

## KISWAHILI AS A LANGUAGE FOR ALL AFRICA: THE WEST AFRICA CHALLENGE

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### Abstract

*The endorsement of Kiswahili as an official working language in AU meetings, conferences and communications gives Kiswahili a big boost. This comes in the midst of another milestone in which World Kiswahili day was set aside as July 7 by UNESCO. These are not only positive gestures in the right direction; they also constitute great prospects and a brilliant trajectory for Kiswahili to be an international language with a global status. The AU did not only endorse Kiswahili as a language of official communication, it also added a resolution that by 2063, all African countries (member states) must have implemented full learning of Kiswahili language in an effort to have the language as the official language of Africa. People coming to Africa will have to learn Kiswahili as a language of communication. The question then is, are all African countries ready for Kiswahili? Are there challenges that can be foreseen even before the implementation of this policy? The paper investigates the unprecedented challenges that may arise in the bid to make Kiswahili the language of Africa with specific reference to West Africa. The choice of West Africa is a purposive sampling methodological approach. This paper employed the socio-psychological theory by Lambert and Gardner (1959) which is one of the theories used in second language learning. The outcome of this research will be essential in formulating the way forward in the implementation of the policy and designing strategies to make Kiswahili a working language for Africa with fewer challenges.*

**Key words:** AU, Second Language, Policy, Strategies, Kiswahili

### Introduction

The renewed push for Kiswahili to become a *lingua franca* in all African countries will benefit Africa and the whole world. However, the big question remains: what does it take to have Kiswahili as a language of Africa? This paper weighs into the ongoing discussions around the globe on whether it is truly a realistic conception to have Kiswahili as a language of Africa, for Africa. The paper, however, centers around the discussion on the West Africa question. Kiswahili, being a language with its roots in East Africa, might be easily accepted and spread to the East Africans for the sole reason that it is already a *lingua franca* in East Africa. The pronouncement that Kiswahili becomes a language of Africa for Africa is centered on the argument that Kiswahili is an African language, therefore, Africans can identify with it. However, with its East African roots, there might arise a dispute regarding the idea of language ownership being equal to power ownership. There is need to examine whether West Africans can accept the ownership of Kiswahili without question. Whether they might think that by embracing Kiswahili, they are then being colonised by East Africans. The challenges of having Kiswahili as a language of all Africa with reference to the West Africans has to be scrutinised before rolling it out or introducing policies to effect the use of Kiswahili in West Africa. These and many more critical questions are what this paper investigates and tries to unravel in an effort to unearth potential challenges and, in a way, offer proposals on what can be done to make Kiswahili sail through the challenges involved in making Kiswahili the language for Africa and of Africa.

### The Theoretical Framework

This research employs the socio-psychological theory whose proponents are Lambert and Gardner (1959).

#### Socio-psychological theory

The theory states that in order to learn a second language, one is led by two important aspects both of which are beneficial to one. First, one accepts to acquire a second language in order to acquire the strains of the traditions and culture of the native speakers of that language. This means that the main aim of learning the second language in this case is to acquire characteristics of the native speakers and be like the native speakers of the said language.

This first concept will be applied in this research to try and assess whether the West Africans might

find good characteristics to admire in the native Kiswahili speakers to motivate them to learn Kiswahili as a second language. That way, the West Africans would learn Kiswahili so as to be associated with the traits, lifestyle and culture of the Kiswahili native speakers or the East Africans in general who speak Kiswahili.

Secondly, one learns a second language in order to get the accompanying benefits. For instance, some languages are promoted through the promises made to those learning them; these benefits include travelling abroad, getting scholarships, getting employment opportunities, being advantaged in terms of promotions at workplace, social mobility, economic mobility, salary increment among others. These 'goodies' are attached to the acquisition of the second language and therefore compels anyone who is interested in getting them to learn the language, thus acquiring it as a second language.

This theory, therefore, is used to explain the strategies that can be employed to arouse the interest of West Africans, in order to motivate them to learn Kiswahili and embrace it as a language of choice of all the other *lingua francas* in the regions, their own native languages and the foreign languages. The theory will also be used to explain the reason for potential hurdles in implementing Kiswahili as a lingua franca and/or second language in West Africa. This is based on the assumptions that the West Africans will learn Kiswahili as a second language as par the benefits they will get from its acquisition or reject the language based on how irrelevant they will find it, despite the language's benefits as proposed by the socio-psychological theory.

