

Impediments in the Use of Indigenous African Languages as Languages of Instruction at Tertiary Institutions of Learning

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Abstract

This article explores why it seems 'impossible' to conduct teaching and learning through indigenous African languages in Zimbabwean tertiary institutions. It argues that the continued diglossic situation that regards foreign languages like English, French and Portuguese to name a few, as the High languages while local languages are regarded as the Low languages is due to the perpetuation of colonial language policies. The bipolar concepts of globality and transnationality, the rise and fall of superpowers and would-be superpowers, the neocolonial educational policies and the nature of politics of power in postcolonial Africa are some issues this discussion deliberates on and the extent to which these are impediments or otherwise to the use of indigenous languages in Zimbabwean tertiary institutions.

Introduction

The diglossic situation prevalent in Africa is mostly due to the colonial language policies. Due to their diglossic statuses, African countries are classified under diglossic societies. In fact, 'diglossic societies are those societies in which bilingualism has become an enduring societal arrangement . . . In diglossic societies; English has generally been adopted as the language of government and commerce . . . ' (Aschcroft et al 1989:39). In postcolonial African societies, foreign languages such as English, French, Portuguese and others are the High (H) languages and indigenous African languages are the Low (L) languages. As such, the former are the languages of education, economics, politics, science and technology whilst the latter are peripherized. Because of their general peripherization, the latter merely serve as national, quasi-national and minority languages. This is what Chimhundu (2001:20) has referred to as the ' . . . continued vernacularization of African languages . . . long after the attainment of political independence [in Africa]'.

African scholars or 'African languages revivalists' (Simala, 2001:316) like WaThiongo (1990, 1998) and Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) and others lobby for this diglossic reality to come to a halt. One way in which they see this possible is through upgrading indigenous African languages to national and official languages. They also lobby for the use of indigenous African languages as media of instruction in

academic institutions. However, there are some serious challenges that hamper their noble call and cause to be realized and implemented in postcolonial African societies. This article proposes that, there are micro and macro factors that militate against the adoption of indigenous African languages as media of instructions at tertiary institutions of learning.

The micro factors include, among many, the idea that indigenous languages lack terms and concepts that can match developments in education, politics, commerce, economics science and technology. What that means is, those colonial language policies which peripherized indigenous African languages under-developed them to the extent that they fail to carry the weight of developments in different academic disciplines of the postcolonial African societies. The other micro factor that hinders this noble cause to be recognized is lack of literary resources in indigenous languages for use at tertiary institutions. Furthermore, the idea of the multilingual nature of African societies can also be held to be a challenge to the noble issue of using indigenous languages at tertiary institutions of learning. Pertaining to the multilingual nature of the African societies as a hindrance to indigenous languages education, the crux of the matter lies on the idea that, if indigenous languages are to be upgraded to languages of instruction at tertiary institutions of learning in those multilingual African societies, which and whose indigenous language(s) should be preferred for that exercise. Chimhundu (2001), Mboup (2008a and 2008b) and others expose these and some of the micro factors which are raised against the use of indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions.

Certain macro factors hinder postcolonial African societies to upgrade indigenous African languages to languages of instruction in tertiary institutions of learning. These factors include among many, the bipolar concepts of globality and transnationality, the rise and fall of superpowers and would-be super powers, the neocolonial educational policies and the nature of politics of power in postcolonial Africa which heralded the rise to power of the members of the black African elite class. This article concentrates on exposing and evaluating macro factors that militate against the use of indigenous languages as languages of instruction at tertiary institutions. That is all because a lot of scholars such as Chimhundu (2001), Mutasa (2006), Magwa (2008), Mboup (2008), Roy-Caampbell (2001) and many more have thoroughly discussed the impact of micro factors on the need to use indigenous languages as languages of education in Africa. It is noteworthy though that the macro and micro factors are interlinked to the extent that one cannot totally separate the two in a discussion like this one. Therefore, in its bid to discuss the effects of the macro factors that hinder indigenous languages education in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe, this article will definitely treat some of the micro factors that militate against that noble goal.

