



COLONIALISM AND POVERTY IN AFRICA: A CASE FOR LINGUISTIC DECOLONIALITY

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Abstract

The research seeks to explore the connections between colonialism, the imposition of foreign language, and poverty in Africa. Language continues to play a very strong role in the development of any society. The continued dominance of colonial languages in education, governance, and other social activities impeded the smooth transfer of learning and technology from one generation to another in Africa. The "colonial subjects" were made to believe that their precious things could be kept safe in Heaven, far away from the ravages of rust and moth, by the "missionaries" while their administrators continued to acquire material wealth. Due to colonization by Western nations, the languages of English, French, and Portuguese were used on the African continent, thus becoming dominant languages for learning. This has resulted in the marginalization of native languages, thereby causing poverty due to a lack of equity. Studies have proved that linguistic imperialism has some detrimental effects. Children are often forced to study in a new language that is completely unfamiliar to them at home, causing a lack of comprehension and high attrition rates. Using the analytical and content analysis methods, the paper argues that Africa should decolonize itself, preserve and promote its development using local languages in educating its citizens.

Keywords: Colonialism, Decoloniality, Poverty, Africa, Development, Language, Education.

Introduction

Although many studies have examined the effects of colonialism on long-term post-colonial developments, little work has been done to measure colonialism's linguistic influence on development. According to Eegunlusi (2017), Africans experienced identity crises and felt inferior to the colonial rulers due to the forced abandonment of their language and culture, which might be considered Africa's difficulties. Africans perceive that the pace of the continent's overall growth has slowed due to the aforementioned claim about Western colonization. Several African scholars argue that poverty on the continent is primarily a result of colonialism in Africa that manifests itself in the misrepresentation of history and culture, and the imposition of foreign languages. The aforementioned claim prompted Ziltener and Kunzler (2013) to argue that the main causes of colonialism's negative economic consequences on the continent are the 'drain of wealth,' expropriation (mostly of land), control over production and commerce, and exploitation of natural resources. Even though colonialism is no longer in place, it has left behind structures that are still very valuable and are still referred to as coloniality by post-colonial scholars. This has continued to harm many African countries' attempts to develop (Adejor & Okpanachi, 2014).

In line with this argument, Enaifoghe (2019) stated with precision that:

The European incursion and the age of the slave trade on the continent are responsible for the underdevelopment problem in Africa. During the slave trade era, Africa was nearly abandoned as the young men and women with the necessary physical attributes were taken to Europe. The young African children who were left behind when their



parents were sold into slavery nearly grew up unaware of their father's real background and without anyone to protect them from learning about it. As a result, the same slave owners who had previously colonized them later brought education and newfound knowledge to them.

The purpose of the colonizer's introduction of their language to the colonies, in my opinion, was to mentally colonize the natives by making them believe that their own culture was inferior and that they should abandon it in favour of the colonizer's superior culture. Mental colonization is harmful because, although the colonizer believes they are assisting the colonized by giving them better beliefs and linguistic dominance, the colonized are frequently unaware that most portions of their mind and language system are being colonized. The aforementioned justifications, mental colonization, comprise "unavoidable influence and involvement of alien mode of thinking, language, and approach to life of indigenous Africans." Otegbulu and Ezeanya (2020) concurred with the above claims when they opined that the African way of life and manner of thinking have been severely impacted by this blind absorption of the foreign way of thinking and expressing itself through foreign languages. Therefore, slavery, colonialism, and the emergence of Western education as the means of studying African history instead of African education remain problematic and a stumbling block to development (Enaifoghe, 2019). Naturally, the African problem of underdevelopment today began with its conquest and failure to use local languages in teaching and learning, which must be rectified or unlearned by employing African languages in the classroom. This is necessary since language is the means of transmitting culture; hence, speaking a foreign language causes one to become culturally isolated. Kaoje and Yusuf (2025) expanded on the impacts of the above situation when they stated that the difficulties Africans have studying disciplines like mathematics, physics, and chemistry, especially when taught in English, are a direct result of the fact that most developed countries, notably China, use their native tongues for instruction and learning. Similar difficulties may have been avoided in our colleges if local languages had been used to teach subjects like computer physics and engineering. Africa has lost its indigenous sciences, which are transmitted and embedded in its languages, which is one of the reasons it is dominated by foreign languages. Given the aforementioned circumstances, decolonizing Africa linguistically is imperative as an effort to liberate it from foreign domination.