#### **Significance of having a common language in Africa**

Wolf (2016) explains the importance of having a common language in Africa. He states various reasons which this paper notes that Kiswahili would well fit to serve. The reasons are as follows:

- For Africa to achieve its highest potential, it needs an African language. An African language is needed to move Africa from its current state to a higher level, technologically. There is a need to use an African language to explain African issues about technology, since this will enable a high level of understanding which will then lead to invention and discoveries. Kiswahili has already been used as a language of instruction, national and official language. In Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, Kiswahili has had an immense impact on the social and economic lives of the people thus unlocking infinite potential.
- Africa does not just need a language for the sake of it, rather, there is the need for a language that carries with it African customs, traditions and culture. African languages carry African culture and traditions. Kiswahili is very rich in African customs, traditions and culture from traditional clothes, food and African literature and art in general.
- Africa needs its own strategies for development, and this includes language use also. Kiswahili can therefore be used as a unifying factor since it carries with it African culture and its association with Arabic language can be used to rally Northern Africa towards its acceptance.
- All languages in the world have the capability of being used in education as a medium of instruction. This is against the notion that there are some languages, majority being African languages, which cannot be used in education or for wider communication since they are not self-sufficient. This is a colonialist approach to African languages and it can only be demystified by an African language being adopted by all African countries in line with the saying: African solutions for African problems.

#### **Kiswahili in East and Central Africa**

Kiswahili is used as a lingua franca in East and Central Africa (Mbaabu 1985, Iribemwangi & Mukhwana, 2011). This is no mean achievement. The idea of Kiswahili being a language of influence in Africa, with a high potential of growing even bigger is supported by Mukhwana (2018) who envisages Kiswahili as a language with a bright future. He centers his argument on the fact that Kiswahili is used as an official language in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, and that Kiswahili is used by many, both in Africa and abroad because it is taught in international universities like Bayreuth Germany, SOAS among others. Some of the international media stations such as Deutsche Welle (DW) in Germany use Kiswahili in their news broadcast.

Among more than 50 languages in Uganda, Kiswahili is one, and is the second official language in Uganda (Constitution, 1999/2002). English and Luganda are the two most preferred and used languages by Ugandans. However, Kiswahili language is prevalent in radio stations such as *Totore, Ngeya, Voice of Bundibugyo, UBC Red, and Butebona West Nile fm*. For the TV stations, we have UBC TV, NTV, UBC STAR TV, TV AFRICA and WBS. Kiswahili is also taught in universities such as *Makerere University, Kyambogo University, Kabale University, Gullu University, Lira University, Busitema University, Islamic University in Uganda, Uganda Christian University, Ndejje University* among others. Kiswahili is among more than 120 languages in Tanzania (Whiteley 1969, Batibo 1992), and along with English, it is the most dominant language in Tanzania, as compared to the other languages in the country. There have been efforts to declare Kiswahili the language of usage in all national domains (Proposed Constitution, 2014). Kiswahili is taught and used to teach at all levels of education (Education policy, 2014).

Kiswahili is one of more than 42 languages spoken in Kenya (Mbaabu, 1996). It is the official and national language of Kenya (Constitution of Kenya, 2010), and is taught and used to teach in primary, secondary and tertiary schools. Kiango (2002) states that Kiswahili is taught as a compulsory subject in primary schools in Kenya. Kiswahili is used in radio stations such as Radio ya Citizen, Radio Jambo, and Radio Maisha. Majority of TV stations use English to run programs while Kiswahili is slotted for 7pm news. News is considered to reach many more people at this time; thus, Kiswahili is used to ensure all Kenyans get news in a language that they understand best. This stamps the idea that Kiswahili is used and understood by the majority of Kenyans (Githiora, 2008). Contrary to the constitution, that places Kiswahili as first official language and national language, thus giving it power over English, English has continued to be dominant in the communication of many official sectors e.g., embassy, law courts, trade, education, public service, national and international communications (Githiora 2002, Ogechi 2003 & Maithya 2015).

In Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kiswahili is used as a language for ordinary day-to-day communications in some regions and in trade (Kapanga, 1991). For instance, Kiswahili is used in the gold mines in Lubumbashi and as a language of trade in Shaba. Kiswahili speakers in Democratic Republic of Congo are now estimated at 8.96 million speakers.

