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## Disinfecting the African Psyche – Fighting the Psychological Residuum of Linguistic Imperialism

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### Abstract

The Euro-centric tragic trilogy of slave trade, colonialism, and neo-colonialism has left an indelible imprint on the African psyche. Although the physical manifestations of the aforesaid trilogy have now been well documented, what often escapes public estimation is the psychological residuum of colonialism and its neo-colonial slough. It is intriguing to note that, half a century after colonial structures have been dismantled, it is not yet 'uhuru' for African cultures. African states have failed to shake off the vestiges of their colonial encounter. They have continued to blindly sacrifice their dignity, integrity, and identity on the altars of cultural universalism – a vacuous prescription from the west. The western civilisation, itself a by-product of the aforesaid trilogy has stealthily presented as normalised givens, the European languages and cultures to the extent that African nations have neglected their languages with reckless abandon in pursuit of the 'givens', thus becoming willing accomplices of their own victimisation. Arguments in support of the globalisation of European languages are slyly packaged and presented in 'masked' intrinsic nature and the functional utility of these languages which render them superior to African languages (what is). It is the contention of this paper that the most daunting task confronting us Africans is cleansing the post-colonial mindset en route to restoration of African agency, intrinsic tenacity and confidence in appreciating and developing their languages

**Keywords:** Neo-colonialism, Colonialism, Functional Utility, Linguistic Independence, Linguistic Dependence

### Background

Prior to the advent of European socio-economic transactions with Africa, African communities and cultures had largely remained undiluted and distinct. With the coming of Europeans, Africa lost her pristine cultural identity. Celebration for the abolition of the obnoxious human cargo trade was short-lived as one vice was replaced by another. With slave trade having ended in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, normal trade with Africa on a fair basis was largely unprofitable, bearing in mind the geographical and political factors involved, the need for a full scale imperial promenade into Africa seemed the only preferred option. Hard on the heels of the abolition of slave trade was colonialism which all but sealed the fate of African cultures.

The Berlin Conference of 1884 marked the historical watershed event that opened the door to a clash of cultures, traditions and power relations (Wa Thiongo,1987). This historic development forced diametrically opposed cultures to exist side by side, albeit with a lot of attrition as prejudicial tendencies tended to define the nature of this engagement. According to Gondo (2010), in one masterstroke African languages and cultures became secondary and irrelevant. European powers imposed their political authority in an attempt to atomise and dissolve identities of African history (Afolayan, 2002). European sensibilities were celebrated ahead of African cultural concerns that, concomitant with European political domination of Africa, European languages were placed at the apex of the linguistic hierarchy with indigenous languages at the bottom (Phillipson1992.p41). Despite their minority in terms of speakers, their role in administration, education and commerce was raised ahead of local languages. In education, English was elevated to a point where it was regarded as synonymous with education. Proficiency in these European languages was mistaken for intellectual competency (Chiwome and Thondhlana, 1989). It was thus assumed that ignorance of English was *prima facie* evidence of low intelligence. Colonial condescension of African languages relegated African languages to inferiority margins even among their own speakers with the later guilty of complicity, if not wilful surrender. Today it is common to hear some African states referring to themselves, unashamedly, as Anglophone or Francophone implying a deep longing for the colonial system.

With the advent of independence many African countries acquired some limited autonomy and self-determination yet none, except Tanzania, have attempted to institute a deliberate policy for officialising an African language. This, according to Prah (2005) "...attests to the neo-colonial status of the African countries in relation to the metropolitan powers of the world." The foregoing assertion provokes a feeling that African countries can hardly release themselves from the ghost of their colonial experience. African states cannot, under the present circumstances, convince anyone that they are indeed free from their erstwhile colonial masters. They remain leashed to the dictates of their colonisers for definitions of development, direction, and even self. The relationship that subsists between the two is essentially that of the core and the periphery where the former controls and manipulates the latter. One would note that the post-colonial state is indeed a hostage state for it lacks its own essence. In that sense to say Africa is indeed free is to invite a critical interrogation of the genuineness of its independence, culturally, economically, and politically.

