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Thème:

Advocating for Alternative National Language Policies in Africa

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Pour une politique alternative d'insertion des langues nationales dans les systèmes d'éducation en Afrique

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SUMMARY

National Language Policies in Africa, whatever the past colonial experience, have not been very far, in terms of the insertion of indigenous languages in the education systems. The difficulty to do so first derived from "the original sins" of early African leaders, who felt compelled to institutionalise foreign languages as "official languages".

The underlying reasons for such an underachievement range from the multilingual profile of the African linguistic landscape and the fast-changing nature of this linguistic landscape, due to the dynamics inherent to the linguistic ecosystem phenomenon. The implementation of national language policies in formal education systems is further complicated with the eligibility of an excessive number of speech forms as media of instruction, whilst language research resources have remained scanty.

This paper suggests turning to regional lingua francas that have the advantage of being already utilised across entire African regions as an alternative, leaving African linguists to league around those transnational lingua francas simply, and equip them with sound orthographies and technical terminology.

Key words:

Language Policies (NLPs) - Education - medium of Instruction (MoI) - Language ecosystem – Literacy – Indigenous languages - (Colonial) Official languages - Transnational lingua francas

RESUME

Les pays africains, quelque que soit leur histoire coloniale, ont réalisé très peu de progrès en matière d'intégration des langues nationales, comme langues d'enseignement, dans les systèmes d'éducation formelle. La difficulté remonte au « péché originel » des premiers dirigeants africains qui, aux indépendances, ont cru devoir institutionnaliser les langues coloniales comme « langues officielles ».

L'insertion des langues nationales dans le système scolaire est rendue difficile dans un contexte caractérisé par la modification rapide du paysage linguistique africain qui subit par ailleurs les effets de l'écosystème linguistique. La tâche est rendue encore plus ardue puisque, contre un nombre excessif de langues nationales préposées à devenir des langues d'enseignement, on ne dispose pas de ressources humaines suffisantes pour la recherche linguistique.

Une solution alternative consisterait à se tourner vers les lingua francas transnationales qui ont l'avantage, non seulement d'être déjà utilisées par la majorité des africains, mais qui s'intègrent progressivement déjà dans les domaines des sciences, des technologies de l'information et de la communication. Il ne restera donc plus aux linguistes africains qu'à fédérer leurs efforts pour doter ces linga francas régionales de systèmes d'orthographe et de les enrichir en vocabulaire technique.

Mots clef :

Politiques linguistiques - Education - Langue d'enseignement - Ecosystème linguistique - Alphabétisme - Langues locales - Langue (coloniale) officielle - Lingua franca transnationale

INTRODUCTION

Over 60 years after independence, African National Language Policies have generally failed to translate into consistently efficient actions, in terms of integrating indigenous languages in the formal education systems. This is not necessarily due to the lack of "political will" as is often believed and said; in this particular instance, the underachievement derives from a poor assessment of the general African linguistic landscape, a landscape that quickly evolves, and in an unpredictable manner due to the deterministic effects of the language ecosystem.

This paper aims to reviewing the major attempts to utilise indigenous languages as media of instruction, before suggesting an alternative language policy that would be in line with the current African linguistic landscape. It unfolds over three sections: (1) a brief overview of the general trends of National Language Policies, (2) a critical analysis of the dynamics of the current linguistic landscape, and (3) advocacy for turning to transnational or regional lingua francas as the most cost-effective option to disseminate literacy skills across Africa for a rapid spread of the much-needed literacy.

1. GENERAL TRENDS IN AFRICAN NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICIES

1.1 Media of instruction in pre-independence education

National Language Policies can be assessed by various indicators among which, the place of indigenous languages in national life in general, more specifically, their role in formal education. The content of National Language Policies, along with the roles devoted to indigenous languages today, appear to be the consequences of two factors: the original imposition of colonial languages as "official languages", and the dynamics of the language ecosystem.