Factors that Militate against Indigenous Languages Education in the Zimbabwean Institutions of Higher Learning

The factors in question are going to be discussed in a single file.

Globality and transnationality

Colonial languages such as English, which occupy the position of official in diglossic African societies, are perceived to be international languages (Magwa, 2008:190; Moyo, 2008:209). This is because they are languages of wider communication (LWC) as opposed to indigenous African languages which are languages of low diffusion (LLD). Since they are held to be 'international' languages, they are also believed to be languages of globalization. In fact, it is Crystal (2003) who has a whole text that advocates the acceptance of English by the world population as the global language. The fear of being left out of a globalizing world forces educationists and learners alike to prefer to teach and to be taught respectively in colonial or foreign languages. Colonial or foreign languages are believed to have the potential of giving birth to linguistic internationalism and globalization (Human Development Report, Murphy & Ross-Larson, 2004:60). The idea of learning English and the other foreign languages out of fear of being left out of a globalizing world was uttered by the South Korean President when he said that South Koreans should learn English if they do not want to risk being left out of the globalizing world (cited by Mutasa 2006: 82).

Wright (2004) says that globalization is a post or supranational phenomenon. By this, she implies that, globalization comes after the period of nationalism in world history. If that is held to be the case, the implication is that linguistic globalization has to be an offshoot of linguistic nationalism. In other words, linguistic globalization has to develop within the humus of world linguistic nationalisms in the same way the concept of globalization or globality itself should be an offshoot of world nationalisms.

Basing on the above view, it seems that, it is nonsensical to imagine that a society can achieve and enjoy linguistic nationalism when its indigenous languages are dominated by a foreign language(s). What it then means is, unless a society's indigenous languages take centre-stage in its educational, political, economic, social, scientific, technological developments and achievements, that particular society will not recognize and enjoy linguistic nationalism let alone nationalism in general. In the same vein, unless nations of the world successfully achieve nationalism there is no place for globalization whether it be linguistic, political, technological, or so forth since in its different globalization facets is a post-national phenomenon. Just because most world societies especially African ones have not yet attained

nationalism in its different modes which include linguistic nationalism, (Mazrui 2004, Giddens 2001 and Sorensen 2004), what that means is the talk of a global world or village is a mere rhetoric. Such rhetoric leads to the emergence of a pseudo global village. This is why Alonso (2001: 87) has this to say of globalization,

It [globalization] is unequal because it does not affect all countries in the same way. While the degree of integration is high among industrialized countries, whole areas of the developing world – like most of the sub-Saharan Africa – remains in the periphery of these trends towards progress and economic dynamism.

However, the myth and rhetoric of a globalizing world, the prevailing pseudo globality and the desire by Africans to be part of that pseudo phenomenon have contributed to the denigration of indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions of learning. Thus Simala (2001:316) confirms this idea when he says, ‘after all, the social movement in these days of globalization and cosmopolitanism, there is demand that people should use global languages’. The so-called global languages are foreign to Africa. Therefore, the pressure to use them in the different domains of life such as education, continues to militate against the use of indigenous African languages as languages of instruction in institutions of higher learning.

Those people, who aspire to enter globalization, view the so-called ‘... international languages, which in actual fact are colonial languages’ (Prah, 2000:77; Mboup, 2008b:109) and languages of the world superpowers, to be the avenues of success in the global set up. Wherever they are in Africa and in whatever they will be doing, undermine, these aspirants indigenous African languages. Aspirants, who are involved directly or indirectly with academic activities at tertiary institutions, have developed a negative attitude towards the use of indigenous languages as languages of instruction. It is within this that, Chiwome and Thondhlana (1992:257) echo the need to work on university students’ negative attitude towards indigenous Zimbabwean languages, if the languages are to become media of instruction during lectures and media of essay writing in the Department of African Languages and Literature of the University of Zimbabwe. Thus the two researchers have this to say ‘... given the right attitudes and approaches it is possible to use mother tongue for instruction [at tertiary institutions of learning]’.

