member of the National Assembly (Chapter III, Part 2, Section 3(c).

The provision regarding qualification for election as a member of the National Assembly is noteworthy as an example of a provision that discriminates against some communities of a given nation. By requiring that in order to qualify for election as a member of the National Assembly, one must "at the date of his nomination for election" be:

Able to speak and, unless incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause, to read the Swahili and English languages well enough to take an active part in the proceedings of the National Assembly....(Emphasis added)

This provision effectively bars any deaf Kanyan from qualification for election as a member of the National Assembly.

In general, a national constitution must be sensitive to the needs and rights of the people it is designed to serve, and must have provisions which define, cater for, and safeguard those needs and rights. It is in this way that a national constitution serves as an instrument for capacity-building: empowering citizens to participate effectively in the development and governance activities of their country, and to derive the corresponding benefits due to them by virtue of their citizenship.

3.0 Applications and Implications

Our discussion up to this point has two key messages: One, for development and good governance ideas to take root in Africa and benefit from African creativity, the relevant processes and activities must involve the African masses, not merely the elite; two, the goal of involving the African masses in development/governance activities cannot be achieved through a national communication network (including educational communication) based exclusively on non-indigenous languages. Let us take further note of the following facts:

- Modern development relies fundamentally on knowledge and information.
- African countries rely significantly on foreign sources of knowledge and information, especially in the areas of science and technology.
- The knowledge and information comes to Africa through (ex-colonial) international languages which are not indigenous to the African continent and, more importantly, are not the languages of the African masses.

The key question for this section is: How can we apply these ideas in actual policy decisions intended to give the African masses adequate space in development and governance activities.

3.1 Fishman's typology of policy decisions

Whiteley (1971) still remains one of the most insightful publications in the domain of African multilingualism and its relationship to the challenges of nationhood in Africa.

We find in this publication, among other things, Fishman's typology of language policy decisions in developing nations (pp27-56). Three types of decisions are identified as follows:

- Type A decisions
 - taken in situations (countries) where there is "no integrating Great Tradition [sense of a common literary/oral culture] at the national level;
 - base the selection of a national [official] language on nationalism, i.e. "considerations of political integration";
 - adopt an international (ex-colonial) "language of wider communication ... as a permanent national symbol";
 - regard bilingualism as a transitional situation, "leading to adoption of the language of wider communication";
 - et cetera.

- Type B decisions
 - taken in situations where there is "one Great Tradition at the national level";
 - base the selection of a national (official) language on nationalism i.e. "considerations of authenticity";
 - adopt an international (ex-colonial) language of wider communication "for modern functions" as a transitional step towards the use of an indigenous language;
 - regard bilingualism as a transitional situation, leading to "indigenous monolingualism";
 - et cetera.

- Type C decisions
 - taken where there are "several Great Traditions seeking separate sociopolitical recognition";
 - base the selection of a national (official) language on the "need

to compromise between political integration and separate authenticities”;

- adopt an international (ex-colonial) language of wider communication “as a unifying compromise (working language ...)”;
- accommodate “both regional and national bilingualism” as normal features of the citizens’ linguistic behaviour;
- et cetera.

* * * *

As may be seen from the outline given above, the overriding concern of the policymakers in these decision types is with the preservation of the state (nationalism) or the expression of authenticity. Development is not addressed in a direct manner. Unfortunately, our experiences in Somalia and Rwanda have not convinced us that the African state is safe even where there is national monolingualism in an indigenous language (Type B). However, there is no doubt that Type B decisions lead (as we have seen in Somalia and Tanzania) to rapid expansion in literacy and other kinds of mass awareness as long as the state machinery is healthy.

What is distressing is that higher education and high level professionalism have suffered in such countries. Tanzania, for example, has aggressively reintroduced English in its education system.

3.2 Nida and Wonderly’s functional typology

For a perspective that throws light on how languages are used in multilingual situations where an international language of wider communication has been retained, one needs to look at Nida and Wonderly’s(1971) functional typology.