### **The Post-Colonial Language Question**

It is boldly stated as fact closed to any dispute, in some quarters, that English and French are the *sine qua non* of development and that a functional proficiency in any one of these languages is a clear gateway to success. The same tradition of thought seems to paddle a covert and implicit assertion that other languages of this world are the diametric opposite of this scenario and the same tradition has convinced enough clientele to purchase its brand. The position is sold out. However, with increasing scholarship on the issue, the position has excited a lot of interest from various professions of concern particularly the Afro-centric fraternity that today the post-colonial language issue has become a source of grand debates. The axle of this contest has to do with the reason the status quo is as it is. The dialectic pits the pragmatic position versus the socio-political

perspective. On one hand, the pragmatic discourse of language focuses on the functional role of language use to technical matters at the exclusion of socio-economic and political issues. Such a school reduces language to a set of grammatical units used for simple communication without attaching any socio-political strings to it. The socio-political perspective, often regarded as too sentimental and wishful, explains the language position from a historical perspective situating the debate in the context of the erstwhile and current power relations subsisting between the coloniser and the colonised as inhibiting the growth and usability of the African languages.

### **A Survey of the Pretexts - 'What is'**

The pragmatic discourse of language use explains the continued use of European languages in most parts of the world, even after independence, in terms of the intrinsic properties of these languages that render them more prepared to handle a number of discourse set-ups ahead of other languages. Phillipson (1992) observes that the reasons normally advanced for the retention of these languages are, *viz*, *what these are* (capacities), *what these have* (resources) and *what they do* (uses). The arguments of the expediency of European languages are generally couched in pseudo linguistic terms of contrast between levels of language modernization between European and African languages. Language modernisation according to Fergusson (1968) cited in Kotey (1977:39) is

the development of inter-translatability with other languages in a range of topics and forms of discourse characteristics of industrialized, secularised and structurally differentiated 'modern' societies.

Covertly imbedded in this view is the conception of modernization as expansion in vocabulary, lexicon of a language and development of new styles and forms of discourse that enable a language to become the equal of other developed languages as media of national and international communication. Proponents of this view would contend that it is not accidental that these European languages are preferable as models of language modernization. They advance (Phillipson, 1992) that these languages are well developed as opposed to African languages which according to Gorman (1974) and Walusumbi (1972) cited in Kotey (1977) are not sufficiently developed or modernised. It seems the pragmatic view believes that the only way to obviate the scenario is to assign the 'prepared' languages the mandate to operate as media of instruction, national and international communication. It does not, however, explain why the African languages are not sufficiently developed. Hold your breath!

Extrapolating the pragmatist argument, the English intrinsic persuasion, as Herbert (1992) and Phillipson (1992) observe, English is considered rich, varied and noble and well adapted for change and is interesting (whatever that means). English, they say, has inherent features that make it easy to acquire. It assimilates borrowed terms, is an intonation rather than a tonal language and has a phonetic rather than a pictorial alphabet. This argument assumes these qualities are 'naturally' denied other languages. It further posits that English is equipped with a rich literature, dictionaries and grammar books as well as trained personnel. Thus it does not need any serious corpus planning. Again this position is axled on *what is*, yet *what is*, is not

necessarily the same as *what ought to be*. That these languages enjoy a privileged position in terms of usability makes the explanation of their socio-political environment inescapable and imperative.

