

The Anglophone Francophone Divide in Sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the Potential and Future of Kiswahili

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Abstract

Three European languages are used mainly as official national languages in Sub-Saharan Africa: French, English and Portuguese. Spanish is spoken and used as an official language in Equatorial Guinea only. The language sphere largely depicts an Anglophone Francophone divide. This study therefore explores the place of Kiswahili language in this divide. The study objectives were: to identify and explain the Anglophone and Francophone states, examine the potential, challenges and future of Kiswahili in the states in view of locally and globally changing circumstances; discuss some best practices and gains of Kiswahili language management, underpin the contribution of Kiswahili language to a nation's wellbeing and lastly, assess the interface of Kiswahili language with other knowledge systems. Qualitative methodological approach guided data collection process. Community Development Theory is the study's theoretical framework. This theory focuses on planning and managing policy, projects, programmes and processes relating to sustainable development. Purposive sampling was employed to select a 30% sample of Anglophone and /or Francophone States and their status of Kiswahili. Data was analyzed by coding and content analysis. This study is a bridge for further research and an insight to language decision making challenges in African States.

Key Words: Anglophone, Francophone, Divide, Sub-Saharan Africa

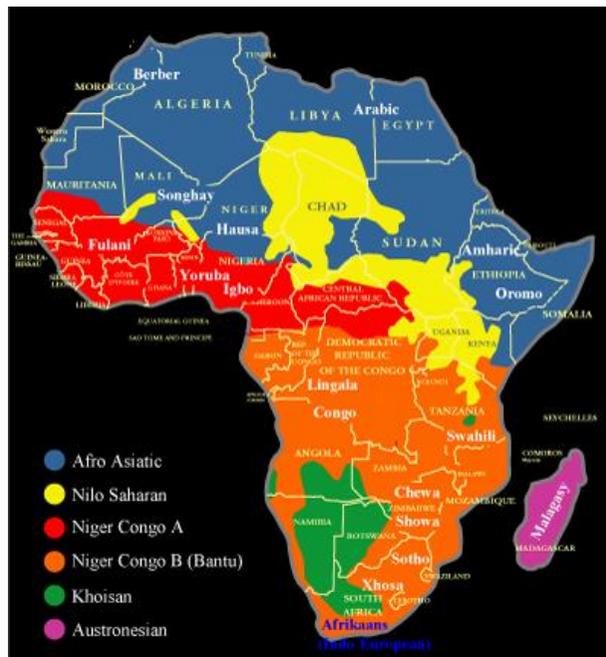
Introduction

Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa

The continent of Africa can broadly be sub divided into two regions namely Sub-Saharan Africa and the 5 Arab states in the Northern part of Africa. These five states are Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The remaining region of the continent of Africa comprising 49 states is the Sub-Saharan Africa. The Sub-Saharan Africa region describes the part of the African continent situated geographically south of the Sahara and therefore according to the definition of the United Nations-49 of the 54 African States. In the Map below, the Dark and lighter green is the Sub-Saharan Africa while grey shows the Arab States in Africa.



The map of Africa below clearly illustrates the Sub-Saharan Nations and the 5 Arab States in Northern part. It also shows the distribution of African language families and some major African languages.



Africa is a continent with a very high linguistic diversity with estimated 1500-2000 African languages. Out of these languages, four main groupings can be distinguished: Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo (Niger Saharan) and Khoisan. Afro-Asiatic comprises approximately 200 languages covering nearly Northern Africa, including the horn of Africa and Central Sahara. Nilo-Saharan