In their discussion of “communication roles of languages in multilingual societies” in Whiteley (1971, pp.57-74), Nida and Wonderly propose three possible functional structures, namely:

- The three-language structure

This involves three language types used as follows:

- an in-group language: for local communication within the members of a sub-national community, such as an ethnic group;
- an out-group language: for inter-group communication involving non-specialized information (messages);
- a language of specialized information: for communication nationally and internationally on subjects that need special knowledge.

This, for example, is the situation in Kenya where English is the language of specialized information; Kiswahili is the out-group language; and various ethnic languages serve as in-group languages for the different ethnic communities. This arrangement badly disadvantages those who are not competent in the language of specialized information, effectively putting them out of meaningful development discourse and participation on a wider scale.

- The two-language structure

Involves two language types as follows:

- an in-group language (as above); and
- a 2nd language that serves both out-group and specialized functions.

This is the situation for many Ugandans who have their in-group languages and English as the 2nd language serving both out-group and specialized functions. This situation drastically weakens the participation of citizens in non-in-group activities if they have neither learnt English nor acquired another in-group language.

- **The one-language structure**

This is the case in powerful monolingual nations such as France and, to a large extent, Great Britain. It is not known to exist in Africa. Where it exists, one language is used in all situations, although there may be differential communicative allocations to various dialects.

3.3 Towards a compromise

The significance of specialized information in development communication (i.e. communication for't be gain To facilitate development discourse in such fields as education, commerce, health, administration, and manufacturing, a community must have some expressional capacity to talk about things that are normally not catered for in light conversational discourse. Indeed, some amount of what would be regarded as technical vocabulary must become part a people's day-to-day communicative competence. Moreover, people must have the conceptual preparation to handle such discourse, so that the pertinent communication may become truly meaningful.

Let us call the kind of conceptual preparation and communicative competence outlined above elopmeneracy. It is not easy, if at all possible, for this kind of literacy to be a widespread national feature if specialized communication is the exclusive function of one language, which requires many years of formal education for a citizen to learn.

Moreover, it is not easy to have such literacy to a significant level if people do not have adequate access and familiarity with a language through which the necessary specialized information is actively and widely disseminated.

This is the paradox of the current African development situation vis-à-vis the English language (and other ex-colonial-cum-international languages). While a reliance on English alone for specialized infor-

mation, and indeed, communication, cannot provide the necessary levels of development literacy to ensure creative mass participation in development activities, a national severance from English and its rapidly increasing body of literature and international community of speakers (users), significantly denies a country the advantages that go with being up-to-date in modern development ideas and skills, not to mention easy access to English-language-based markets and entrepreneurial interactions.

There surely must be a compromise somewhere. The question can no longer be to have or not to have English. With the 21st century trends in globalisation and the central role of English in communication within the emerging global village, no sensible African government can deny its country the advantages of mass participation in development activities. **Where is the compromise?**

Anticipating this question, Nida and Wonderly (1971:67) had this to say:

...if so-called developing nations do not wish to condemn themselves to perpetual dependency and to an ever-increasing lag they must make provision for either: (1) a sufficient number of persons fully educated in a language of specialized information and continually provided with books in such languages, or (2) adequate programmes of translation and publication of such materials in the national language, or (3) even better, a combination of these two approaches.

It is unfortunate that these insightful writers/thinkers did not develop their discussion to give an elaborate model of their "even better" option. The rest of this paper will attempt to shoulder the responsibility of elaborating on and, hopefully, enriching such a model.

3.4 Towards a modified three-language structure

Language policy is worth the efforts it requires and costs it entails only when it is placed in the broad context of national development. In its turn, national development only makes sense when it is designed to improve the welfare of the citizens (see World Bank, 1989). It is people's welfare which justifies the energy put into development activities; and it is people's welfare which justifies costs of development policy research and formulation. **Language policy is not for the welfare of languages; it is for the welfare of people.**

In seeing societal multilingualism as a resource (cf. Fasold's words above), we capture the spirit of "the power of Babel" (cf. Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998). We view multilingualism as a sociolinguistic situation from which we can derive strength rather than weakness. But, of course, there is an if, namely: if we put in place policy provisions which facilitate the realization of such benefits.