The other argument that is put forward for the retention of European languages is that adopting African languages is highly divisive. If one native language is chosen as an official language ahead of others this would give it undue advantage and provoke resentment by other ethnic groups (Bamgbose, 1992). It is believed that a colonial language is emotionally neutral since it belongs to neither ethnic group and is thus a compromise language. Kotey (1977) states that the same language would forestall potential ethnic conflict and therefore bolster the usually fragile and delicate national unity. In my view what sounds fragile and delicate is the explanations given for such a scenario. It is feared that using a local language as a medium of instruction or for international communication would encourage tribalism. Surprisingly, if not suspiciously, this position fails or deliberately refrains itself from accounting for the reasons the African states would find solace in the neutrality of a foreign language in fostering that delicate unity. The 1980s Zambia is roped in as an anecdotal case of divisiveness of using a local language as an official language. In 1981 the government of Zambia prevented candidates who did not have English to stand for election. This move was ostensibly precipitated by the need to ensure that no particular language would be used as to use such would leave out other regions which did not use that particular language. This argument sounds cogent in the absence of concrete analysis of the source of the problem. The problem is firmly rooted in the Berlin conference (1884) that bundled different autonomous linguistic communities into political entities without due attention to the attendant problems of this set-up. The argument also fails to account for the reason that even some seemingly linguistically homogenous states like Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland English is still used as lingua franca instead of Tswana and Sotho. This kind of argument trivializes the socio-political overtones of the English language. What would make locals begrudge one another and be united by a foreign language begs a convincing response. We will come back to this.

It is further posited that the European languages are employed because of their functional or utilitarian value. These languages are preferable because they lead to national development since they are associated with technology and wider communication (Kotey, 1977). Several countries resort to the use of English because it is internationally used in the scientific, technological and economic domains hence officialising the local languages is hidebound and abjectly parochial, in light of the global trends in international relations. They contend the use of African languages as official languages for international communication would impede the progress of Africa and in turn retard their integration into the global village. Again this position is premised on *what is* the case now without attending to the finer strands of the argument, *why it is* the case. The other unpleasant assumption is that other languages of the world are denied this potential to handle commerce and international relations. Is it so? Prah (2006) rides the opinion that,

...no language is inherently incapable of incorporating modern science and technology...None of the Asian economic dragons of today are developing

on the basis of colonial languages and yet we know too well that only four to five decades ago some of them were colonies like their African counterparts.

Imbedded in this opinion is a rebuttal of the intrinsic argument that treats the European languages as sacrosanctly charged with the responsibility to do what other languages of the world are denied. They tend to forget that these European languages possess these privileged positions courtesy of the brutal imperialist domination of the other cultures of the world and resultantly, linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). Accepting such a European snobbish perception leads to pushing for the globalization of these European languages while localising, if not, asphyxiating African languages.

Flimsy and generally stated arguments are usually advanced for the retention of European languages. As Kotey (1977:41) asserts that the argument advanced is that,

It is undeniable that English, French and Portuguese have established themselves as languages of prestige and upward mobility in many African states.

The World Bank opinion seems inclined to the continued use of colonial languages as practically expedient for dealing with real life issues (Sanou1989, p76). Accentuating the utility of European languages, The Makerere Report cited in Phillipson (1992) portrayed English as a panacea to higher standards of living and better understanding. This argument clearly ignores to explain why and how these languages have firmly 'established' themselves ahead of the local languages choosing to present the argument *what is* instead of *why it is*. It is further accepted as an indisputable truism that African languages are not rich and are deficient of rich expression and fail to ably handle modern technological changes in the complex web of international relations. This obviously smacks of European condescension of the African languages. But why is it like that anyway?

### **The search for *why it is***

One can glean from the above that the arguments for the retention of European languages are premised on *what* these languages are doing or how they are viewed which render them preferable ahead of African languages. Naively acceding to this school of thought without a thorough interrogation of *why it is*, no doubt, leads to self doubt and self-resentment on the speakers of the belittled languages. The correct explanation for *why it is* what it is can be located in the socio-political set-up of Africa vis-à-vis its colonial and post-colonial relationship with the metropolitan powers of the world and the negative externalities accruing to it. Colonialism and its sepulchral monument of neo-colonialism still dictate the post-colonial behaviour of Africa. Africans might have regained territorial independence but, as Adegaju (2008, p16) observes, what is pathetic is that she has lost the empires of the mind. Africa has lost touch with the local

languages – one critical tool in the exploration, understanding and domination of the African world.