Colonial practices regarding indigenous language policies prove different depending on the colonial zone of influence. Whilst the British, in the context of their *indirect rule* proved more tolerating to African languages to the point of even considering that the use of local languages represented the best option "to make Africans, a better African" best African" (Prah 2000: 61) and for the success of the evangelisation missions[1], the French colonial agenda based on their *assimilation rule* resorted to all sorts of tricks to maintain the colonised as "French subjects", completely cleaned off of any indigenous cultural intake, and doggedly collaborative as prospective neo-colonial agents. By some sort of logical implication, the French Catholic clergy led its evangelisation mission in the French language essentially, with the consequence of having attained comparatively more mitigated results[2]. In any case, the French cultural brainwashing was so efficient that some high profile African leaders like Senghor (1986: 170) had come to believe in a "congenital" superiority of the French language for science and technology, over African languages that, so he believed were just good for arts (poetry, music and dance). Under such circumstances, both colonial systems though, resorting to local languages as media of instruction was not perceived as a crucial issue.

Today, there is no African nation using a native language as the unique official language. Still, there was an unquestionably objective constraint as we compare the situation of African states to that of some Asian nations. Whilst in Asian nations (like Korea) indigenous languages were in use and were already equipped with writing systems ling before the colonial encounter, in African nations, basically no indigenous language was written with the exception of some isolated successful attempts like the Vaï scripts that had gone as far as attaining the syllabic level (Scribner and Cole: 1981) and the scripts in Somalia and Ethiopia[3]. As a result, basically a desperately limited number of African languages could have the least

chance of being promoted as the official language and this applies to those African nations that naturally enjoy a remarkable linguistic homogeneity[4].

We would all agree that whatever the nationalist devotion of the then African leaders, they were bound to resort to colonial languages for the simple reason that it was and it is objectively impossible to conduct national affairs (administration, educative, parliamentary tasks, etc.) in languages that lack any writing system. Indeed, the insertion of languages is modern life necessitates long-standing and devoted linguistic research that understandably require time and financial input. To be fair, one must not blame the "original sin" on early African leaders concerning the preference given to colonial languages as official languages: the sheer lack of a writing tradition in African languages derives from historically remote factors for which early African leaders cannot be held responsible.

1.2 The issue of indigenous languages as media of instruction: between politics and purely educational concerns

Whilst politics is the complex of strategies that often resorts to more of less orthodox tricks either to have access to or maintain power, the implementation of an education policy is a purely technical matter that does not call for scabrous tactics. Still, pragmatism shows that politics and education necessarily intersect, first because the policy is normally the translation into education curricula of prevailing ideologies. In effect, declaring a foreign language "the official language" amounts to saying that this language is "the language the State speaks and understands" and this is indisputably a political decision, since such a decision is always ascribed in the Constitution. But the overlap of politics and education affects the issue of the medium of instruction to the roots so that, once a foreign language is declared official, that language is put in a privileged position, causing the linguistic competition to being unfairly in favour of this foreign language, at the expense of indigenous languages.
Considering the chronic persistence of illiteracy decades after independence, the 1965 UNESCO Conference of Teheran clearly identified the resort to non-indigenous languages as the major cause of underachievement in (informal and formal) education. Therefore, UNESCO asked member countries, especially African countries, to turn to indigenous languages as media of instruction, as much as they could. This education policy was to be implemented in the form of functional literacy, as a way of empowering the workforce. In the context of formal education, the resort to indigenous languages was expected to curb down the rates of school dropouts and class repetitions as well.

Regarding adult literacy, the utilisation of indigenous languages did bring about significantly encouraging results, namely with projects like the ones implemented in the mid-1980s by the *Institut de Linguistique Appliquée* (ILA)[5] in Côte d'Ivoire (Silué 2000: 143).[6] By contrast, the utilisation of indigenous languages in the school system proved more erratic. A survey conducted in September-October 2012 (Silué 2012) shows that African nations are at extremely varied levels. The most advanced nations in the utilisation of local languages in the school systems are former British colonies. Those nations have managed to set up clearer projects to cover the primary level with indigenous languages as media of instruction, and made provisions to turn them into school subjects at subsequent levels of the national curriculum. By contrast, in the former French colonies, even when a nationwide indigenous language is available, the pervasive influence of the *assimilation rule* generally hinders any serious attempt at implementing any serious national language policy around indigenous languages. By and large, even though African scholars have stubbornly kept on urging politicians to institutionalise indigenous languages as media of instruction, as critical input to

achieving culturally motivated development strategies likely to guarantee sustainability, their actual insertion in African education systems has yet to become a reality.