African governments must look at the languages spoken by their citizens in terms of how they can be utilized to contribute to the welfare of the citizens. It is in preparing our languages for enhanced gainful utilization that we develop them; paradoxically, so that they may develop us.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in language policy formulation for a multilingual nation is the allocation of functions to the various languages found in the sociolinguistic fabric of such a nation.

To concretize the discussion, let us take the three-and two-language structures discussed by Nida and Wonderly, who did not have the advantage of considering the post-apartheid South African language policy. That policy, providing for as many as eleven official languages,

is too recent for us to judge, although one must acknowledge its inspirational value to current discourse and thought on African language policy possibilities.(cf. Section 2.3 above.)

The common factor in Nida and Wonderly's three-and two-language structures is the presumption that only one language in a multi- or bilingual society can serve as a vehicle of specialized information. It is this presumption, I believe, which forms the basis of the common perception of the relationship between English and indigenous African languages as being essentially antagonistic or adversarial. The basic line of thinking in this regard being that if Africans are to use their indigenous languages for modern specialized communication, then those languages must replace English in its current privileged position. The corollary, of course, is that if English remains a language of specialized information (communication) in Africa (where that applies), then indigenous African languages have no chance of having a similar role in Africa.

I believe that this is a fallacy in language policy theorizing. In the subsequent discussion in this section, I will attempt to demonstrate that a modified view of Nida and Wonderly's three-language structure (and, by extension, of their two-language structure) can lead to a non-antagonistic functional structure between English and our indigenous languages, making it possible for us to benefit equally from the various facets of our multiple linguistic heritage, while creating an opportunity for the African sociolinguistic character to evolve with less traumatic mutations.

It needs to be understood that the three-language structure accommodates any multilingual situation that has an international (usually ex-colonial) language used for specialized communication; an indigenous language used for communication at the national level; and any number of indigenous languages used by various ethnic communities

for group-internal communication. The three-language idea is, therefore, based on the communication possibilities of a single citizen: operating at various levels as (a) a member of an ethnic group, (b) a citizen who interacts in non-specialized discourse situations with fellow citizens of different ethnic backgrounds, and (c) an individual passing or receiving specialized information to other individuals.

In Nida and Wunderly's terminology, the three language types required for the three communicative settings are (a) in-group language, (b) out-group language, and (c) language of specialized information. It is the role of language-type (c) which is made the preserve of (ex-colonial) international languages, which are spoken (used) by only a small national elite - a sociolinguistic phenomenon which denies modern development ideas a chance to spread rapidly among the masses, and denies the masses an opportunity to participate creatively and significantly in development activities, ultimately denying the nation a chance to grow at a rate that can enable it to provide for the needs of its citizens.

To redress this undesirable situation, we need to allow specialized information to be passed and received in all the three language types, at least to the extent required by the public development needs of the country. This may need slight renaming of the language types, especially type (c), and a new allocation of communicative functions.

The following model suggests itself as a working possibility.

- **International language of wider communication**

- an international language of wider communication with a well established tradition of use in passing and receiving specialized information (e.g. English)
- for receiving the latest information on specialized fields
- for active access to the outside world

- for internal expert-to-expert specialized discourse
 - for writing contributions to specialized knowledge intended for international consumption
 - with country-wide official status.
- **Intra-national language of wider communication**
 - an indigenous language serving both national and official functions alongside the international language of wider communication may or may not have some international application (e.g. Kiswahili in eastern Africa)
 - increasingly developed to approach parity with the international language, especially in its capacity to facilitate specialized communication.