Literature is replete with researches and articles that point to the importance of using indigenous languages instead of foreign languages. Mammino (1980, p190), investigating on science and language problem, observes that understanding scientific concepts becomes more laborious when science is learnt in a language different from the mother tongue. It is axiomatic that it is easier and more efficient to teach and learn using one's mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Research has shown that most developed countries use their mother tongue as both media of instruction and official communication. Closer home, throughout Africa, missionary and evangelical efforts were successful largely because the missionaries understood the importance of local languages in preaching their message. They developed literacy in local languages before they could propagate the gospel.

The advantages of using indigenous languages can also be appreciated in developmental issues. It has been stated as a fact cast in iron that language is a crucial for development. Magwa and Mutasa (2007) have indicated that development and language are co-terminus. Language is critical for the transmission of political, commercial and professional communication. Prah (1993) is of the conviction that development initiatives couched in European languages ignore indigenous thought processes and reinforce neo-colonialism. Evidence from research has thrown light on the efficacy of using indigenous languages en route to development. Development in this sense as Okwundishi in Adegaju (2008), puts it should be human-based and uses a language that facilitates access to information for total involvement of the ordinary people. National development should afford indigenous languages pride of place in a variety of set-ups. None of the Asian economic giants like China and Japan achieved economic growth through the use of a European language. Communication is critical for development to take place. According to Fafunwa (1989,p103). "There seems to be a correlation between underdevelopment and the use of a foreign language of a given country in Africa..." The use of a foreign language for developmental purposes tends to scuttle development as it excludes some sections of the nation from contributing to national agenda as they fail to interpret the national vision normally crafted in foreign languages.

While it is undeniably established by research that the use of one's language in almost all areas of engagement is the most preferred of all options, what is begging explanation is why Africans continue to use European languages even long after independence. Guinea, which had been the pacesetter in West Africa in indigenisation of the medium of instruction, abandoned the project with the end of Sekou Toure revolution in 1984 while Burkina Faso tried and gave up between 1979 and 1984. These are only modest efforts that have not been implemented in any part of Africa.

Against all these yawning realities the continued use of European languages seems to run counter to informed logic and warrants further investigation. While the pragmatic discourse of post-colonial language largely places emphasis on *what is*, disconnecting culture from structure,

choosing to focus on the unique grammaticality of European languages, this article is of the persuasion that socio-political and psychological factors largely explain the preference of European languages ahead of African languages. This position largely sees it as an escapist abnegation of responsibility from blame on the part of Europe to disconnect language from its socio-political environment. *What is* is simply a tip of the iceberg; the real point of debate is *why it is*. To unlock this enigma, an assessment and appreciation of the effects of Africa's socio-political relationship with Europe is an obligation this paper cannot be released from.

The economic and political effects of colonialism have become humdrum, if not effortless appreciation even for a layman. What often escape public reception and estimation are the toll effects of colonialism and its cenotaph- neo-colonialism on the African psyche that any behaviour Africa eventually exhibits has a Eurocentric frame of reference. It is now a herculean task to honestly behave African and attain an African centredness particularly in the so called global village. Can there ever be a genuine claim to linguistic and cultural independence?

The European intercourse with Africa has left an indelible imprint on the socio-psychological aspect of many Africans. According to Nabudere, (2003, p1) the inhumanity accorded to the Africans in slave trade was regarded as inferiority on the part of the victim and so it is with colonialism. The colonial slough is evidently in motion to the present day in the form of the *ex post facto* use of European languages in independent Africa. What is not abundantly clear for many is the socio-political residuum populated in a language that the continued use of these European languages can only be done on an excuse of ignorance. According to Afolayan (2002), European powers imposed their political muscle and languages in an attempt to atomise and dissolve African identities. This would facilitate an efficient control over the post colonial experience. The European languages carried with them some socio-political residuum, that is, certain ideologies of domination, into post colonial Africa. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1987) would note that no language is culturally or politically innocent. Afolayan (2002) amplifies this argument farther when he says what makes a language ideological and move from mere grammaticality is the imputation of certain dominant power interests into it grammaticality. Language is therefore not politically innocent. Language and culture are intricate and inextricably related. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1987) seconds the view by saying that language cannot be discussed meaningfully outside the social forces that define human conduct. All languages of this world are conditioned by their socio-political environments.