The goal of this study is to clarify why colonialism and the language it left behind in Africa should be seen as Africa's main causes of poverty; hence, using local language for instruction and learning is essential to this rebuilding. We contend that Africa will advance if its people are able to communicate and raise their children in all domains in their own tongue.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate how colonial languages have been shaping education and development in Africa
2. To examine how strong European language usage brought about poor developmental strides in Africa
3. To promote linguistic decoloniality using indigenous languages for faster development in Africa

Colonial Activities in Africa

The rise of the Industrial Revolution, which brought about a swift change in the socio-economic transformation and technology of the European countries, was one of several factors that made the colonization of Africa by European powers necessary. Consequently, the need for the European powers, such as the British, to travel outside of the nation in search of more raw materials arose as it became harder or more difficult for agriculture to meet the demand for raw materials needed for the industries. Furthermore, when farm production declined, the problem of producing enough or appropriate food to support the fast-growing urban population emerged. To put it another way, it was



getting more difficult for rural areas in Britain, for example, to provide enough food to sustain the expanding urban population. In a similar vein, Wrigley (1962) revealed that a market was necessary for both the fabrication of raw materials and the production of food to sustain the expanding population; hence, the pace at which technology evolved outpaced population growth, resulting in the rapid development of new products, and Africa's sizable population served as a ready market for these products.

Raw materials and other markets for finished goods were even more crucial to lay the foundation for the new revolutions in the productive sector because colonies were fought over and conquered during the age of imperial expansionism, sometimes known as the period of colonialism in Africa, for political and economic reasons (Mmoneke, 2020). The continent's economic potential astounded Christian missionaries who had travelled through its interior. Additionally, colonialism's effects on the continent are evident due to the multiple political issues that arose from the Afro-western contact, such as the division of Africa's ethnic groups into fragments that are under the jurisdiction of different political kingdoms. The elimination of the concept of self-governance among African inhabitants as a result of colonial authority led to the subjugation of numerous kingdoms and chiefdoms by the colonial power (Kabwe, 2020). The author also asserted that by imposing strategies and ideologies and introducing disparate ideas, the government caused the indigenous people to become outsiders in their own country. This unintentionally led to the mingling of people with different languages and beliefs. In other words, Esi, the main character, is a neo-colonial woman who underwent a violent process of acculturation. The story vividly illustrates how colonialism affected her mind and shaped her desires; as a result, she tries to satisfy her racial desire by examining and revealing the circumstances surrounding women during the colonial era (Okeugo, 2019). Ngohengo (2021) bases her own claim on cultural genocide when she stated thus:

The colonial system, which compelled educators, parents, and students to adopt colonial mindsets, is linked to the prevalence of cultural genocide in Africa's contemporary educational system due to the use of Western languages.

It is implied by Ngohengo that the African people being forced to learn foreign languages resulted in a "cultural genocide." While acknowledging that colonialism had some positive effects in Africa, we disagree with Ngohengo and Enaifoghe that the continent's underdevelopment can be attributed to the European invasion and the slave trade era (Mmoneke, 2020).

While colonialism did have some beneficial effects on the continent, we believe its destructive and disastrous tendencies much exceed any gains made in terms of development. Borocz and Mahua (2016) conclude that colonization initiated two comparatively distinct phases of global structural restructuring. Both could be referred to as the devastation effect and colonial value transfer. To guarantee the transfer of natural resources from the colony to the metropole, the first step included establishing economic, legal, and logistical channels. This is among the explanations given by Enaifoghe (2019) for her lamentation that European colonialists and missionaries misappropriated and denigrated Africa's heritage. According to her, colonial education lacked an organic connection to African culture and, as a result, was unable to promote any significant progress within the African context. Moreover, colonial education was primarily literary in nature; lacking any technological foundation, it was incompatible with actual industrial or physical progress. Due to the inadequate educational foundation that the colonialists placed, the majority of modern African states have low technological bases, which has contributed to their underdevelopment. Colonial education primarily served to prepare labourers who would aid in the exploitation of Africa's abundant resources, such as clerks, interpreters, produce inspectors, craftspeople, etc. The implication is that Africa's industrialization or the advancement of technology within its borders were not the goals of colonial education.