The obvious implications of having these two language types and the functions allocated to them are that:

- national level communications should as far as possible be flexibly bilingual, even in educational settings (where service providers may freely choose which of these two languages may be the medium of instruction, with the other being a compulsory subject if the education is below university level); and
 - all language teaching texts should include a wide range of discourse types, including specialized discourse (e.g. in science and technology).
- **Sub-national community language**
 - for ingroup communication
 - for at least four years of elementary education, during which time the 2 languages of wider communication are compulsory subjects
 - for clarifying concepts to pre-secondary-school speakers which ever language of wider communication (LWC) is used for instruction

- for transmitting publicly required forms of specialized information
- for restricted official use (e.g. in local courts)

To sustain and enhance the level of literacy obtained in such a language and give its speakers a useful level of development literacy, the following measures are necessary:

- reading texts in the language should contain as much specialized information as judged manageable on the basis of the readers previous exposure;
- there should be continued literacy education in the language for at least six years;
- as much specialized information as possible/necessary should be translated into the language for general readership;
- there should be programmes on radio and where possible, television where development talk is conducted in the language;
- generally, such a language should be empowered to serve as a conduit for making specialized information flow to the grassroots through radio, newspapers, public meetings, etc.

In general, for the whole national sociolinguistic fabric, a strong culture of language facilitation, including translation and interpreting services should be cultivated, with opportunities for professionalism in the provision of such services.

3.5 What it means for the Deaf of Africa

So far I have been discussing language and African languages in general. In terms of broad principles, what I have suggested should work for both spoken and sign languages.

However, because many people are not familiar with the language

situation among the Deaf, it is necessary to try and interpret what I have suggested so that it becomes clearer how it should apply to the Deaf.

Technically, deaf persons who use the sign language of a particular country simply form a language minority. Thus, for example, Kenyans who use Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) constitute a language minority vis a vis the rest of the community of Kenyans who use spoken languages.

For countries that would adopt a two-language policy, e.g. Rwanda, the deaf citizens could simply be treated as a special group for whom compulsory literacy would have to be in one official spoken language only. Their sign language would replace the second official spoken language.

The more difficult situation would be in a three-language country, e.g. Kenya. In a country of this kind, each hearing person would ideally be trilingual. This trilingualism would involve three spoken languages in the following pattern:

- One international language of wider communication, e.g. English
- One intra-national language of wider communication, e.g. Kiswahili; and
- One sub-national community language.

For a deaf person in this situation, the relevant national sign language (e.g. KSL) would take the place of the community language. But, notice that sign language is also, for the Deaf, an intra-national language of wider communication - linking all the deaf people of a country. Thus, for a deaf person, one language plays two roles: that of a sub-national community language and that of an intra-national language of wider communication. This leaves them with only the international

language of wider communication to learn at school (in addition to their sign language).

An arrangement of this kind places the Deaf in the same situation as native speakers of an intra-national language of wider communication. But there is a difference. For the Deaf the major learning activities in the spoken language would involve reading and writing skills, while the learning activities in their sign language would involve signing (=speaking) and listening skills, where listening is interpreted to mean listening with the eyes.

The ultimate goal of such a policy is to have deaf citizens who are fluent signers in their national sign language and proficient readers and writers in the (spoken) international language of wider communication used in their country.(8)

Needless to emphasize, deaf people in such an enabling environment do need sign-language interpreting services in those situations where they are seeking public services to which they are entitled as citizens. One also hopes that there will be a number of professional sign language interpreters who can be hired by a deaf person on a private arrangement.

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

The key concern of this lecture is the current alienation of the African masses from development and governance activities in their respective countries. I have reviewed the major perceptions and concerns related to this matter. In the review it turned out that what is expected of Africans in the areas of governance and human development activities, is not attainable without a language policy that empowers the masses.

The major policy proposal is that the current development and governance needs of Africa require that international languages of wider communication, such as English and French, be given a place in African countries, but without denying the masses a chance to receive and express the appropriate levels of specialized information in languages in which they feel competent. If language policy is for the good of people, rather than of languages, then policy formulations must make it possible for all citizens to participate creatively and significantly in development and governance discourse as well as in the related processes and activities. The objective of it all is to build our people's capacities for self improvement and for playing their civic roles as effectively as may be desirable in their various countries.

It appears to me that a three-language structure which allows flexible bilingualism at the national level, plus a reasonable degree of specialized information passing and receiving at the grassroots level, can cater for the language-based development and governance needs of an African country which has one dominant indigenous language and a number of community (ethnic) languages.