Other underlying reasons for the rather timid use of indigenous languages as media of instruction are more technical. African educational authorities that concede some commitment in favour of indigenous languages in education stumble on the practical constraints: (a) few indigenous languages are equipped with acceptable writing systems, (b) there is still confusion between phonetic transcriptions and orthographically transversal scripts and (c) indigenous languages have yet to be modernised through lexical enrichment[7].

In a great number of countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, only a few textbooks exist for kindergarten, which display illustrative drawings more than written language. No one can deny that in the absence of scientific and technical terminology, resorting to indigenous languages as media of instruction remains a difficult task. In any country where teachers find themselves obliged to resort to indigenous languages, like in South African rural provinces (Makalela 2009) and Madagascar (Prah and Capo 2011), the lack of any consistent scientific and technical terminologies forces them to code-switch or code-mix, a pedagogical practice that impacts negatively on the learners' performances.

So, the implementation of sound national language policies in African education systems requires a new assessment of the general linguistic landscape on the continent, a linguistic landscape that has considerably evolved due to the dynamics of general social change and the impact of globalisation (i.e.; the influence of the language ecosystem).

2. THE DYNAMICS OF THE AFRICAN LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE AND THE CHALLENGE FOR INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AS MEDIA OF INSTRUCTION

2.1 The post-colonial African linguistic landscape

The issue of linguistic diversity on the African continent has been the subject of many discussions. High profile academics like Prah (2009) and Bamgbose (1985) have desperately been arguing that the so-called linguistic diversity is overstated. The fact is that the term "linguistic diversity" for European researchers may hide ulterior motives, causing Djité (2008: 46) to make the point that "language classification [in Africa] is more telling about the classifiers than the [languages] classified"! The term "linguistic diversity" seems only to apply and describe the linguistic situation in Africa, whilst the same phenomenon is termed "multilingualism" when referring to European communities. The pre and post-colonial African landscape have been further complicated with the introduction of colonial languages, and especially new economic production behaviours in the context of an increasingly globalised economy.

2.2 The language ecosystem and the African linguistic landscape

a) The language ecosystem and the new configuration of the African linguistic landscape

The concept of "the language ecosystem" (alternatively, "*linguistic ecology*" is steadily making its ways into Sociolinguistics (Lechevrel 2008) and Mühlhäusler 1995, 2001. As a theory, the language ecosystem equates the life of languages to that of living beings in the real biological ecosystem (Bastardas-Boada 1996, 2003, 2007, 2009). The linguistic ecosystem shows that, even though languages will not be delivered birth or death certificates, they do have periods of birth and periods of death (Patrick 1979, Landweer 1999), with periods of

dynamic life and irreversible decay. The linguistic ecosystem approach also accounts for the linguistic behaviours of language users that translates into language preferences that appear, in turn, determined by prevailing socioeconomic dynamics (Mufwene and Vigouroux 2008).

The new economic production systems brought in by the colonisers, along with formal education, leads those (young) Africans who can afford, to acquire foreign languages. We know that the mastery of those European languages does offer better economic opportunities and social promotion. Yet, the appropriate and effective use of those languages is restricted to the elite. The rest of the population is generally illiterate or semi-literate in European languages, even though they try to use these languages when industrial occupation requires, leading to distortions that bring about the emergence of pidginised forms, further adding to the complex linguistic landscape.