African version of technology served as the foundation for the indigenous educational pattern that was distorted and disarticulated by colonial education. According to Ateklemariam, A. A. (2025), Africans were skilled technologists before they completely embraced colonial education, developing at their own pace with the tools available to them. He further argues that Africans, for instance, were skilled miners, blacksmiths, fabric weavers, sculptors, and carvers. They were able to meet and supply the many African societies' technical needs. Africans had to give up their native technological know-how and education in favour of a curriculum that focused mostly on reading and writing when colonial schooling was introduced. This served as the precursor or basis for the subpar technological foundation that currently exists in African states and has prolonged their underdevelopment. The assertion made by Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) that education cannot meaningfully develop technology if it is not firmly ingrained in a people's culture and environment sums it all. The misguided attempt at the so-called technical transfer, which is more myth than fact, has admirably illustrated this. Moving on, we will now discuss the detrimental impact of foreign language imposition on Africa's progress.

Foreign Language and Colonialism in Africa

Language conveys culture and embodies national beliefs, values, ideas, and oral literature; as a result, a society's language reflects its mythology, history, literature, and ways of seeing the world. In the same way, culture and language are mutually reinforcing, and studying them independently is challenging due to their intimate relationship to the idea of identity (Bazimaki, 2023). Due to colonization, foreign languages have long since become ingrained in African nations. The colonizers worked hard to inculcate this asymmetrical social ideology in their colonial subjects, mostly through the educational system, but it was also continuously reinforced and developed by a variety of other social and linguistic practices. As part of their "divide and rule" strategy, the British backed the most widely spoken languages in their colonies, but this also served to validate European languages as the most esteemed. Tiangco, Pan-Hsing, and Lee, (2024).

The local linguistic context was significantly impacted by these practices. For example, African languages were firmly placed at the bottom of the language hierarchy and were only given auxiliary status at best. This effectively "froze the opportunities for functional development." The European language somewhat slowed the expansion of the existing African vehicular languages, and it also stopped linguistic competition between languages for entry into new sectors. Conversely, the language of the colonizer became essential for everyone hoping to progress in society and engage in public life in the colony, and upwardly mobile individuals soon began to shun the native tongues in favour of the colonial language. A rising number of educated people chose to raise their kids in the colonial language instead of an African language. In their conclusion, Bettina and Isabella (2014) discuss the influence of foreign languages in Africa:

Colonial language policies, when combined with each colonial power's unwillingness to teach its own languages to other colonial powers, "effectively placed a kind of linguistic cordon *sanitaire* around each group of territories, linking them in language, as in trade and finance, with the metropolitan community, and cutting them off from their neighbours." The decline of several languages was also a result of colonial language practices

In light of the fact that language shapes identity and the significance of cultural sovereignty, colonizers typically attempt to communicate their culture through various means. The more traditional kind of colonialism involved forcing non-Western people to learn a foreign language to impose their languages and traditions on them. An excellent example of this process is the disappearance of indigenous languages in America and Africa (Zanon, 2021).



By imposing policies of forced assimilation and integration, colonial rulers suppressed and discouraged thousands of years of language variation and expertise alongside the transfer of local science. According to Muhammed (2011), language is a highway by which a superior nation tries to make a subordinated nation vacant and strange to itself. The author further argues that language is also a colonialist tool and is imposed on conquered nations more than any other matter, and prepares a background and motivation for most of the unwanted problems and quarrels; also, it is a defensive tool for conquered nations to affirm themselves by applying it and keeping their identity. The people of territory which are dominated through language can't think with their own intact language, and they accept dependence to colonialism language, at least to represent and supply their primitive requirements, and this dependence starts from usual matters and little by little change to a part of collective memory. Passive and conquered nations, by accepting hegemonic language in surface layers, occasionally become psychologically ready to think and speak differently from their mother tongue. Separating of mother tongue is a gradual separation of own identity and joining to the other one, not with the intention of glorification, but with the intention of forgetting past and lingual and cultural valuable inheritance. Wolf (2017) believed that the post-colonial elite in the newly independent states, especially in Africa, enthusiastically welcomed this impact, whether knowingly or unconsciously.