The Department of African Languages and Literature of Zimbabwe’s Great Zimbabwe University recommended the use of indigenous languages as languages of instruction in all the modules it is currently offering. However, that good gesture is facing strong resistance from the students. Gudlanga and Makaudze as cited by Magwa (2008:200) have established the negative attitudes students display towards the recommendation to use indigenous languages as languages of instruction in

the teaching of different modules. Some of the negative attitudes result from the belief that indigenous languages will not allow Africans to advance into the global village, as such the students believe that they will remain backward and under-developed. What that means is, as long as the African people do not come to realise that, "If English is the mother tongue of the [global] village, then th[at] village is obviously occidental rather than global and therefore not for Africans", (Chiwome and Gambahaya, 1998: 100), they will continue to opt for the use of English as the medium of instruction in institutions of learning at the detriment of indigenous languages.

The rise and fall of superpowers

Wright (2004) and Simala (2001) discovered that the language of the superpower(s) is in a favourable position to dominate other world languages. Therefore, what that means is, languages rise and fall in relation to the rise and fall of superpowers. In the classical period, when the Greeks dominated the Western world, the Greek language and Hellenist culture spread like veld fire. In that period, Greek language and culture gained a lot of prestige over other world languages and cultures. This is probably why the Bible, which is one of the most widely read texts in the world today, was translated from Hebrew into Greek before it was translated into any other language of the world. With the fall of the Greek Empire, and with the rise of both the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church, Latin took over from Greek as the world's most dominant language. French took over the position from Latin when France rose to one of the world's superpowers (Simala, 2001:311). German gained a lot of ground during the period of Hitler's rule. The defeat of Germany in the Second World War in 1945 witnessed the rise of two world superpowers namely the United States of America (allied by Britain) and the Soviet Union and its communist allies. As a matter of fact, Russian and English competed for total dominance of the world as did the two superpowers in question (Wright, 2004:144). Therefore, throughout the period of The Cold War, Russian and English shared dominance over world languages. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, meant that the United States of America emerged as the world's sole superpower. USA controls the world with the aid of its allies in the name of Britain and other Western and Asiatic countries, which joined hands in 1991 to wage the ever popular and unforgettable Gulf War.

The fall of the Soviet Union also meant the defeat of Russian by English at global level. It also meant the dominance of the American-cum-western culture over the whole range of the cultures of the world. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998: 196) confirm this same view when they say that, "The collapse of the USSR and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact left the United States as the sole undisputed superpower on

the world stage. This added to the prestige of the English language as a global means of communication". Crystal (2003: 59) also comments that, "The present day world status of English is primarily the result of two factors: the expansion of British colonial power which peaked towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the twentieth century," As the language of the sole superpower, English, and some other languages of the superpower's Western allies were and still are considered international languages. As such, they are considered to have become languages of globality and transnationality. However, these languages, especially English which is the language of the sole superpower (USA), are languages of neo-colonialism. Therefore, neo-colonialism is, '... simply the American style of empire now being emulated by Europe' (Chinweizu, 1983:430). Both the English language and the American-cum-western culture, which dominate world languages and cultures, perpetuate the English-indigenous languages diglossia in Africa and other regions of the world. As a matter of fact, indigenous African languages and cultures bow down to the languages and cultures of the superpower and her allies. In fact, the position the United States of America enjoys in global politics and economics is the same position the English Language enjoys in the world. As such, it is a great challenge to try and de-centre English, which is the language of the superpower at tertiary institutions of learning when the USA is still the sole superpower of the world.