gathers approximately 140 languages with some eleven million speakers scattered in Central and Eastern Africa. The Niger-Congo covers two third of Africa gathering more than 1000 languages with some 200 million speakers. The Bantu languages of Central, Southern and Eastern Africa form a sub-group of the Niger Congo group. Khoisan gathers about 30 languages in western part of Southern Africa. This distribution of African language families is useful pre requisite information in exploring the potential and future of Kiswahili language in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa forms its own climatic zone which is ecologically, culturally and ethnically separated from the northern Africa by the Sahara and the Sahel. A special feature of the region is the enormous linguistic diversity with up to several hundred languages in some states which make trade and communication more difficult. For this reason, supra-regional languages such as Kiswahili in East Africa were developed early on and are still spoken today. Over one billion people live in the 49 states of the Sub-Saharan Africa. The region has the highest population growth in the world which is even expected to double to around two billion by 2050. This development offers great potential especially due to the strong growth of the young working population. It is worth noting that, majority of the young population in the region are not inclined and enslaved by ethnic languages; a situation partly occasioned by the rising inter-ethnic marriages. As a result, the use of a common language such as Swahili rather than ethnic languages for communication among the young population is on the rise.

Anglophone Francophone Sub Saharan Africa

This study focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa by examining the potential and future of Kiswahili language in the broadly Anglophone Francophone Sub Saharan Africa. The map of official national languages in Sub-Saharan Africa replicates pretty closely the map of colonial divisions. Three European languages are particularly common as official national languages in Africa: French, English and Portuguese. They typically remain official languages in the colonies of France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Portugal. The only country in Sub-Saharan Africa where Spanish is spoken and used as an official language is Guinea.

French is still the official language of the former French and Belgian colonies: Mali, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Cote D'ivoire, Togo, Benin, Gabon, Congo, Cameroon, Mauritania, Comoros and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is also a co-official language in Chad, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi and Madagascar.

The Portuguese speaking African Countries (also referred to as Lusophone Africa) consist of 6 African Countries where Portuguese is an official language: Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and the tiny West African country of Guinea Bissau.

The rest of the countries in Sub Saharan Africa use English as the official or co-official languages such as Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone in West Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Namibia in the South. English is also co-official language in the stretch of countries that run from south to north through the east of the continent, including South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan, Eritrea. Note that Cameroon has both English and French as its co-official languages.

The statistics above vividly define Africa as largely divided into English Speaking (Anglophone) and French Speaking (Francophone) states and to a very small percentage, Portuguese speaking states (Lusophone).

Reasons and Rationale for Anglophone Francophone Divide in Sub Saharan

Batibo (2005) notes that it is unfortunate that in most African countries, language planning activities and issues of language policy are not given much attention. Of the 54 countries (including South Sudan) indigenous African languages are recognized as official in only 10 countries, Arabic in 9 and 48 countries have ex-colonial ones as official language distributed as follows: French 21 countries, English 20 countries, Portuguese 6 countries and Spanish 1 country (Bamgbose, 1991). Different from the data provided by Bamgbose (ibid), recent studies show that at least 24 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa list English as one of their official languages. Most recently, Rwanda, long a French-speaking country switched to English as an official language. Burundi and Gabon are switching from French to English and South Sudan is adopting English.

Asya (2012) explains why particularly English and French languages have gained prominence in African states unlike the local languages, in our case Kiswahili. He states that one of the reasons why so many African countries kept a former colonial language as the official language to be used in governments, education and the media is because of Africa's linguistic diversity. In terms of number of languages, Africa is like no other continent. There are well over 2,000 different languages spoken across the continent. Some are spoken by just a few communities and others by millions of Africans. With so many local languages, choosing one or a few to serve the official functions would inevitably discriminate against the others. And selecting the former colonial language, which is perceived as "nobody's own language" allows these countries to avoid some of the ethnic and linguistic quagmires. Little attention has been paid to the examination of the question: "The impact of African language policies on formal education, literacy and development?" Some of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with African languages at state or national level are as follows:

Botswana: Setswana	Kenya: Kiswahili	Malawi: Chichewa
Rwanda: Kinyarwanda	Somalia: Somali	Togo: Ewe
Burundi: Kirundi	Ethiopia: Amharic	Lesotho: Sesotho

Nigeria: Hausa, Yoruba

Seychelles: Sesewa

Swaziland: siSwati

Tanzania: Kiswahili

Zaire: Lingala; Kikongo; Chiluba; Kiswahili

This study perceives and examines the potential and future of Kiswahili as a common language best placed for use by Africans in general across the Sub-Saharan Africa for social, cultural and economic empowerment in the largely Anglophone Francophone Divide Africa. The study argues that African indigenous languages such as Kiswahili demand more developmental attention, more prestige and honor and are capable of carrying more functional load than they are currently entrusted to carry.