Namibia and South Africa have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tanzania and Kenya respectively on having teachers of Kiswahili from Kenya to teach Kiswahili in their countries. In May 2019, Cabinet Secretary for Education (Now the Late George Magoha) signed the agreement on behalf of Kenya while the then South Africa Minister Basic Education Mrs. Angelina Matsie Motshekga signed on behalf of South Africa. In July 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Namibia and Tanzania on the introduction of Kiswahili language into the Namibian school curriculum. This is in an effort to have Kiswahili as an African language, enabling wider regional communications at a lingua franca status.

The widespread of Kiswahili in East and Central Africa makes Mazrui and Mazrui (1999) to state that Kiswahili is the language of choice by the majority in East Africa and its neighboring countries.

### **The attempts previously made to have Kiswahili as a language of Africa**

For a long time, Africa has relied on foreign languages for official communications, education and trade. The renewed impetus to have Kiswahili for Africa is set to diminish Africa's reliance on foreign languages for official communication. The recognition and spread of Kiswahili will, therefore, promote Pan-Africanism. However, this push for a Pan-African language did not start just recently. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, emphasized having Kiswahili as a Pan-African language. It is noteworthy that the language proved successful in unifying Tanzanians under *Ujamaa* philosophy.

This language was advocated for as lingua franca by Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, and many other renowned African personalities. In fact, Wole Soyinka urged African writers to get their works translated into Kiswahili. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's literary works have been

translated from English to Kiswahili such as *The Black Hermit* being translated as *Mtawa Mweusi, I will marry when I want* (Nitaolewa Nikipenda), Francis Imbuga's *Betrayal in the City* (*Usaliti Mjini*), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (*Shujaa Okwonko*). All these show that Kiswahili is a readily available language for use in government, education, constitution, literature, science and so many other fields.

Even though the current move is a wonderful idea, to turn it into reality requires the proponents to be extremely calculative for a brilliant execution. The push to have Kiswahili as a language for Africa, at that time, did not gain the needed support to make the proposition a reality. Lessons are to be learnt from the first attempt and used to better the current trial.

### **Kiswahili and Unions in Africa and Beyond**

Various unions in Africa have also instituted policies to have Kiswahili as a working language, for instance, East Africa Community (EAC) has Kiswahili as the official language of communication and South African Development Community (SADC) recognizes Kiswahili as one of the official languages that can be used in its official meetings. This is the situation that has led to other Southern African countries, like Namibia, to embrace the teaching and learning of Kiswahili.

African Union (AU) has Kiswahili as the official working language with a policy to have all African countries implement the usage of Kiswahili by the year 2063. The recognition of Kiswahili by AU and the follow up policy passed afterwards is what informs this research paper in a bid to help contextualize the realization of this envisioning.

United Nations too recognizes Kiswahili as one of the official languages that can be used in communications. Consequently, UNESCO, which is a UN body, declared 7th July as the World Kiswahili Day. This is in recognition of the influence that Kiswahili has had, not just in Africa, but in the whole world. The announcement was made by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 23 November 2021 during its 41st Member States' session held in Paris, France. This made Swahili the first African language to be feted by the UN. Additionally, on the same November 23, 2021, the United Nations designated July 7 as the World Kiswahili Language Day — the official day to celebrate the Swahili language.

### **The prospects of Kiswahili**

Kiswahili is a language that has proven to have a lot of prospects for communication, teaching, governance and many more functions as seen in the East African countries like Tanzania, where it is the national and official language, as well as Kenya where it is more than just a lingua franca. Kiswahili is a language that has its own Roman-based writing system, documented grammar and has enjoyed international relevance in many parts of the world (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013). More specifically, in Europe, Scandinavian countries, China, United States of America and some other nation states, Kiswahili has enjoyed international broadcast, scholarly research, and it has been a taught subject. Furthermore, Kiswahili has been used extensively in Information Communications Technology. In the East African Community, made up of Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda, Kiswahili has long been adopted as one of the official languages. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kiswahili is one of the national languages. All these have enhanced the functionality of Kiswahili in these specific linguistic domains.