The culture of the superpower is spread and exalted in developing nations as more prestigious than the indigenous cultures. The language of the superpower is usually shrouded in supremacist mysticisms in those nations as if it is the language of a demi-god of the world. In that way, speaking the language of the superpower and living its culture is perceived to be synonymous to development and civilization. Therefore, governments, ministries, institutions of higher learning, educationists and learners prefer the language of the superpower to indigenous languages as the medium of instruction in academic affairs. They develop a negative attitude towards indigenous African languages which they understand to epitomize backwardness and under-development while English, which is the language of the superpower appears to them to be a symbol of civilization and development. However, the opposite is true. Indigenous languages are the potential tools of development in Africa (Mazrui 1990), whilst the language of the superpower is the language of continued colonialism and under-development of Africa. As long as Africa continues to gnash her teeth under the death-grip of the language and culture of the superpower, it remains a serious challenge to try and promote indigenous languages to languages of instruction at tertiary institutions. If Africa has to successfully promote her languages to languages of instruction in institutions of higher learning and in some key domains of her economy, she should come up with strategies of cutting short the covert and overt involvement of superpower politics when she

makes policies (whether they be linguistic, economic and political) and then seek to successfully implement them.

Foreign aid from the superpower and her allies

Another issue is that, a superpower becomes a superpower as a result of its having favourable political and economic stamina. In that sense, the superpower has the potential to use its political power and economic stamina to set up tertiary institutions in developing countries. For instance, 'American assistance has established an American Studies Research Institute in India, complete with a scholarly journal in which Indian academics may write on American-related topics' (Altbach, 1991 in Aschcroft et al., 1995:455). Altbach (ibid) concludes, '... this institution will help to produce over the long run a group of Indian professors favourable to the American cause and perhaps professionally tied to it'. Once it sets up institutions of higher learning in developing countries, the superpower promotes the teaching of its language and culture. It also promotes its language to a language of instruction in those institutions. Once this happens, it becomes very difficult for the indigenous populations of the developing societies to push for the promotion of their indigenous languages in such tertiary institutions.

Usually, the superpower and its allies have money to print a lot of literature in their languages and then donate that literature to institutions of higher learning in developing countries. In Zimbabwe, the Midlands State University receives a lot of literature from British organizations. Major donors which at times sell and at times donate literature to the Midlands State University's library are Book Aid International, World Vision and Books Abroad. Without those Western organizations, the library of the university in question might be nearly empty (Information from the desk of the Midlands State University Librarian, April 7, 2011).

Since resources are scarce at most tertiary institutions in African countries, and Zimbabwe in particular, students heavily rely on information from the internet. Information obtained from computer websites is in the language of the superpower and its allies. This is so because they are the ones who control information technologies at global level. If the literature and other general information which is there for use by the student is in English and other 'international' languages, the student finds it meaningless and time wasting to do his/her assignments in indigenous African languages. Use of indigenous African languages in institutions where most of the literature is in a foreign language(s) loads an extra burden on the learner of translating ideas from a foreign language into an indigenous language. As such students develop a negative attitude towards the use of indigenous African languages both as media of instruction and of academic essay writing.

One other issue is that the donations which the superpower gives to African countries and to their tertiary institutions of learning are neo-colonial devices which aid the superpower to spread and exalt her culture in former colonies. Altbach in Aschcroft et al. (1995:455) notes that, 'American aid to overseas universities has tried to "depoliticize" aspects of higher education'. In other words, Altbach asserts the view that foreign aid perpetuates the dominance of the superpower over developing countries since it works against any meaningful involvement of developing nations in global politics. These donations, apart from being availed in form of literature and financial aid to build tertiary institutions in developing countries, they also come as financial boosters in institutions of higher learning that are owned by Africans and by African states. In Zimbabwe, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has sponsored educational activities at institutions of higher learning such as Masvingo State University, (Gudlanga and Makaudze cited by Magwa, 2008:200). Foreign aid and donations are usually accompanied by conditional ties. It is therefore difficult to do away with the culture and language of the donor if that donor insists on its use in institutions of learning. This behaviour of foreign donors becomes a stumbling block to governments which would like to recommend promotion of indigenous languages at tertiary institutions of learning since any moves against the donor's wishes lead to the donor's withdrawal of aid. For instance, SIDA withdrew its aid to Masvingo State University in 2001 sighting among other things, lack of good governance as cause of its withdrawing the aid (Gudlanga and Makaudze Ibid).