The spread of English throughout all continents as a result of British colonial expansion has led to a new understanding of what "English" means: modern English is now understood to be a collection of more or less related national or regional varieties rather than a single monolithic "Standard English." Therefore, the idea of "Englishness" in the plural has thus become established and acknowledged as a legacy of colonialism (Seargent & Pinhlaja, 2023). Next, we shall argue that this historical and linguistic distortion of Africa contributed to the continent's high rate of poverty.

Poverty in Africa

Even with its abundance of natural resources, Africa is home to the largest population of impoverished individuals. 593 million indigenous Africans, or 47 percent, are extremely multidimensionally poor in 48 nations (Ross & Oldiges, 2020: 2). According to the authors, Ethiopia accounts for one in ten Africans and is the second most populous country on the continent, with a population of over 110 million. With more than 200 million citizens, Nigeria accounts for 16% of all Africans. Consequently, 91 million impoverished people living in both countries lack access to essentials, accounting for 15% of the continent's destitute population (Ross & Oldiges, 2020). Additionally, the writers believe that at the regional level:

East Africa has the highest concentration of poverty, accounting for 4 of every 10 percent of the continent's poor citizens. When combined with West Africa, which makes up 33% of the population, this region has 7 of every 10 people who live in poverty, as opposed to North Africa, which is home to only 3% of the continent's poor. The number of indigenous people in Niger increased between 2006 and 2012 from 14 million to roughly 18 million, but sadly, the number of people living in poverty climbed from 13 million to 16 million, with poverty staying extremely high because nine out of ten of them are impoverished.

The fact that all economic activity throughout the colonial effort was focused on meeting the demands of Europe provides evidence of a connection to the current state of poverty in Africa. The inference is that Africa is no longer in control of the type, volume, pace, or direction of her economy. From then on, the agricultural economy persisted, but it was focused on exports. Distribution of



manufactured goods and mineral exploitation emerged as the two key industries. With the exception of a few nations that were fortunate enough to be able to supplement with income from mineral resources, land, labour, and capital were thus diverted from the traditional but primitive economy to the export-oriented sector whose direction was based on the export of single agricultural commodities. Okere (2004) effectively conveys the weight of African modernity by stating that for this reason, the entire map is covered in the detritus of rogue states, failed governments, violent successions, villains and victims, violently suppressed secessions, endless wars, endless rows of wandering refugees with endemic diseases, endemic poverty, hopeless debt burdens, ugly slums with desperate recourse to religion and magic, and substantial youth unemployment. As he continues, he claims that mass graves from long-forgotten yet ongoing civil wars, plagues, child labour, child soldiers, amputees, and mass graves from almost every type of crime against good government are all in Africa. The aforementioned circumstances are linked to colonialism because, according to historical narratives, raw materials and markets for completed commodities were particularly necessary in Europe to lay the groundwork for new economic revolutions that served international rather than domestic objectives. Mmoneke (2020) clarified this position by stating that Christian missionaries had travelled through the interior of Africa before this new desire for raw resources and markets, and they were perplexed by the vast amount of economic potential they found there. As a result, they provided their home governments with insightful situation assessments regarding the commercial fertility of the interior regions of Africa.

It makes sense that a large number of academics have attempted to identify economic exploitation and poverty as fundamental components of colonialism in addition to its purported civilizing goal. Onimode (1988), like other Marxists, contends that post-colonial Africa is impoverished because its "huge wealth has been plundered for the benefit of non-Africans," leading to the continent's underdevelopment. The problem stems from internal flawed "domestic class structures," colonialism, and neocolonialism, as well as external exploitation from a structural and historical perspective. Nkrumah (1966) further stated that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are the source of Africa's troubles. He claimed that colonialism's fragmentation of Africans, westernization of the continent, and resource extraction for Western benefit were the root causes of Africa's current woes. Rodney (1983) agreed with Nkrumah that imperialists deliberately created tensions between nations and tribes, maintained and restored antiquated social relations, and slowed down economic and cultural development in the colonies to facilitate colonial exploitation (Rodney, 1983).