In such a functional allocation of communicative roles to languages, an international language, such as English, can co-exist with indigenous African languages in a non-antagonistic relationship, where all

the languages serve the development and governance needs of a multilingual nation. In this way societal multilingualism becomes a resource rather than a problem.

Alongside this sociolinguistic thesis I have demonstrated that the policy arrangements suggested here need not engender ethnic animosity. In this regard let me remind ourselves of Unesco's advice on cultural pluralism (Unesco 1995:25):

The basic principle should be fostering respect for all cultures whose values are tolerant of others. Respect goes beyond tolerance and implies a positive attitude to other people and a rejoicing in their culture. Social peace is necessary for human development: in turn it requires that differences between cultures be regarded not as something alien and unacceptable or hateful, but as experiments in ways of living together that contain valuable lessons and information for all.

All in all, there is only one important fact for us to remember: **plurality is the African reality.** Policies that cannot accommodate that fact are unlikely to be of any good to Africa and her people.

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI LIBRARY
P. O. Box 30197
NAIROBI

5.0 Endnotes

1. The insights summarized here have been used in a contribution to the Malawi language policy debate. (cf. Okombo, 2000) The present rendering of the relevant issues and related conclusions is revised in various aspects of form and content.
2. Variations on this theme include, on the one hand cases such as that of Cameroon, where no such national language exists, and those like Tanzania, where there is a high degree of competence in the national language but international market forces militate against the full-scale adoption of the national language in higher education and professional/scientific discourse. For a discussion of the Tanzanian case, see Gibbe (2000).
3. A comprehensive summary of the divergent views will be found in a recent publication on Languages of Instruction in Africa by the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC, 1997).
4. This is a safe assumption because there are enough languages (perhaps more than enough) to cater for the countries in the dominantly Islamic north.
5. The practice of calling such problems 'language problems' has been challenged by these scholars (loc. cit.). In this work, I adopt their expression 'language-based problems', which I find more accurate in referring to societal problems of a non-linguistic nature but attributable to language matters.
6. The dichotomy between 'nationalist' and 'nationalist' interests as used here is equivalent to that between state and national concerns, where the former is associated with government/adminin-

istrative concerns and the latter with the ethno-linguistic/cultural concerns of the nation. For a discussion see Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta(1968).

7. There is, of course, a reverse tendency arising out of a predilection for foreign things - in which some individuals prefer a foreign expression to an existing indigenous one. Realistically, such conflicts should not arise. The availability of an indigenous word alongside an equally attractive foreign one should lead to a case of synonymy in the vocabulary of the borrowing language. A case in point is that of *televisheni* and *runinga* (for television) in Kiswahili. Arguing over which one should be preferred to the other is a waste of time except when editing a text whose producer has an editorial policy regarding the use of indigenous and foreign words.

8. In principle there is no reason why the Deaf should not learn their intra-national language of wider communication and become literate in two languages. The two-language recommendation made here is based on the difficulties African teachers are finding in teaching deaf children to read and write even one spoken language. However, such difficulties are based on the inability of the teachers to sign fluently. When the signing ability of our teachers has improved, it will be reasonably easy for our deaf people to learn two (or more) spoken languages as languages for reading and writing, in addition to their sign language.

Cited Sources

Abrahamsen, Rita. 2000. **Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourses and Good Governance in Africa.** London/New York: Zed Boks.

Allen, Tim and Allan Thomas, eds. 2000. **Poverty and Development into the 21st Century.** The Open University in association with Oxford University Press.

Baker, Colin. 1996. **Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism [2nd Edition].** Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Barber, Charles. 1999. **The English Language: A Historical Introduction.** [Low-Price Edition.]

Constitution of Kenya, The. 1992 (Revised Edition 1998). Nairobi: the Government Printer.

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, The. 1996. As adopted on 8 May 1996 and amended on 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly.

Duranti, Alessandro. 1997. **Linguistic Anthropology.** Cambridge: University Press.

Eade, Debora. 1997. **Capacity-building: An Approach to People-Centered Development.** UK and Ireland: Oxfam.