Educational philosophy as a factor in choosing language of education

Makuvaza (1996) established that, for a system of education to be sound and relevant to a people, it has to have a clear-cut guiding philosophy. He believes a guiding philosophy of tertiary education ought to have roots in a given society's culture. Thus he says,

[For] education to be meaningful and relevant, [it] should emanate from a philosophy of education. The philosophy of education should be a reflection of and a response to historical and existential circumstances of the people. Education in Africa if it is to be genuine and relevant [it] should not be uncritically borrowed from the west lest it produces educated uneducated graduates with an identity crisis (Makuvaza, 1996: 57).

Most educational philosophies which direct teaching and learning processes in post-independence African societies have roots in Western value systems and Western supremacism. Again Makuvaza (1996:55) says,

Zimbabwe and most once colonized African states have adopted philosophies of education which are not rooted in their philosophies of life.

They follow philosophies of education which are borrowed from the West and have no direct relevance to the needs of the people. As a sequel to that the products of these uprooted systems of education have identity crisis. The crisis emanates from being products of two Philosophies fundamentally disagreeable to each other namely Individualism [Western] and collectivism or communalism [Traditional African].

The same view that the guiding philosophy in African institutions of learning is western oriented is confirmed by Mazrui (1978: 267) when he says that, "The Eurocentrism we have inherited in our educational institutions is still with us. For the time being we seem unable to achieve a paradigmatic revolution in favour of greater intellectual autonomy". It is necessary to refer to the case of independent Zimbabwe to try and verify Makuvaza's and Mazrui's viewpoints. After attaining political independence in 1980, the new Zimbabwean government did not reform the colonial philosophy of education in a meaningful sense. What the government did was simply to constitute a policy of 'Education for all'. The policy was made vibrant through building of a lot of new schools, especially secondary schools. However, that good gesture did not go hand in hand with an installation of a philosophy of education that has roots in Zimbabwean indigenous cultures. As a matter of fact, from the time Zimbabwe attained political independence to the year 2000 the Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate was at the helm of Zimbabwean secondary and high school education. The University of Zimbabwe, which was the sole university before 1991, and The National University of Science and Technology that recruited its first batch of students in 1991 would select their pool of students from 'A' Level graduates. The graduates were those people who would have passed the Cambridge 'A' Level General Certificate of education. In that sense, the University of Cambridge had an indirect influence and responsibility over university education in Zimbabwe. The Syndicate had the responsibilities of drafting and producing school syllabi, setting examinations and marking those examinations. The Syndicate produced and issued certificates of excellence to 'O' and 'A' Level graduates. It performed these roles up to until the year 2000.

Starting from the late 1990s up to the year 2000, the Zimbabwean government worked modalities to make sure its Ministry of Education takes full charge of curriculum development for and implementation in secondary and high schools. That move was sparked by an acute shortage of foreign currency needed to pay the Syndicate. The government also worked modalities to make sure the Ministry of Education administered to the setting and marking of all primary, secondary and high schools examinations. Thus the government sought to wean the Ministry from the educational activities and involvement of the Syndicate. The weaning process however involved full participation of some representatives of the Syndicate. The government involved the Syndicate in the weaning exercise since it wanted to make sure its Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture would not

lose track and sight of the British philosophy of education that had guided Zimbabwean education from 1890 when Zimbabwe became a colony. Members of the Syndicate were invited to train Zimbabweans how to set and mark examinations. Most curriculums were and are still not reformed up to date. Of course cosmetic changes were effected to some and not all the curriculums. Generally speaking, Zimbabwe is still using the Cambridge way of managing educational activities. Failure of the government through its arm, the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, to uphold and maintain University of Cambridge's standards of education in schools is by default. Otherwise, the government seems not to be in a hurry to effect radical changes in the education system. It seems to be eager to maintain that philosophy of education set by the Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate: a philosophy that has roots in Western culture.