Kellman (1971) observed that in most African countries, European Languages alone are used in official functions. These are languages used in official day to day administration for ensuring the smooth functioning of the social and economic systems of a nation. Consequently, many of the indigenous people are ignorant of what happens in government circles and are unable to participate effectively in national life. In many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, owing to inadequate language policies, European languages have usurped such a role. In Nigeria, for instance, her national language is not clear-cut. Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are being groomed for such a role but have not been given commensurate institutional support to make them function effectively in performing the role of a national language. Consequently, English, the colonial language is very much evident in this function. However, it is not effectively performing such a role because it is spoken by a minority elite group only. Owing to the fact that effective language policy has not been formulated in many African countries to execute the function of intercultural or interethnic communication, European languages tend to strongly compete with the indigenous languages in filling the vacuum.

On a world-wide scale, the English language, by virtue of the history surrounding its development in Britain, America and the Third World, it has developed into the International language par excellence and it appears to be fulfilling this role rather well even in African contexts. This scenario has contributed immensely to the enhancement of its status in Africa and in the world in general. For instance, English is the language of education in most African States.

Adegbija (1999a) writes this about Language in Education. The domain of education is, “the most crucial area in which language policy is needed, the most problematic, the most multi-faceted, the most economically involving, sometimes the most politically charged and explosive, and the most pregnant with life-long consequences and implications.”

Decisions on languages of education are, therefore, very consequential because they affect other areas of language functionally. It is with regard to this function that most language policies in Africa have goofed by largely assigning the function of language in education to ex-colonial languages (mainly English and French) at levels beyond primary. African languages have been stigmatized and disapproved in

the educational domain as being incapable of functioning beyond primary or low levels in education. Lack of use of African languages over the years has also meant lack of growth, lack of development and lack of challenges. Attitudes towards African languages in education tend to be generally negative. European language in Africa, mainly English and French have naturally filled this vacuum created by the inadequate use of African languages and the highly positive attitudes towards European languages. This has been at the cost of leaving a majority of Africans educationally impoverished, functionally illiterate and participatory demobilized (Adegbija, 1999).

The Potential and Future of Kiswahili in Sub-Saharan Africa

The potential and future of Kiswahili as a resource for social, cultural and economic empowerment is embedded in its capability to serve as one of the globalized world languages. The dictionary meaning of the term globalize is 'make something become adopted on a global scale'. Below are some reasons that would make Kiswahili the favorable language which has a lot of potential in Sub-Saharan Africa amidst the Anglophone Francophone Divide.

The Potentiality of Kiswahili Language in Sub-Saharan Africa

Kiswahili is spoken by over 100 million people in the world with an indication that it is a language of wider communication in Africa and beyond. As a lingua franca for East Africa since the 19th Century, it has gained recognition beyond its traditional borders (Ashton, 2000). For example, the language has gained popularity beyond East Africa and is being taught at University levels in departments of African languages in Europe, America and Asia. Kiswahili, is widely accepted due to its geographical coverage, history and origin, function, social prestige, use in trade and commerce and use as a symbol of national identity (Kishe, 2004:127)

Kiswahili has been used as a symbol of national identity and a unifying force in East Africa for a long time. Moreover, its use in the education system since colonial times shows a legacy of literacy materials. This means that the school materials were developed in the language and the language is well developed and documented. The language was used as an administrative language in colonial times as well as a medium of communication in education system. It was a communication tool capable of reaching and uniting the members involved in the slave trade and in spreading religions such as Islam and Christianity. Missionaries used Kiswahili in writing religious literature, for example Bibles and Liturgy to educate the people on religious matters. Kiswahili also played a prominent role in the struggle against colonialism in Tanzania (Mkilifi, 1980).