Edwards, John. 1985. **Language, Society and Identity.** Basil Blackwell in association with Anre Deutsch.

Fairclough, Norman. 1989. **Language and Power.** London and New York: Longman.

- Fasold, Ralph, W. 1984. *The Sociolinguistics of Society*. Basil Blackwell.
- Fishman, Joshua A. 1971. "National Languages and Languages of Wider Communication in the Developing Nations." In Whitely, 1971, pp. 27-56.
- Fishman, Joshua A.; Ferguson, Charles A.; and Das Gupta, J., eds. 1968. *Language Problems of Developing Nations*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Gibbe, A.G. 2000. "Marginalisation of Indigenous Languages in Africa: The example of Tanzania" In G.P. Okoth, ed., pp. 57-76.
- Goldthorpe, J.E. 1975, 1984. *The Sociology of the Third World*. Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press.
- Heine, Bernd and Derek Nurse, eds. 2000. *African languages: An Introduction*. Cambridge: University Press.
- IDRC. 1997. *Language of Instruction: Policy Implications for Education in Africa*. Canada: International Development Research Centre.
- Jandt, Fred E. 2001. *Intercultural Communication [Third Edition]*. Third Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Mazrui, Ali A. and Alamin M. 1998. *The Power of Babel: Language and Governance in the African Experience*. Oxford: James Currey; Nairobi: EAEP; Kampala: Fountain Publishers; Cap Town: David Philip Publishers; Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mtshali, L.P.H.M. 1998. Opening [Address]. In South African Translator's Institute. **Language Facilitation and Development in Southern Africa**. Published by the South African Translator's Institute.

Nida, E.A. and William, L. Wonderly. 1971. "Communication Roles of Languages in Multilingual Societies." In Whiteley, 1971, pp. 57-74.

Obanya, Pai. 1999. **The Dilemma of Education in Africa**. Dakar (Breda): Unesco Regional Office.

Okombo, Okoth. 2000. "Towards a Non-Adversarial Relationship Between English and Indigenous African Languages." Paper presented at the 2nd National Symposium on Language in Malawi. 25-27 October, 2000. Malawi.

Okoth, G.P., ed. 2000. **Africa at the beginning of the 21st century**. Nairobi. University Press.

Potter, David. 2000. "Democratization, 'Good Governance' and Development". In Allen and Thomas (2000), pp. 365-382.

Sandbrook, Richard. 2000. **Closing the Circle: Democratisation and Development in Africa**. Canada. Zeb Books Ltd.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 1981. **Bilingualism or Not: The Education of Minorities**. Multilingual Matters 7.

UNDP. 2000. **Human Development Report 2000**. New York: Oxford University Press.

Unesco. 1995. **Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development**. UNESCO PUBLISHING HOUSE.

Unesco. 1996. Learning: the Treasure Within - Report to Unesco of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. UNESCO PUBLISHING.

Webb, Vic and Kembo-Sure. 2000. "Language as a Problem in Africa." In Vic Webb and Kembo-Sure, eds., African Voices: An Introduction to the Languages and Linguistics of Africa.

Whiteley, W.H., ED. 1971. Language Use and Social Change: Problems of Multilingualism with Special Reference to Eastern. Africa.

World Bank, The. 1989. Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth. Washington, D.C. The World Bank.

World Bank, The. 2000. Can Africa Claim the 21st Century? Washington D.C.

Appendix 1

Summary of University Education and Career Profile (UoN)

Date	Appointment/Course of Study	Department/Faculty
JUNE 1974-JULY 1977	Bachelor of Arts	Arts (Linguistics)
OCTOBER 1977- OCTOBER 1979	Master of Arts	Arts (Linguistics)
1981/82-1985/86	Doctor of Philosophy	Arts (Linguistics)
OCTOBER 1979 (1st appointment)	Tutorial Fellow	Linguistics & African Languages
JULY 1984 (On promotion)	Lecturer	Linguistics & African Languages
JULY 1988 (On promotion)	Senior Lecturer	Linguistics & African Languages
OCTOBER 1988 (On transfer)	Senior Lecturer	Linguistics & Literature (CEES)
OCTOBER 1992 (On promotion)	Associate Professor	Linguistics & Literature
JANUARY 1999 (On promotion)	Professor (Linguistics & Communication Skills)	Linguistics & Literature
1988-APRIL 2000	Chairman	Linguistics & Literature
APRIL 2000-PRESENT	Dean	Faculty of Social Sciences