As is commonplace practice for farmers to rid the land of anything that would eventually impede the envisaged growth of any seed, the European colonisers sought to rack down the cultural pillar of African strength with absolute guile and finality. The first point of assault by European powers before political and economic control was breaking Africa's cultural virginity. African cultures were labelled as backward, barbaric, and unsophisticated compared with the more polished, civilised and modern European cultures. Traditional religious practices were labelled diabolic. All these were supposed to be summarily destroyed and replaced with European practices. Colonialism thus destroyed the African cultural identity – their corporate ego (Hagan, 1989 p10). Once a people's certainty of who they are is destroyed such a people are prone to manipulation,



humiliation and dehumanisation. When a people's culture is molested, that people loses their source of corporate confidence. This leads to self-doubt. Fanon (1952) described this as the depersonalization of Africans by colonialism which injected a "psycho-existential" inferiority complex giving them a deformed and devalued image (Sanou, 1989 p79). This way, they would abandon their cultures. The coloniser's culture was immediately imported to fill the void left by the African cultures. The coloniser's cultural practices were presented as *normalised givens* as Ashraf Jamal (2003) would put it. Jamal refers to normalised given as those European sensibilities, tastes and cultural practices which were considered more polished and refined compared with their African opposites. The net effect of it was that Africans developed an amazing appetite for European languages, cultures and values at a time when the 'masters' never bothered to have anything to do with African cultures beyond mere curiosity (Gondo, 2010).

Unashamedly, Africans embarked on a crusade of ditching their own languages and cultures to a point where distance between one and his / her own culture and proximity to the alien culture was a mark of distinction. Cultural genocide was indirectly served on the African way of life leading to the resentment of anything with an 'African' adjective. In a research by Ndamba (2008,p176) it was found out that parents and school pupils showed higher preference towards the use of English ahead of indigenous languages in Zimbabwe. This is in spite of the fact that the local languages are widely used in everyday social interaction. Picture this, in 1976; South Africans heavily protested the imposition of Bantu education, demanding instead the use of English as an instructional language. Never mind the socio-political environment then, choosing a European language ahead of African languages sounds awkward. Condescending on the African languages meant their eventual underdevelopment. To date, the continued use of European languages engenders the stigmatisation of African languages and casts sad impression that they are naturally inferior and, therefore, unusable in official discourses.

In some African quarters, there is a conviction that the use of European languages, particularly in literature, has a liberating effect. Awoonor (1975) cited in Mazrui (2002) Chinua says that English has the potential of being used for cultural liberation. He thus cites the case of Caliban in *The Tempest* who says that he was taught English in order for him to fight the conquerors. The potential use of European languages as a weapon to fight the colonialists in their cultural turf is commendable. This to some extent holds substance in that there is need to communicate with the enemy at the gate but not in one's backyard. Very few academics have distinguished themselves as that combative in this duel. Allowing oneself to immerse themselves into the European languages and come out intact is to underestimate the socialising role of language and is to strip language of any power to colour one's tastes in the culture of that language. Sometimes the aggregate effects of exposing oneself to a foreign language are not as plain as is often appreciated.

The Europeans assaulted the confidence of the Africans by smearing the malicious falsehood that Africans were an inferior species awaiting the redeeming hand of Europe. There is a tendency to believe that everything foreign or white is better .