Nexus between the Imposition of Foreign Language and Poverty in Africa

The relationship of language and thinking is starting to receive considerable attention. The 1990s heralded a renaissance of research into the relationship between language and thinking, alias linguistic relativity, basically establishing that speakers of different first languages behave differently on a variety of cognitive tasks such as spatial orientation, classification of objects and perception of colours. Though languages are forever changing. Their differentiation into distinct varieties is driven by the interplay of external sociocultural pressures and internal structural constraints. Whorf (1940) was of the opinion that unless people are of the same linguistic framework, they cannot interpret reality in one way. Consequently, the imposition of foreign categories on the African thought system has, in the words of Wiredu (1995), deformed "indigenous thought structure out of all recognitions." He thus makes an effort to draw a crucial link between the conceptual harm done to African modes of thought and the realities of contemporary Africa, noting that the continent's current cultural crisis of modernity stems from an intellectual anomaly in African experience that results from the continent's general "interplay between an indigenous cultural heritage and a foreign cultural legacy of colonial origin." Building on the aforementioned problem, the nexus between the imposition of foreign language and poverty in Africa is made manifest in the following areas:



Education

Numerous linguists from the educational field have defined code-switching. It is the process by which speakers carry out a speech act while utilizing multiple languages. In the same discourse or exchange, it also refers to the switching between two or more language varieties. Akanbi, Oladayo, and Adewuyi (2015) state that this is a significant issue in the teaching of English and French in Africa. Both teachers and students speak a combination of English and other languages when conversing and passing along knowledge both inside and outside of the classroom. Interference refers to the interaction of two languages that results in a distinct variety. According to Serunjogi (2025), the imposition of a Western-shaped curriculum using a hegemonic alien language is at odds with African learning traditions because the Western approach to education in Africa is at odds with a long-standing tradition in which African children learned community knowledge and history through informal learning with adults in their community. Not to mention the usage of African languages, the emphasis on literacy as the primary component of education has unintentionally contributed to the degradation of indigenous African knowledge systems. The issue stemmed from the adoption of literacy as a fundamental component of formal education in Africa during the period of colonisation. In Africa, the usage of English, French, and Portuguese in the classroom still holds a monopoly on national educational programmes and objectives. According to Ndhlovu (2008:143), there are significant developmental issues with this circumstance:

Languages that are marginalized and remain invisible in the development matrix kill the cumulative wisdoms - political, philosophical, ideological, and knowledge about effectively surviving on Earth. Every ethnolinguistic republic is distinct from the others and has a different history.

Human development in the impacted society may be negatively affected by forcing individuals to speak a language that is not consistent with their cultural norms. Akinwale (2011) claims that from the 19th century, English, French, and Portuguese have been encouraged throughout Africa due to the adoption of Christianity and Western education. Additionally, North Africa and certain regions of sub-Saharan Africa have shown a strong embrace of Islam and Arab civilization. The media used for governance, commerce, and the spread of African cultures is overshadowed by these languages. Voter education campaigns and election procedures are primarily carried out in the aforementioned *lingua franca* as well as a few other African languages in the majority of African nations. This circumstance exacerbates the language barrier and keeps a large number of Africans out of political processes. Because Africans tend to associate languages with wealth and power, knowing a *lingua franca* is essential for social mobility, particularly when pursuing higher education and employment prospects. Speaking and writing in the same language as the majority of people on a continent turned literacy into a source of power. Above all, colonialism has had a significant impact on Africa in several ways. Okon (2014) asserts that various languages were imposed as official languages on African nation-states throughout colonialism, including English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch. Africa was still having trouble acclimating to these official colonial tongues when Islam came. The Catholic Order's Euro-Christianity, which mandated that all of its members and leaders use Latin, the language of God, in church services and in their education, contributed to the language barriers in addition to Islam. Regarding the connection between foreign language imposition and poverty in Africa, Walsh (2006: 130) emphasized the detrimental effects of linguistic variety on the economy and made the following arguments:

Plans for economic, agricultural, and industrial development are more difficult to design and implement anywhere the language of the government and the legislation differs from that of the majority of the population. This is because language barriers



impede basic research in these areas. Thus, linguistic variety stands in the way of economic advancement.

Drawing from the aforementioned reasoning, we concur with Zehlia and Mchombo (2016) that education theories and practices across the globe have been shaped by the Western understanding of education. This is demonstrated by the Western educational system, which runs counter to a long-standing (African) tradition in which children learn history and community knowledge through informal learning with adults in their community. When languages are marginalized and remain invisible in the development matrix, accumulated wisdom—wisdom about politics, philosophy, or ideology, navigating life on Earth—dies. African learning practices are therefore at odds with the imposition of a Western-shaped curriculum utilizing a hegemonic alien language, which presents a barrier to African growth.