In a paper published in *Language Policy and Planning,* Djité (1988) portrays the African linguistic landscape as made up with four (4) categories of languages ranked according their spread and importance in national life: the *"languages of intra-ethnic communication"*, the "*regionally dominant languages",* the *"lingua Francas and the national official languages"*. All classifications leak, and Djité's (op. cit.) classification which dates back to the mid-1980s does not reflect the actual state of the African linguistic landscape. A more accurate configuration today would consist of five (5) categories: the "*minority lingua francas or close community languages*", some of which now list among *"the endangered languages of the world";* the *"inside border languages"* that remain socioeconomically dynamic within national borders and which speech communities stretch beyond their original cradles[8]; the *"trans-border languages"* that are spoken across borders and, at last, the "transnational lingua francas"[9].

The dynamics of the language ecosystem is almost unquestionably "messing up" the whole linguistic landscape. The elite uses colonial languages that are generally perceived as media of prestige and as the key to access the new production systems essentially. As for minority languages used in the communities, they face the increasing threat from the inside border lingua francas, because transport, daily trade and seasonal cash-crop trade are progressively expanding to rural areas.

b) Linguistic competition: the threat on European languages and the conundrum for the choice of the media of instruction

Linguistic competition is as universal as the fight for survival among animals and plants described by Darwin a century earlier. In the European Union area language competition is generally a matter of chauvinism with some nationals like the French constantly complaining[10] about the linguistic imperialism of the English. Even more striking is the role of a lingua franca, such as Mandingo, Hausa and Fulfulde, in urban areas, lingua francas which have historically been the media of trans-Saharan and cross-Saharan trade (Gerda 1993), along with Wolof in large scale sub-regional economic dynamics in the Atlantic coastal areas of West-Africa. In a context of local globalisation where the informal economy is increasingly competitive, the so-called "official languages" are hardly used. Everywhere on the African continent, regional lingua francas are snacking not only the national lingua francas (not to mention the minority or community languages), but confront colonial languages that are now losing ground (Djité 2008: 145). The new investors from Asia show no preference for the use of European languages. They would rather use their pidginised versions or simply opt for indigenous languages.

The language ecosystem is a universal phenomenon that contradicts William Mackey's axiomatic claim that *"... dans la réalité sociale [...] les langues ne sont égales que devant Dieu et les linguistes!"* The irresistible effect of the language ecosystem shows that any language will do, depending on the prevailing socioeconomic circumstances. Mufwene (2008) notes that when required, some Europeans businessmen travelling to Asia with a poor mastery of English would try out Asian languages. This also applies to the African situation where Europeans admit that their "almighty" languages are not always the most appropriate keys to access all economic sectors on the continent.

The dynamics of the language ecosystem brings about a new configuration of the African linguistic landscape. Languages in contact indulge in a cross-influence game that progressively eats into the share of European languages in the (economic) lives of Africans, whilst gaining greater influence vis-à-vis inside border languages and European languages.

There is a correlation between the profile of a national or regional linguistic landscape and the decision to insert one language or the other in the education system. Back in the mid-1980s, when the ILA of Côte d'Ivoire was officially entrusted to plan the insertion of indigenous languages in the education system, this research centre decided over four languages corresponding to the four major "cultural areas" of the country. Neglecting the crucial influence the language ecosystem can have on the landscape, the project made very little headway, in terms of resorting to indigenous languages as media of instruction. Today, just like other African nations, Nigeria has not been able to take indigenous languages into the formal education system beyond primary school, the most advanced nations in this area being Tanzania, Uganda and Botswana. These countries have been able to take indigenous languages beyond the primary education, not as media of instruction, but simply as academic subjects. As a consequence, Africans are left with reformulating alternative national language policies in which the use of indigenous languages in formal education will be the cardinal preoccupation.

3. ADVOCATING FOR ALTERNATIVE NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICIES WITH ALTERNATIVE MEDIA OF INSTRUCTION

The nature of the African linguistic landscape today is not the direct cause of the failure of integrating indigenous languages in the national language policies. It is its on-going change led by the language ecosystem that further complicates the task. That is why, as Prah (2000: 46) recommends: *"new language policies need to be put in place which reflect the social and economic reality of the mass society. Only then will we make serious headways in education and development"*.