To date most African states have adopted European languages and have not been able to extricate themselves from the colonial web that, at present, Europe continues to manage Africa even via remote control. It is not surprising to note that Africa is the only continent in the world in which the language of education is largely exogenous to the society it seeks to serve even in the post-colonial (Djite 2004 in Adegaju (2008). Mandaza (2009) observes this about the post colonial African experience, “ the post colonial state itself essentially a hostage and dependent formation, insecure because of the lack of an anchor class...” lacks its own essence. It is not only a nominal hostage but in everything including the technical and managerial sense. A hostage state has no autonomy to chart its own course but is made to tow the line in tune with the whims of its reality definers. One cannot look at language without referring to the hostage status of Africa. This hostage status puts African states under economic, political and resultantly, cultural siege from the west. How does language become an issue meriting attention, particularly, in understanding the socio-political relationship of the west and its erstwhile colonial partners? Language is the most important aspect that oils the relationship between the core and the periphery in all matters of engagement in the neo-colonial set up. Trade, commerce and development thrive on effective communication of ideas and innovations. The construction of the biblical Tower of Babel depended on language such that when different tongues were released the project was summarily stopped. Language has also been discovered to be a vehicle of culture (Wa Thiongo 1987). Brock-Utne ( 2009) seconds Ngugi Wa Thiongo who says that language is culture expressing itself in sound. An acceptable definition of wealth for Africans is that which puts culture at the centre. The west is cognisant of the futility of letting the Africans return to their languages as this would tremendously weigh down their neo-colonial exploitation machinations

Africa needs to be exorcised from the dependency syndrome. The neo-colonial set up has created extreme African dependency on the west that today Africa cannot do anything without reference to Europe. No wonder even selling one country's minerals needs clearance from the west (Zimbabwe's diamond issue is a case in point). The dependency syndrome further implies that Africa can never be allowed to concentrate on any agenda that seems to break the exploitative umbilical code linking Europe to African resources. It is implicitly designed than accidental that today many African nations do not have any or clearly defined indigenous language policies in spite of the clarity of the imperative to have them. This situation is two-tiered; firstly, many African states have been deprived of the power to order their priorities and choices and these constitute the premise of independent development. It is not surprising that African states have given peripheral attention to the issue of languages even against convincing evidence of the vitality of conscious commitment to uplifting their own languages. Secondly, even if African states had the noble intention of developing and promoting their own languages, extreme poverty and dependency on the west weighs down whatever sovereign decisions adoptable. Some western institutions have loaded it upon themselves to develop their own languages in Africa at the expense of indigenous languages (Phillipson, 1992). The British Council funds the teaching and learning of English in former Anglophone countries while Alliance Française sponsors the same cause in the former Francophone countries. The west's hypocrisy in the development and promotion of languages was exposed against the Tanzanian initiative of

officialising Swahili. In a clear move meant to scuttle and sabotage this effort, the British government embarked on a spirited move to sponsor the teaching of English in Tanzania. By some extension, the argument that African languages are underdeveloped to sufficiently handle the complexities of this civilisation apports blame on the victim instead of the assailant. It becomes apparent that the underdeveloped position of African languages is externally contrived. Although Tanzania buckled to this pressure and reverted to the use of English it was more applaudible than abject surrender to neo-colonialism.

Some policy decisions adopted by some African governments even long after their ascendancy to power consolidate the continued use of European languages. Throughout Africa, the decisive criterion for upward mobility is through attainment of educational qualifications (Sanou, 1989,p90). In Zimbabwe, for instance, English has been entrenched as a gateway to higher institutions of learning as well as to various high paying jobs despite the fact that it has been well demonstrated by research that African languages are more used in the work environment compared to English. Here, a full certificate is one that has English as one of the five or more subjects passed at ordinary level above the fact that all the subjects would have been taught in English. This move is synonymous with the colonial practice of making it mandatory for school pupils to speak in English always at school. Those days it was considered a heinous offence that attracted an opprobrious placard hung on one's neck with pejorative inscriptions on it if one was caught conversing in their first language. The Nziramasanga Commission of 1999, in Zimbabwe, recommended that African languages be considered as equally important in this regard but more than ten years later 'beacons for the road to Damascus' are still out of sight. Government commitment to the recommendation is rather cagey. Is this not some kind of internal colonialism where a system that is supposed to liberate, instead, scuttles the process of liberation?

Although it has been noted that, with a sufficient political will power, African languages can upstage European languages, Africa is faced with a chronic dilemma of competing needs which stifle any ambitious patriotic initiatives pursued. The African crisis, courtesy of neo-colonial plunder, is such that African states have to channel resources to more pressing issues like health, education, agriculture and in some cases civil wars, in most instances externally fomented. Competing against these issues language would not require immediate attention. African states have to remain aligned to the painful reality of retaining European languages against all rationale to do so. In some countries where governments and donor agencies have teamed up to support efforts by the academics in language research some achievements have been noted. Chimhundu (2003) admits that donor efforts have complemented language research and development. The African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) has in consultation with several indigenous languages committees is behind the resurgence of language research work from the 1990s upwards.