Culture and Human Development

Every ethnolinguistic republic is distinct from the others and has a different history. Every African community is distinct due to its interactions with the environment; it has its own language, wisdom, concepts, and knowledge systems, and it has the power to improve the socioeconomic status of the entire world. Akinwale (2011) emphasised, in *Language Barrier as the Bane of Development*, the connection between poverty and the colonial imposition of foreign languages in Africa when he said that a language cannot be revived once it dies and, as a result, there is less evidence supporting our understanding of the structure, patterns, and functions of human language as well as the brain's processing of it to support learning. This failure to convey language to children, according to him, eventually results in a systematic decline in the number of new speakers, with dominant languages supplanting the weaker ones from engaging actively in social, educational, and economic activities. In line with the aforementioned claim, Okon (2014) concluded that the imposition of foreign languages was an additional factor that contributed to the multidimensional linguistic issues in Africa, which in turn affected other parts of African life, by dividing rather than unifying people. He used Islam as an example, which came to Africa when the continent was still having trouble adjusting to these official colonial languages. Those who supported it and its heroes lacked the political clout to make it happen. He maintained that because prayers and other liturgical rituals were "divinely" mandated to be performed in Arabic, the Arabic-written Koran intervened to intensify linguistic and cultural issues while simultaneously escalating divisive political issues. Apart from Islam, the Euro-Christianity of the Catholic order also contributed to the linguistic confusion, as all its adherents and protagonists were required, both in church worship and educational training to use Latin as the God-ordained language for any sacred exercise. Even though colonialism was eventually eradicated from the continent, its influence on African thought patterns, worldviews, identities, languages, and histories continues to be felt today because people living across the borders cannot effectively do business with one another because of different languages imposed by various colonial masters. Africans had a mechanism for establishing traditional societies and for understanding, passing down, and protecting reality before colonialism ever began. All of these were ignored, nevertheless, because colonization created a peculiar and difficult situation. Due to their inability to think and behave in a language that really reflected their reality, African indigenes found it very hard to develop their skills as a result of their cultural and linguistic estrangement; consequently, linguistic decolonization is required. The aforementioned problem shows how African development challenges have been exacerbated by the appropriation of African languages and misunderstandings of our traditions. Regarding the previously said, Wurm (2001: 13) cautions:

Each language reflects a unique world-view and culture complex, mirroring the manner in which a speech community has resolved its problems in dealing with the world, and has formulated its thinking, its system of philosophy and understanding of



the world around it. In this, each language is the means of expression of the intangible cultural heritage of peoples, and it remains a reflection of this culture for some time even after the culture which underlies it decays and crumbles ... However, with the death and disappearance of such a language, an irreplaceable unit in our knowledge and under.

Still on the aforementioned view, Wiredu (1995) corroborated Wurm's argument by stating that the superimposition of alien categories on African thought system has distorted “indigenous thought structure out of all recognitions.” Thus, he attempts to establish an important connection between the conceptual damage to the African mode of thought and contemporary African realities and observes that the current cultural crisis of modernity in Africa derives from a certain intellectual anomaly in contemporary African experience which arises from the general “interplay between an indigenous cultural heritage and a foreign cultural legacy of colonial origin.” Human development is concerned with how people interact and work together in communities in addition to how they are as individuals. The establishment of a dominant language is described as a crucial component of a culturally oppressive kind of development in the 1996 World Report, which eradicates other cultures and languages in the name of nation-building (Tucker, 1997). Tucker has proposed a link between a culturally different group's socioeconomic development and its unique cultural identity. According to him, when a people lose their identity, they lose their ability to make decisions for themselves; instead, they become subject peoples whose past, present, and future are all created by others, and whose goals, aspirations, values, and meanings are all provided by others. The aforementioned reasoning makes it evident that when people's languages are corrupted, as in the case of Africa, meaningful growth is also impacted because it causes disarray in people's thoughts, meanings in life, scientific change, and generational transmission.

Economy

In an increasingly global and networked economy, companies have a wider market at their disposal but also a number of barriers they have to overcome in order to expand their business internationally. When the decision of trading with another country is made, one of the key issues companies have to deal with is language: language barriers can hinder trade, while language similarities can boost it due to the weight of communication costs. The economics of language is an interdisciplinary field of study that aims to bring together reflections on the role of language in the economy and conversely on how the economy affects language choices.