3.1 Too many media of instruction for reduced research resources

Ever since most African nations abandoned the early national language policies whereby just one was selected and then promoted as the unique national medium, they have taken the opposite direction by engaging several languages at the same time. In this instance, the post-apartheid South African government has decreed about ten (10) indigenous languages as "official languages"; now, is not this decision only purely politically motivated? And if so isn't there a risk of relegating the pedagogical objectives at a lower level? Furthermore, what credit can be given to the decision by the Cameroonian authorities who have declared that all indigenous languages are eligible to become media of instruction in the national education system when we know that documentary research has identified no less than 200 languages and related variants for this nation[11]? Is it realistic to plan to consistently instrumentalise all these media them thoroughly within a reasonable span of time? Is not such a decision a

placebo just to soothe hard-nosed academics that are urging their authorities to make concessions for indigenous languages as media of instruction? In short, is the decision to choose an excessive number of indigenous languages at once a practical one?

The use of a any language as a medium of instruction necessarily requires long-standing research work involving, among other things, language description, the devising of scientifically sound orthographies and the compilation of technical terminology for all modern domains (biology, mathematics, physics and chemistry, economy, politics, etc.), the formatting of those theoretical findings into pedagogical materials. Field experience shows that top quality research resources for linguistic research are scanty and research institutes like the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Societies (CASAS)[12] are left with resorting to native speakers for their workshops. Any African native language is extremely useful, and any of them can be exploited, but in subsequent levels during the language modernisation process[13], and not necessarily as nationwide media of instruction.

So, it is high time that Africans asked themselves whether it is realistic to aim at using so many languages as prospective or actual media of instruction. As Africans, we should bear in mind that our case is really special in the sense that, contrary to European and Asian nations, literacy was certainly prior to the institution of formal education[14]. The task stands out in titanic proportions when we realise that the insertion of indigenous languages in education requires massive linguistic research to set up efficient orthographies and then elaborate pedagogical contents that must make room for the African cultural inputs.

3.2 Streamlined financial inputs for a fast-expanded literacy environment

The budgets of African Governments generally show that sizable amounts of public monies are devoted to education. In reality however, these budget allocations are skewed in favour of the payroll of education staff (Silué 2000: 61) at the expense of the production of pedagogical materials for which African nations usually turn to international financial institutions (i.e. The World Bank and the IMF). It is important to underscore that all this financial support is essentially destined to the traditional education practices where colonial languages are the unique medium of instruction. The international financial system and foreign editors, whose strategic position in the international financial system give them the opportunity to lobby for financial assistance to the African education sector, are not prepared to commit themselves for the production of pedagogical materials in indigenous languages[15]. Considering all this, it is high time for those who believe in the necessity of inserting indigenous languages in formal education to find more imaginative strategies: we are suggesting the resort to regional lingua francas in Africa as mediums of instruction.

The implementation of most status[16] language planning schemes comprises three stages (Fasold 1987: 268): “the language determination stage” (selecting a speech form out of many), “the language modernisation stage” (equipment of the language with writing systems, technical terminology, etc.), and “the standardisation of the language”. In opposition to language planning projects undertaken decades earlier, the implementation of the determination stage has become relatively simpler. The language standardisation stage proves more challenging as it involves intermingled extra-linguistic constraints; most language planning schemes will end up there[17]. When seriously and accurately engaged, language standardisation generally calls for any kind of social actors, including public figures or opinion leaders who would act as social models in their use of native languages.

Considering the constraints inherent to the standardisation of indigenous languages, some individuals (usually lay persons) give in the fascination exerted on them by pidgin languages that emerge here and there in some nations, generally the most linguistically and culturally heterogeneous. It is still unclear whether African pidgins will stabilise to ever meet educational requirements. Djité (1988: 58) even wanders if the widely praised "Ivorian French" does not cover the weakness of inappropriate education systems. The decision over regional lingua francas as media of instruction in each major region of Africa will consist in the distribution of these lingua francas over the regions that correspond to the areas covered by regional organisations; say Mandingo, Fulfulde and Hausa in the ECOWAS area, like Kiswahili covers the nations of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC).