Kiswahili has a highly developed grammar, rich vocabulary and creative literature. It has been used as a written language of art, literature and commerce since the beginning of the 20th Century and as stated above, it was the language of instruction in colonial days in both German and British East Africa. Therefore, if

the Great Lakes Region would seriously consider the adoption of Kiswahili as Potential for economic development and a means of providing an Inter-regional integration in Sub-Saharan Africa, the dissemination of the language would not be an uphill task, as would be the case if another language such as Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Luganda, Kikuyu or any other African language, spoken only in one country was adopted.

Kiswahili plays an important part in education in several African countries, for instance, it is taught as a subject in Primary and Secondary Schools in Uganda and Rwanda. It is a compulsory subject in Kenyan schools and a distinct academic discipline in public and private universities. It is now one of the official languages in Kenya. In Tanzania, Kiswahili is a sole medium of instruction in primary schools, primary teacher training colleges and adult education institutions. Hence, introducing Kiswahili in the other states would not be difficult, since curriculum developers would only need to develop common materials for the entire region. In an addition and significant is the fact that Kiswahili is a Bantu language and like many other languages in the region that are Bantu in nature, it is easy to be learnt by Bantus and teach it to the non-Bantus. Also, Kiswahili can now be learned without major difficulties through computer programs and software, online lessons, online materials and dictionaries such as Kamusi Project, Google in Kiswahili among others.

In the mass media, Kiswahili is very popular in getting news across the globe. It is used in National broadcasts in the Great Lakes region, other African countries for instance Comoro Islands, Ethiopia and the Republic of Congo (Kishe, 2004). It is also recognized by foreign media organizations, such as BBC, which broadcasts radio programmes in Swahili. Voice of America, Radio Moscow, Deutsche Weller, Radio Beijing and Radio India broadcast in Kiswahili amongst other African Languages. This makes Kiswahili an International language and the Great Lakes region can exploit the acquired status of Kiswahili to foster development.

In July 2002, Kiswahili was declared one of the working languages of the African Union. Scholars felt that other languages such as Amharic, Arabic, Fulani or Hausa would have been selected to serve this vital role. However, Kiswahili and Arabic received the highest scores. These two languages are the most widely used lingua francas in Africa today. However, Kiswahili is the most favored as a communicative tool in African forums in Great Lakes region. It is also one of the official languages of East African Community. This recognition places Kiswahili in an advantageous position as a means to regional development and commerce. It stands out as a language of influence politically, economically, socially and competency in the language can deepen business relationships. The Great Lakes region would take advantage of Kiswahili language to sell their inventions and to trade with other African states.

If you are dealing with East Africa in any way, then it is essential you take note of Kiswahili language. Kiswahili is a Bantu language and therefore spoken by many

communities that inhabit the Great Lakes region and other areas of South East Africa including Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Mozambique. It is particularly useful to have knowledge of Kiswahili if you are doing business in Kenya. Kenya is the largest economy in East Africa and Central Africa and has seen remarkable growth in areas such as telecommunications in the last decade.

The Future of Kiswahili in Sub-Saharan Africa

Payne (2014) states that Swahili will become a language associated with IT and Technology, and as a result, arts and culture. As investment continues in IT, infrastructure, mobile and online solutions in countries such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa, the economy will grow. When an economy grows, so do people's spending power, their exposure to information and their inventiveness and creativity. The result will be a flourishing tech-culture scene expressed through Kiswahili.