Additionally, Kiswahili has the highest number of speakers in Africa, a population of about 150 million (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013), and it is a highly researched language, in fact, it is one of the most researched African languages. There are grammar books, dictionaries, online resources and university courses available for the teaching and learning of Kiswahili. Now, there is Google Swahili and there is a Kiswahili version of the Microsoft Office which was launched into the market in 2004. More so, there are many mobile devices which have Kiswahili as one of their operational languages. However, it must be registered that the presence and acknowledgement of all these features are not equal to the actual adoption of the language as a continent-wide lingua franca by all fifty-four countries in Africa. There are still potential challenges with this admirable resolution by the African Union, and some of these challenges are discussed in the subsequent sections and paragraphs.

### **The potential attitude of West Africans to Kiswahili**

Naturally, East Africans are expected to have a positive attitude towards Kiswahili; however, as reviewed in Mutheu, Indoshi, Okwah and Amukowa (2019), parents have continued to encourage their children to take up English over Kiswahili. Over the years, some policies have promoted this stance among guardians, parents and learners because they promoted English over Kiswahili. In Kenya particularly, Kiswahili has occupied the status of national language since 1974, yet, as of 2019, English was still the medium of instruction in schools (Mutheu, et al., 2019).

In West Africa, the situation is not much different with the local native languages and there are numerous factors responsible for this situation. First is the economic value of the language; the English language has proven to be a language that provides economic sustenance, more than the native languages. Although, local languages are gradually being encouraged in recent times, it will take a great deal of time before these native languages overtake the progress that the English language already has under its belt.

The attitude of some educated West Africans to the English language is more positive than it is towards local languages, and the economic weight that English carries has been identified as one of the reasons. Additionally, English is internationally accepted and is often a requirement for job opportunities within different African regions and outside Africa. This situation has been in existence since when colonialism was still around, and this situation has caused people to have a positive attitude towards English, to the detriment of local languages. This impression and attitude still remain on the minds of parents, students, uneducated people, and many more categories of people.

In Nigeria for instance, although the constitution clearly acknowledges that local languages be used in as the language of teaching and instruction in schools, the English language continues to be the only language of instruction in schools across the country. This is clearly a positive attitude towards English at the expense of the indigenous languages. Moreover, the constitutions still have a niche carved out for English, so this still gives it an opportunity over the other languages. In light of these, English appears to be currently relevant as a medium of instruction in education, as the language of government, banking and so on. If local languages, which are indigenous to these locations, are still being treated in this manner, what then is the assurance that Kiswahili will be accepted in West African countries?

Furthermore, English is still a language that many are aspiring to learn well enough for international intelligibility. Many students, adults and workers still battle with being proficient enough in this language to be intelligible by nationals from other countries and continents, therefore, taking on a new language by the next fifty years does not seem like it will be a very welcome idea for these people. More so, students are constantly aiming to further their education in the global west and sometimes have to write internationally licensed English examinations to test their proficiency; these examinations include, International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Students already have so much baggage dealing with these examinations, and very few people appreciate these examinations which seem to be a test of how well Africans were colonized. Now, the examinations are still a requirement that have yet to be eroded out there, and must be taken to secure an undergraduate or graduate position in any of these western schools. Considering this background, no soothsayer need preempt that adopting a new language that is not English in African schools will not be so welcome, neither will it enjoy a positive attitude because students will now be saddled with learning a language which they only need within Africa.

Another reason the positive reception may not be a forthcoming response is that Kiswahili is an African language. As shameful as it is, it remains a fact that tribalism is a problem that still exists in very many countries in Africa and this is evidenced by tribal cleansings and xenophobic attacks occurring in Ethiopia, Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa to mention only a few. One of the things that a colonial history has taught African countries is that a language is not just a language; rather, it is a property of a group of people and can be used either to their advantage or to their disadvantage. On this basis therefore, Kiswahili is very likely to face antagonism from West Africans, as a language belonging to East Africans and which may be used to overpower West Africans.

Furthermore, there is still the fundamental fact that Kiswahili is an African language, and it is not news to many Africans that things, concepts and phenomena that are local to Africa are hardly ever appreciated by Africans, unlike those things considered foreign. However, this is a little matter, compared to others, and it is one which can be addressed through in-depth and proper re-orientation. However, it is still one challenge that exists and must be acknowledged.

### **Kiswahili learning in West Africa: Prospects and possibilities**

To get Kiswahili in the learning curriculum of schools in West Africa by 2063, teachers in West African primary schools, at least, ought to have been equipped with the language skill before then, not just for the purpose of communication, but also for the purpose of imparting it into pupils and students. This is because speaking a language is one thing, while teaching it is completely another. Thus, learning Kiswahili across all these countries will require a great deal of manpower from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and the like. These said countries must be capable of meeting up with the demand for human and material resources to linguistically equip the whole of West Africa (North and Southern Africa) before 2063.