Appendix 2: 12 Check-points on the Way to this Inaugural Lecture

This inaugural lecture is a significant landmark on a long journey that I started slightly over ten years ago. The concerns addressed here and the thought energy that informs them represent an accumulation of ideas and research conclusions that have been presented at many intellectual and policy discourses over the period of the journey. The following are 12 of the key check-points on that journey. They take the form of seminar and conference presentations where aspects of the present theme have been addressed. Today, most of them have been published in the form of conference/seminar proceedings, journal papers, book chapters and even books. (Presentations that are not in line with today's subject are not represented here.)

1. 'African Languages: Will Sign Language Have Better Luck?' Presented at the East African Sign Language Seminar. Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, 1990.
2. 'Obstacles to the Development of African Sign Languages. Presented at the XI World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf. Tokyo, Japan, 1991.
3. 'Linguistic Aspects of the Second Scramble for Africa.' Presented at the Professors World Peace Academy Conference on The Second Scramble for Africa: Response and Critical Analysis of the Challenges Facing Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa. Nairobi, Kenya, 1992.
4. 'Bilingualism in the Schools for the Deaf.' Presented at the East African Sign Language Seminar. Nairobi, Kenya, 1992.
5. 'Kenyan Sign Language (KSL): Some Attitudinal and Cognitive Issues in the Evolution of a Language Community.' Presented at

the **International Conference on Bilingualism in Education.** Stockholm, Sweden, 1993.

6. 'Organization of Sign Language Interpreter Training and Interpreting Services in Kenya.' Presented at the **Fourth East and Southern African Sign Language Seminar.** Kampala, Uganda, 1994.
7. 'Towards a Future Without Poverty for the Deaf of the Third World: The Sociolinguistics of Social Disadvantage.' Presented at the **XIV World Conference of World Futures Studies Federation.** Nairobi, Kenya, July 1995.
8. 'Languages of Instruction and their Policy Implications for Education in Africa.' A Preliminary Report to Education Ministers at the **Pan-African Seminar on the Problems and Prospects of the Use of African National Languages in Education.** Accra, Ghana, August 1996.
9. 'Strategies for Formulating Language Policies in Africa.' A Keynote Address to the Meeting of Experts at the **Intergovernmental Conference on Linguistic Policies in Africa.** Harare, Zimbabwe, November 1996.
10. 'Towards a Strategy for Changing Attitudes to Indigenous African Languages.' Presented at the **10th World Congress of Comparative Education Societies' Panel on Language Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa: Issues, Constraints and Possibilities.** Cape Town, South Africa, July 1998.
11. 'What Space will African Languages have in the Global Village?' Presented at the **African Languages Society of Southern Africa Conference.** Pretoria, July 1999.

12. 'Towards a Non-Adversarial Relationship Between English and Indigenous African Languages.' Presented at the 2nd National Symposium on Language in Malawi. Centre for Language Studies, Malawi, 2000.



Listener's Notes and Questions

... nobody who has an interest in modern society, and certainly nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language.

- Norman Fairclough [Language and Power]

* * *

The time has come to address the marginalisation of the indigenous languages of Africa. The linguistic disadvantages suffered by Africans who do not speak the so-called powerful languages must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

- L.P.H.M. Mtshali, , South African Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (1998).

* * * * *

... allow me to give special thanks to my deaf friends here at home and all over the world: those in the Deaf Associations of East Africa, those in the Southern African Region, those in Scandinavian countries - especially Sweden, Finland and Denmark-and those in the Secretariat of the World Federation of the Deaf. *To them, my deaf friends of the international community, I dedicate this lecture.*

D. Okoth Okombo, 6 September 2001