3.3 The choice of transnational lingua francas and cultural preservation concern

One of the reasons why leading scholars make a strong case for indigenous languages as media of instruction is the adequacy of educational contents. Language is the cradle of cultural heritage, and resorting to local languages as media of instruction ensures that educational contents embody the features of indigenous cultures. Now, if this option were to be retained, how to conciliate the inescapable local globalisation effect of regional lingua francas with its cultural levelling, and with the preservation of particular cultural content of each African community? Will not the institutional extension of these media to other ethic communities overwhelm their particular cultures, hence causing the irreversible loss of some African cultural assets? Or does not the option of regional lingua francas hide some sort of local imperialism? Prah privately shows some concern about this option and wonders: *"why substitute the European imperialism that we are lamenting on for a local cultural domination and nonetheless imperialistic too?"*

As language and culture intersect, culture and natural environment do intersect too, and there are more environmental similarities among African regions than with Europe. In addition, the colonial languages we have historically come to accept are also regional lingua francas, but from European cultural communities and no one would seriously question the fact that there is much more cultural similarities among African communities than with European communities[18]. The use of an African regional lingua franca by all Africans, who are not initially native speakers of such a medium, is common. As Kimizi (2009: 199) puts it "Most Africans are multilingual, though in African languages". In other words, and to a large extent, resorting to an African transnational lingua franca is certainly not regarded by the majority of Africans as a case of linguistic imperialism (Djité 1988: 219; 1991: 134): Africans are generally multilingual from adjacent sister speech forms. Even educated Africans and the elite naturally turn to a transnational lingua franca when the communication circumstances command that they do so. In short, the majority of Africans do not perceive transnational lingua francas as a case of linguistic imperialism. In other words, it is the combination of the historical spread of most regional lingua francas (Gerda op. cit.) and the impact of the linguistic ecosystem that, in the long run, has surreptitiously brought about a language shift in African communities in some cases, bilingualism or multilingualism in others, or simply the entire adoption of one or more African lingua francas.

In addition, regional lingua francas are increasingly dynamic in the international linguistic ecosystem and are pushing their way into the new communication and information technologies19. A UNESCO (2005) report indicates that English is losing ground on the Web while other languages, including African languages are on the increase. The combined impact of the language ecosystem and the robustness of African transnational lingua francas appears

to be the perfect illustration of this biological axiom: "it is the function that creates the organ"! Regarding the spread of regional lingua francas, history informs that the English language was decreed in 1362 by King Edward III, "the language of the English people", once the Sovereign came to realise that this medium was the one actually used by the majority of English people[20], and not the then official language, the language of the (Norman) conqueror.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable development is simply unconceivable without education; and a key factor to attain positively rewarding achievements in education is the rational choice of the medium of instruction. The current issue regarding the use of indigenous languages is a consequence of the "original sin" on the part of early African leaders who decided to retain colonial languages as "official languages".

In practice national language policies are hard to implement, because of the number of native languages retained as prospective media of instruction and this, against the rather reduced language research resources. Therefore, the choice of regional lingua francas sounds as the most reasonable way out, since these languages not only resist the invasion of foreign languages, but are making their way into the worldwide spearhead technological and economic sector, that is, the ICTs. It is up to Africans to mobilise around these regional lingua francas and modernise them for science, technology and development.

A word of caution is in order. Considering the historical conditions under which colonial languages were decreed as "official languages", considering also the conditions under which indigenous languages are striving to be admitted as media of instruction, as long as foreign languages are maintained as "official languages", the widespread and socioeconomically dynamic transnational lingua francas will never go beyond the primary school and will be maintained as mere academic subjects in African formal education systems.