Some of the pertinent questions to be asked are when will these teachings and trainings begin, how would it be done, who would pay for it – the government or the individuals? We must bear in mind that between 1979/80 academic session and early 1990s, Kiswahili was being taught at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, but this ceased because there was no staff to teach the course anymore (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013). This is a likely foreshadow of what may occur with the Kiswahili for Africa campaign.

Besides, the funds for this huge project are another important factor to consider. Are these countries willing to commit funds and other resources to achieve this goal, even when there are other issues and challenges that require urgent attention and resources, such as security, economy, employment, and many more? Also, what exactly would become of the English language in education, daily dealings and international settings where West African countries are concerned? What would be the status of native languages which are local to West African countries? This new introduction may further endanger native languages, many of which have already been reported to be on the brink of extinction. There is a need to formulate strategies to deal with these critical questions that may hamper the spread of Kiswahili in West Africa so as not to start at a point of impossibility.

Of all the West African countries, it is quite notable that Ghana has done measurably well in the promotion of Kiswahili by adopting it in some of their institutions such as Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, the University of Ghana and Ghana Institute of Languages (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013). This is Ghana's quest to encourage the unification, through language, of the whole of Africa in order to facilitate joint political, economic and social achievements. Therefore, Ghana is in a better position to participate in the sensitization program for other West African countries to rally them behind Kiswahili as a lingua franca for not just West Africa, but Africa as a continent.

However, there is a possible reality that studies and scholars like Dzahene-Quarshie (2013) are not taking into consideration, and this is the fact that a language is never really spoken the same way across different geographical locations, because they are often subjected to subtle but real changes, just as found in the World "Englishes" today. Thus, there is a possibility that Kiswahili, over time, will be subjected to cultural, semantic, phonological and other modifications from country to country, so that there are now differences in the variety of Kiswahili spoken in different African countries. This is likely not to inhibit communication immediately; however, is there not a possibility of attracting negative attitudes to the modifications that Kiswahili goes through at the hands of such countries where Kiswahili is not native? These realities must be put into consideration and dealt with at the policy level as well as during the implementation of the teaching and learning of the Kiswahili language.

### **What can be done for Kiswahili to gain the status of a language of Africa in papers and in reality?**

In an article in the African renewal, Iribe and Makanji (2022) discuss strategies to be considered if

Kiswahili is to become the language of Africa, and these strategies are applicable to West Africa too. They are as follows:

### ***Addressing the foreign national and official languages challenge***

Currently, English is the official language in 27 of the 54 countries in Africa, while French has the same status in 21 countries. These languages are not just foreign but also languages of the former colonizers. This means that at some point, these languages fetched some 'goodies' for the said country. Their continued use attracts funding and other benefits from the colonizers while dismissing the languages may lead to a misunderstanding in the relations. Moreover, these foreign languages are well established and strategically placed as languages of international and global communication, diplomacy and trade. To drop these 'important' languages for an African language will not be easy; thus, political goodwill will be very instrumental to attaining such a dream. For instance, English is referred to as 'the language of power' by Prof. Chege Githora from Kenya, and other foreign languages like French and Portuguese follow in the same vein. Kiswahili has to convincingly define its way if real results of this seeming dream are to be achieved. All West African leaders have to hold consultative meetings together with the body mandated to implement the policy of Kiswahili for Africa in a bid to unanimously acknowledge the need for an African language for Africa, and the choice of Kiswahili as the suitable language to take this position.

### ***Intensive Lobbying***

As a language, Kiswahili has had its influence grow in Africa and beyond. It is estimated that there are more than 200 million Kiswahili speakers around the globe. Kiswahili is ranked among the 10 most widely spoken languages. The current recognition therefore, brings educational, diplomatic, trade, tourism, cultural, philosophical and political benefits to the continent. All these benefits can only be harnessed if the players are Kiswahili-conversant. For instance, Kiswahili will not be a language in tourism when the tourists do not understand Kiswahili. Countries will not sign a Memorandum of Understanding and diplomatic relations documents if one party does not understand Kiswahili - a language used in the documents. This simply means that the process to have Kiswahili as a working language has to be a joined and combined effort. If some countries are to accept to learn and teach Swahili to its people while others refuse, then the effort will be futile. Therefore, lobbying has to be done. All countries have to be convinced beyond reasonable doubt of any malice in the process to install Kiswahili as the working language for the continent. If this is not done, this policy to have Kiswahili as a working language of African Union has a danger of remaining a policy that exists only in books while being absolutely absent in reality.