Knowledge of Swahili will enhance the credibility of researchers interested in Africa. Areas such as big data, social media and digital information are growing and to gain critical insight into Africa, evolving markets that have an understanding of Swahili language will be very important. Payne (ibid) writes:

I could be wrong, but I have seen languages rise from under the radar to become globally important. Ten years ago, nobody would have considered learning Chinese; now it is a crucial global language. Fifteen years ago, my Arabic skills were seen as useless. How about now? Swahili has the same potential to become a global language, and that is why anybody looking to Africa should pay attention to it.

In addition to this extract by Payne (2014), research and studies have shown the immense opportunities that exist in digitizing Africa which is currently sparsely digitized compared to other continents of the globe. These opportunities have merely been tapped. With the advent of the Novel Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID 19), institutions of learning, businesses, those working in offices among others in Africa were caught unawares and unprepared to take their operations online. All these sectors have been re-awakened to the new realities and possibilities that can be achieved on a digital platform. Due to the closure of institutions of learning and many work places due to COVID 19 in a country such as Kenya, the new normal of studying and working online from home predicts an enhanced role for languages such as Kiswahili in the digitization process. The digital platform operations have become the new norm heralding a paradigm shift of doing things even in the Post COVID 19 era. Kiswahili language as a communicative tool has a place in the New Normal.

Inter-African connectedness at this point in time is low. Poor transport connections and infrastructure have thus capped business movements between African countries. However, as investment is made in improving logistics, trading

languages will emerge to aid communication between different people. Kiswahili is well placed to become such a tool.

Lastly, with regard to the future of Kiswahili, Mazrui (1999) states that a common language is paramount in establishing nationhood and subsequent development of such a nation. That we need to acknowledge the fact that all the world's developed countries have developed on the basis of their national languages, as they have adapted and integrated technology within their cultural and social values hence reaching all people in their countries. However, the problem in Africa has been captured by Mazrui (*ibid*) as follows:

...no country has ascended to a first rank technological and economic power by excessive dependence on foreign languages. Japan rose to dazzling Industrial heights by scientific ting the Japanese language and making it the medium of its own industrialization. Can Africa ever take-off technologically if it remains overwhelmingly dependent on European languages for discourse on advanced learning? Can Africa look to the future if it is not adequately sensitive to cultural past? Against this backdrop then, the need to 'scientific ate' African languages cannot be over-emphasized.

The words of Mazrui (*ibid*) in the excerpt, in my view, poses one fundamental question to governments, language experts and planners on the African continent and in the Diaspora. Which is the most widespread African language of communication with less ethnic affiliations that could be scientified in order for the Sub-Saharan Africa and her countries to ascend to a first rank technological and economical power? The rationale behind this one question lies in the fact that, many conflicts between persons or group of persons, communities on the African continent arise because of differences in ethnic or tribal backgrounds and consequently differences in indigenous African language spoken by the warring groups. These conflicts have resulted in ugly massacres of humans, loss and destruction of property as the conflicting groups fight over resources such as land, water, livestock, pasture, minerals, Presidency and leadership in general from their tribe and so on.

The factors stated with regard to the potential and future of Kiswahili in the Sub-Saharan Africa render Kiswahili as a preferred language of regional integration, social, cultural and economic empowerment and also offer insights into an important resource, whose potential is yet to be exploited.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hence put forth for language expertise and planners and all stakeholders in Sub-Saharan Africa and the diaspora.

Recommendations

It is time for Kiswahili to be seen as a factor of identity and unity for Africans. De-tribalization can be part of the process of expanding human capacities to socialize

beyond ethnic loyalties and Kiswahili has a role in broadening the horizons of Africans and enriching their loyalties and allegiances.

Kiswahili can facilitate economic participation in multi-ethnic workplaces and help to promote political participation as a national language of persuasion, bargaining and intrigue. Kiswahili is probably the most eligible single African language in black Africa for transformation into the first indigenous African language for modern science and technology.