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NOTES

[1] *According to Emenanjo (1999: 3), the early reflections about African languages in education date back to 1911.*

[2] *In former French colonies, Catholicism is more the religion of the elite compared to Protestantism that rather stands out as the religion of the masses.*

3 Note that the case of Ethiopia is special with the Amharic and interesting too: Ethiopia has never been under colonial rule and one is justified to wonder whether these two facts are not interrelated (i.e. the master of an indigenous writing system dating back long before the colonial encounter and the fact of having resisted successfully to the (Italian) colonisation attempt! l

[4] *Like Mali with Mandingo, Senegal with Wolof, Madagascar with Malagasy and even in states with nation-wide pidginised lingua Franca like Tanzania with Kiswahili and the Central African Republic with Sango. As will be seen, the case of Tanzania is no exception if we take into account the rather modest level they have attained with the insertion of Kiswahili in formal schooling.*

[5] *ILA (Institut de Linguistique Appliquée) is the national research institute for applied linguistics*

[6] *These were pilot projects carried out in the mid-1980s, leading to improved tomato farming in Marabadiassa (Central region) and improved fisheries in Mossou (South costal region).*

[7] *A continent-wide Fulfulde scholar association has achieved remarkable results with the compilation of scientific terminology: the metalanguage for linguistic description in Fulfulde is almost completed.*

[8] *Such is the case of Baule, Senufo (Cote d'Ivoire), Ewe (Ghana and Togo, Luganda Runyankore-Rukiga Ateso (Uganda), Bulu, Dwala, Ewondo (Cameroon), etc.*

[9] *This is the case of the set of regional lingua francas identified by the African Union's Academy of African Languages (ACALAN): Fulfulde, Mandekan, Hausa, Chichewa-Cinyanja, Setswana, Beti-Fang, Lingala, Kiswhaili, Somali.*

[10] *During an international symposium on the endangerment of languages, Claude Hagège lamented the sidelining of other European languages in favour of English. However, driven by the far-reaching impact of the language ecosystem, he felt compelled to deliver his paper in English!*

[11] *Reportedly (Survey) only private religious schools resort to native languages in education because they are well informed of their efficiency.*

[12] *For over 15 years this research institute has been conducting a continent-wide project on the Harmonisation and Standardisation of Orthographies for use in education, social science, science and technologies. The CASAS project has now covered up to 85% of the continent.*

[13] *To devise technical terminology, researchers can search any African language, the most appropriate term to name a particular scientific concept. This is how scientists have borrowed specialised terminology from Latin and Greek, and from any language of the world. Minority languages and even decaying or dead languages can be used as data bases to fuel the terminology database.*

[14] *History informs that literacy, which is the backbone of formal education, was not intended for schooling in the first instance. Rather, early writing systems were a matter for clergies, whatever their spiritual orientation. Understandably, writing systems came to be known as "the Holy Scripts". Be they "holy" or lay, scripts have historically been always secret practices. By way of example, Sanskrit which dates back anywhere between the 600 and 300 BC was known as a "secret language", presumably with reference to its script.*

In the same vein, the Vaï script was taught to neophytes in the Sacred Forest during ritual initiation.

[15] *This might have underlying ideological motives: European are fully aware of the stakes, when it comes to the efficiency of native languages in education as an instrument of emancipation.*

[16] *In opposition to status planning, corpus planning is more technical as the research concerns the structure of the language only; an orthographic reform is a typical example of corpus planning.*

[17] In the framework of its Harmonisation and Standardisation Project, the CASAS has, over 15 years, devised harmonised orthographies for most language clusters on the continent. CASAS and her continent-wide network of language researchers has now successfully covered up to about 85% of the continent. The technical task having been completed, CASAS and her research team agree that the standardisation phase is beyond purely linguistic expertise and calls for institutional measures, in the form of lobbying that the African Union through the ACALAN is best placed for.

[18] In a study on African cultural heritage, striking cultural similarities were found between the Senufos (West Africa) and the far distant Shona of Zimbabwe, namely over the matrilineal organization as described by Rukuni (2007).

[19] Casual observation informs that some transnational lingua francas are used for the menus of some mobile phones, not to mention the advertising sector that is particularly fond of transnational lingua francas, because it targets a scale size public.

[20] Oddly enough, King Edward III could not speak English himself! However, the undisputed spread of this language as a lingua franca across the Kingdom led him to take this pragmatic and realistic measure.