### ***Constitute implementation committee***

There is a need to form a body to ensure the implementation of this process. African Union should constitute a Special committee or body mandated to sensitize all countries on the need to have Kiswahili as a language of Africa, for Africa. This body has to lobby all African countries to back up the idea and even reach out to other stakeholders outside Africa for the goodwill and funding of Kiswahili programs. The body has to conduct research and come up with excellent strategies to help spread Kiswahili and boost its acceptability.

### ***Exposure to Kiswahili***

For this process to move faster, there is a need to expose people more to Kiswahili, for example, through collaborations in music to sing Kiswahili songs between East African musicians and other musicians from other countries. Media stations – both TV and radio – that use Kiswahili as the language of communication are instrumental to achieve this necessary exposure. Print media can furnish countries with Kiswahili articles, books, journals and newspapers. A website for Kiswahili has to be built and made active in order to help any Kiswahili issues arising. Through software research, applications that will aid the learning of Kiswahili should be developed, so that learners do not even

need to step into a classroom. This way, learners who are past the age of formal fundamental education can be captured within the learning space. Existing language learning applications like Duolingo can also be used to facilitate this language learning across the continent.

### ***Research and promotion funds***

For Kiswahili to be a language for all Africans on the African continent, there is a need for resources. What has been done for other languages to gain prominence has to be repeated for Kiswahili. Africa is a large continent; thus, it is impossible to even conceive that few people can traverse it to spread Kiswahili. There is need to have sufficient funding to train more teachers in Kiswahili and Second language learning methodologies. Many scholars have to be funded to carry out more research on Kiswahili and come up with recommendations on how best to make Kiswahili known and used. Infrastructure is needed to have extra classrooms to teach Kiswahili. Libraries all over Africa have to be furnished with Kiswahili texts and learning materials. To facilitate this, a funding equal to this noble task, is required.

### ***Learner motivation across Africa***

Learner motivation is needed for Kiswahili to be taught all over Africa (and now with specific reference to West Africa). For this to be achieved, individuals who already have their own languages that are sufficient for communication have to embrace the idea and make the sacrifice to learn a new language. This sacrifice will not come on a silver platter. Just as it has been done in other languages, conferences have to be held all over Africa, awarding best students in the Kiswahili language. Writing competitions with mouthwatering prizes have to be organized to ensure all are motivated both in the linguistics and literature parts of Kiswahili. For the case of West Africa, there can also be a competition among West Africans in the use of Kiswahili in both written and oral mediums. This will contain the competition among West Africans and block undue advantage from East Africans who might have had an early exposure to Kiswahili thus have an unfair advantage. This will balance the competition and make West Africans feel appreciated, other than having a situation where all winners come from East Africa which might prove quite discouraging.

### ***Embrace diversity and localization of the language usage***

The challenges of other African languages must be accepted. Africa is multicultural and most Africans grow up to be multilingual. Kiswahili has to follow the practice by other international languages where the languages are free. The over-emphasis of rules in the language must be relaxed as we move forward. Terminologies and words from the local languages need to be infused, thus, giving the locals a sense of belonging and ownership of the language. In this way, many will use Kiswahili without suspicion of imposition of a modern 'colonizer' (this was once a case of sentiments from Ugandans feeling 'colonized' by Kenyans whenever they spoke Kiswahili). This implies that more sensitization has to be done on the importance of having a common language for Africa and why Kiswahili is the best choice.

### ***Formulation of language of Africa policy***

Policies have to be formulated; specifically, language policies in the whole of Africa need to be updated and formulated to accommodate Kiswahili as either a compulsory subject in school or as an important language to be learnt for formal education. Other policies by AU and UN have to follow in order to stamp and boost the uptake of Kiswahili. For instance, it should be made a requirement that people entering Africa for a long-term investment or education purposes study Kiswahili language to some level of proficiency before venturing in their endeavor. Those working for the AU need to have some knowledge of Kiswahili even if not fully proficient in it. Some countries have to follow the East African countries of Kenya and Tanzania, which have developed policies declaring Kiswahili to be their national language, thus making Kiswahili popular amongst its people and boosting its significance. For the case of West Africa, the language can be promoted through the media - both traditional and social media. Employment policies can be revised to provide an additional advantage for those who understand Kiswahili, especially for the jobs that involve dealing with Africans.