Since the classic work of Marschak (1965), there has been a growing consensus within economics that language is an important determinant of economic activity. How does language diversity affect trade patterns and economic welfare? It is believed that widespread knowledge of a common language increases efficiency as it allows for the discovery of preferences and lowers transaction costs associated with communication. It therefore helps establish trade between populations and improves welfare. The implication is that the imposition of language in Africa affects the redistribution of goods and services, hinders growth, or hampers a country's level of development. Others claim that standardizing languages may result in the disenfranchisement of linguistic groups within a country, restricting their linguistic rights and potentially causing social and economic damages. Domestic policies governing language throughout the world ought to consider these competing issues because they can have significant economic consequences domestically as well as far beyond their own borders (Gurevitch *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, a change in domestic linguistic similarity simultaneously affects both internal and international trade negatively.

A Case for Linguistic Decoloniality in Africa

The criticism of linguistic decoloniality and the approach of trying to teach children in post-colonial nations in a foreign language is not new, claims McKinney (2020). However, this kind of criticism



is typically framed by the argument over whether teaching in one's own tongue is preferable to teaching in a foreign language or English. In a world where multilingualism is the norm and everyday language practices are heteroglossia, continually breaching socially imposed "language" borders, this debate that opposes one clearly defined language against another is not productive. Since 1953, UNESCO has promoted mother tongue instruction for all children as a fundamental prerequisite for high-quality education, with the admirable objective of ensuring access to high-quality education. In order to combat language shift, endangerment, extinction, and death, language decolonizers make use of social, ideological, and pragmatic principles as well as documentary methodologies. Language decolonization is the process by which states and society use nationalist interventions, initiatives, and action plans to reclaim the languages and identities that linguistic imperialism has suppressed. They employ a variety of strategies and resources to preserve and revitalize the language. These include language documentation and preservation, media, particularly radio, linguistic plurality, literacy and knowledge of language death, and educational curricula. By replacing the functions of their language with those of the dominant and colonial languages, linguistic inequality, manipulation, repression, and cultural oppression are addressed through language decolonization, documentary projects, and interventions.

Language is power, and those who control language or discourse channels hold power as well. With this in mind, it is not surprising that Nigerians, along with other Africans ensnared by the corrosive tendrils of neocolonialism, are unintentionally bestowing upon their children the dishonourable garland of mother tongue disability. The hopeful predictions about the realistic chances of removing the oppressive manacles of neocolonialism through the agency and instrumentality of indigenous languages in Africa indicate the need to institutionalize an efficient mother tongue-based education system. A purposeful language policy should be implemented with the goal of revitalizing the native tongues that had previously been marginalized by the dominant foreign tongues and giving them access to political and socioeconomic resources that were previously reserved for the languages of the former colonial rulers.

It has been demonstrated, according to Agbedo, Krisagbedo, and Eze (2012), that learners develop their ability to think, communicate, and gain an intuitive grasp of grammar when they use their mother tongue. They believed that because mother tongue language awakens the capacity for universal grammar that exists inside all normal human beings, it opens the door not only to its own grammar but to all grammars. Proper language-in-education regulations that allow teachers to teach in a language that a child speaks most of the time at home and comprehends enough to internalize the academic material promote students' critical engagement with the material, create a cooperative learning environment, and increase inclusivity. According to the authors, students who comprehend the language used to instruct them are more likely to ask questions, participate meaningfully in the material, and even look forward to taking on new challenges. Accordingly, Bodomo (1996) draws the conclusion that science and math topics taught in the home tongue would be easier to understand than those taught in a foreign language. Because language is a receptacle, a granary of the indigenous knowledge systems of the community, using the mother tongue here will help the youngsters, future leaders of the community, to adequately grasp the belief and knowledge systems of the culture.

Conclusion

Numerous theories have been proposed regarding the underlying causes of poverty in Africa. Some scholars believe that poverty and its associated issues in Africa are self-inflicted, while others believe that colonialism and the West are to blame. However, as language transports culture and reflects national ideas, values, and oral traditions, we arrived at the conclusion that Africa's inability to develop and retain its identity is mostly due to the imposition of alien languages. We call for the



decolonization of Africa via the resurgence of the use of native languages in instruction and learning centers around this circumstance.

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