The continent of Africa has an advantage over most global continents for having a vast population of young people. Majority of these young generation in a country such as Kenya speak Kiswahili as their first language even if they may be or not competent in their African ethnic languages. This is an indication that Kiswahili is a language of wider communication and it could just be the panacea to frequent tribal conflicts on the African continent which are mainly fueled by ethnicity.

As a result, it may not be long before Africans find the political will to invest in Kiswahili as a test of whether technological advancement is ever possible in Africa without Westernization. Must access to modern science and technology be exclusively through the alien gates of European languages? Can the African masses ever begin to participate in modern science without making it available, at least in part, in an African language? Kiswahili, an African language has the capacity, potentiality and elasticity to assume this role.

Conclusion

This paper argues that Kiswahili is capable and suitable to carry the functional roles in Sub-Saharan Africa that have for a long time been bestowed only on European Languages, particularly English and French.

Besides, Gazemba (2020) in his article asks 'Is Kiswahili the Key to unleashing the full potential of Sub-Saharan Africa?' He further adds that Kiswahili has the potential to forge strong trading ties between the people of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa and to promote cultural cohesion. That, if widely promoted in these regions, the language can single-handedly remove the artificial barriers and boundaries imposed by imperial powers.

Kiswahili has the capacity to unite communities of different ethnic languages and backgrounds. Why? Many countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa have perennially drifted into anarchy and human massacre due to conflicts occasioned by ethnicity. In comparison with other countries in the region, the capacity of Kiswahili language as a uniting factor has been evident in the Republic of Tanzania. BBC News on 14th April, 2020 by Business reporter, Mary-Ann Russon on the subject 'Swahili's Growing Influence outside East Africa' reported on Kiswahili and its role in uniting the Tanzanian large population. Swahili is the National language of Tanzania, which is home to 59.7 million people. There are over a hundred languages spoken in Tanzania but Swahili is spoken by 90% of the nation and is what unites the

country's 130 ethnic groups. Swahili which is known colloquially as "Kiswahili", is now used as the language of administration, and it is also widely used in schools and business. The growing popularity of the language outside Tanzania in the last two decades has largely been catapulted by music which is breaking down cultural barriers across the region.

In 2017, Tanzania became the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to have an African language as the sole language of Instruction in its schools, replacing English. English is widely used in Sub-Saharan African Nations and is seen as being a critical tool for countries to be able to engage with global economy, as well as enabling job opportunities and political development.

Following Tanzania's independence in 1964, children were expected to learn English in primary school and then study Swahili in secondary school. However, the Tanzanian government discovered that Tanzanian children did not seem to benefit from English lessons, and often could not hold conversations in English. Teaching of subjects in English actually led to lower academic performance in those subjects, so the government decided to make Swahili the sole language of instruction.

Russon, the Business reporter, BBC News further notes that there are concerns that using Swahili might not be as helpful in boosting Tanzania's economy as communicating in English would be:

It's something we can aspire to in the future, because I truly believe that when you talk about economic competence, you have to look at market share", Amani Shayo, a project manager at Empower Ltd, a Tanzanian firm specializing in recruitment, outsourcing and training told the BBC.

But in the space, we currently have, most of the companies are multinationals, they operate on a global scale and the means of communication is English.

In order to access new markets both abroad and in Tanzania, Mr. Shayo believes that being able to speak English is still key at the moment.

Besides and of significant mention is that universities around the world have introduced Swahili as a language of study, and South Africa is now bringing the language to its schools. Swahili is also the only African language to have officially been recognized by the African Union, which shows that it is gaining prominence. Swahili has the potential of becoming a common language of business. Hence, there is need to publish more books and prepare more Kiswahili teachers. In so doing Swahili will truly be able to flourish as a common language with the expansion of publishing, education and translation sectors.

This possibility of the Kiswahili language points to its potential, capacity and elasticity in usage as a common language in education, business and for unifying different ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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