### ***Address the West African Lingua Franca challenge***



The challenge that other African languages constitute cannot be overestimated. In Western Africa, there are languages like Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba which have *lingua franca* statuses. For instance, according to ethnologue, Yoruba language is estimated to have about 50 million native speakers and about 2 million second language speakers. To have a good penetration of Kiswahili in such regions, resources and political goodwill are imperative. Adequate resources need to be availed to ensure that the language serves the role of these other languages in the same manner or even much better so as to gain preference and consequential prominence. This has to be done both at the financial, social, psychological and at the economic levels. By so doing the sociopsychological perspective used as the theoretical framework of this research will have worked. We will have West Africans learning Kiswahili for the two beneficial aspects. To acquire some of the admired characteristics of the Swahili speakers, visit different destinations in Africa using one language and the economic part of the equation being employment opportunities arising from the learning of Kiswahili. This will be intrinsically and extrinsically motivating.

### **A Language of Africa for Africa**

Iribe and Makanji (2022) enumerate points to consider in order to have an African language used in Africa. These suggestions are as follow:

- Lobby for support from the African countries in terms of policies and finance in order to promote the choice, teaching and learning of the language.
- Formulating important language policies and principles that will activate strategies for the implementation of the common African language.
- Sensitization and awareness must be used to educate all Africans of the significance of having one common language in African and by Africans, as against the usage of foreign languages which are currently taken as languages of power and employment.
- Designing strategies that will ensure proper teaching and learning of the African language and finding stakeholders who will implement the language policies and the developed principles.
- Developing strategies and procedures of investigating and evaluating the steps made for the implementation of the policies to aid the learning of common African language.
- Availing the best syllabus and curriculum for the teaching and learning of the common African language including the suitable and most appropriate teaching and learning resources that will ensure smooth teaching and learning of the languages with less or no challenges.
- Championing publications in the common African language and formulating publishing policies that lower the cost of publishing materials and literature in the common African language. This will encourage people and scholars to publish books, research papers, journals and articles using the common African language.
- Encouraging research about and in the common African language and more inventions and discoveries. There can also be research on comparative linguistics between the common African language and the other native African languages so as to enable easy acquisition of the common African language as a second language. This will help predict the challenges that may be encountered in learning the language as a second language and therefore enable scholars, researchers and teachers to come up with the best strategies to appropriately teach and learn the second language contextualized according the native languages in the specific regions of Africa.

Wolf (2016) admits that there is a possibility and need to have an African language used by Africans. However, this does not insinuate killing one language to develop the other since these languages can exist together in a diglossic, triglossic or even quadriglossic situation. Intensive research can be done on the Kiswahili language, and through this, it can be made better even when there exist challenges in the learning of the language in different regions of Africa.

Iribe and Makanji (2022) conclude that Kiswahili as a language has traversed different countries in Africa and beyond. In all these countries and continents, Kiswahili has stood as a sufficient medium of communication. With a good number of African countries having already embraced Kiswahili in both

teaching and speaking, some for official communication, and others for colloquial use, Kiswahili has a huge probability of becoming the language of Africa if proper strategies to market the language are established. Wolf (2016) argues that having an African language for Africa will not only be a unifying factor but will also be a milestone towards achieving greater things as one Africa.

### Conclusion

Kiswahili is not a new language on the African continent; however, a push to have it as a language for the continent must be carefully crafted with a recognition of the impending myriad of challenges. The recognition by AU and UNESCO is just one step towards the right direction. Whether this push moves or stagnates at the first step is enshrined in the subsequent follow up actions henceforth. With the efforts and policies ongoing in different countries and organizations in Africa, having Kiswahili as an African language is in no way an impossibility. Kiswahili has the potential, not only to be used in West Africa or the whole of Africa, but also in the whole world.

There is a need for research in every region of Africa to ascertain the possible challenges that can impede the spread of Kiswahili to all corners of Africa. Through this kind of research, the rollout program will be made easier as many of the challenges would have been addressed and strategies to counter these challenges would have been developed. The possible challenges in West Africa, as discussed in this paper, are important considerations in forming the basis for this rollout.

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