The picture so far cast would appear like we arguing for a wholesale jettison of European languages. No. The point intended is that African languages be accorded the right tag as well as appropriate space as well as demystifying the invincibility and the functional utility of the European languages. Let them (European) remain the languages of international communication but as for the other tasks like language of instruction, internal commerce, governance and other

aspects, the indigenous languages are more than equal to the task, given the necessary attention and empowerment

### **A Parting Note**

Against these realities, the continued use of European languages at any rate can never be condoned even at the excuse of ignorance and indeed, here, more than in law, ignorance is no defence. African leaders cannot be released from the obligation of interrogating their independence in the context of post colonialism and in a globalising world, otherwise “no amount of crocodile tears will absolve them from the verdict of history” as Babu (1985, p49) would put it. It is high time we realised that we have carried our subjugation from the days of colonialism to the days of post-colonialism and dependency should never be confused with independence. There can never be any celebration of independence behind the prison walls of neo-colonialism.

A deliberate crusade to highlight and explain the full picture of the African condition against the odds should be an all-stakeholder concern. Government, academics, advocacy and all should awaken to the occasion and be able to sell the message audibly and with all clarity, particularly at a time when most nations are gullibly responding to the global invitation of cultural universalism without an inkling of its implied negative externalities on African cultural identities. This way, no one would escape the need to justify the continued use of the *givens* without questioning the normality of the *normalised givens*. If ignorance were no longer a factor defending the use of foreign languages would Africans continue to use these languages? I doubt.

It is imperative that Africans refocus inwards for intrinsic energy in dealing with African problems and concerns than exposing themselves to the caprices of the so called donor countries. Dependency allows you not to sing your own tune if at all it allows you ever to use your own voice. Implicit in this statement is the fact that there can never be freedom to chart one’s course when one perpetually depends on someone for direction, energy and even speed. Africa should shrug off the temptation to be swayed from patriotic positions in the face of the ‘carrot’, no matter how hungry. Descendents of the Biblical Esau, up to the present will always regret the folly of selling a birth right for cheap portage. When we no longer depend on others for definition of self, we are likely to have the autonomy to use our own languages when and where we want.

The need for deliberate, conscious and predictive language planning and promotion is an imperative. Governments should rise above regional and tribal politics to finance and craft inclusive language policies that take on board voices and views from all indigenous languages on local space. The attention so far apportioned to this cause has been so cursory that language planning has in most countries been a site of bitter tribal squabbles with many local languages competing for recognition. Exclusive language policies create room for resentment but go on to justify the divisiveness of promoting the use of African languages.

Research in, and subsequent development of African languages should not only be encouraged but supported. The current efforts by ALRI and The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Societies (CASAS) in Southern Africa are positive pointers in the development of African

languages and cultures. Rather than viewing indigenous languages as hostile camps, research and deliberate advocacy efforts have attempted to forge commonalities among these languages as a starting point towards encouraging inter-language co-operation. The harmonisation of the Shona/Nyayi languages in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana is a case that has seen the need to realise the common flow of energy subsisting within the several dialects of the same cross-border language. Governments should deliberately encourage and support development and promotion of indigenous languages than leave their development to chance.

### Conclusion

The true and total independence of African cultures requires a revitalisation of the revolutionary spirit of yesterday. Such a move requires a fresh interrogation of the whole concept and conception of independence by Africans themselves. The need for concerted efforts by intellectuals, government, advocacy and other related stakeholders becomes apparent and imperative. Today's battlefield is more psychological than physical. This becomes a logical starting point in the crusade to certify our independence lest we run the risk of enduring in dependence instead of enjoying our independence. Affirming and recognising African languages in a variety of discourse set-ups guarantees their survival as well retrieving them from the destiny of obscurity

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