In 1998, the same government set up 'The Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry'. The commission was tasked with the duty of visiting schools to carry out research work among teachers and pupils with the objective of coming up with recommendations that were to effect radical changes in the education system of Zimbabwe. That Commission had the task to try and make Zimbabwean education more African centred than Western. The commission produced its report in the year 1999 with recommendations, which probably if implemented, may enforce radical educational reforms. One of the recommendations of the Commission was the need to uphold education for hunhuism/ubuntuism in Zimbabwean education.

Up to this day, there seems to be a dichotomy between planning and implementing educational reforms. Till now, very little if any of what the Nziramasanga Commission recommended has been implemented as policy in Zimbabwean education. What this means is, the University of Cambridge's philosophy of education remains the foundation of Zimbabwean education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

If the Zimbabwean education system has roots in a British system of education, what that means is, the whole business of teaching and learning in Zimbabwean institutions of learning is Western-oriented. As such, it has roots in Western individualism. waThiongo (1987:15) says that 'language carries culture'. If language transports culture, what that means is, an education system which is Western oriented can best be facilitated and shared in Western languages such as English. Use of indigenous African languages as languages of instruction in tertiary institutions, whose guiding philosophies of education have roots in Western individualism and supremacism, is unethical. It is unethical because in order for an educational discourse to be clear and sound to the educationist and learner alike there should be an interface of the taught material and the language of instruction. Now when an indigenous African language is used to teach western-

oriented content, that interface is gnawed. Once it is gnawed, a gulf or a rift is apt to appear between the taught material (content) and the language of instruction (form).

When the dialectics of form (Language of instruction) and content (Values to be taught) is gnawed, serious challenges emerge. Firstly, the indigenous language may lack terms to describe Western oriented academic values. Secondly, learners are apt to be confused during the teaching and learning process. This happens because some feel that indigenous languages do not qualify to carry foreign philosophies of life. This is so because indigenous African languages were developed within African cultures and histories for the purpose of carrying an Afrocentric and not an alien world-view. In fact, each language develops within the confines of a specific human community for the purpose of carrying that community's cultural values. Of course, a language has some ability to carry cultural values that are separate and apart from those values of their native and mother-tongue speakers. However, any language fails to perfectly carry and transmit values of another culture for which it was not developed to carry and transmit. For instance, if an indigenous African language is forced to carry Western values of culture, it is apt to distort those values or part of those values or the structure of those values in the process. Once distorted, those values can potentially confuse the learner. On the other hand, if a foreign language is forced to carry indigenous African cultural values, it is apt to lead to the distortion of those values in transit.

Most of the content that is taught in Zimbabwean universities is still western oriented. Therefore, it is a challenge to use indigenous languages to teach that western-centred matter and material. In fact, western oriented educational values can be taught more perfectly in Western languages than in indigenous African languages. However a problem arises when Western languages are preferred to indigenous ones in tertiary institutions of learning. Of course, Western content is best taught in Western languages, but what happens to the African learner when Western educational values are taught in Western languages? The learner, who is not a native or a mother-tongue speaker of the western language in use, may fail to grasp the taught content. If an indigenous African language is used to teach western centred content, the language distorts educational values since it lacks equivalent terms to those in the western cultures and languages. As such that scenario can potentially confuse the learner. Again, if a western language is used to teach western values of education, that language does not distort the values, however the learner who is an African and not a westerner and who is neither a native nor a mother-tongue speaker of the western language will fail to fully grasp the taught content. He/she might end up confused. Therefore, the promotion of indigenous languages to languages of instructions in tertiary institutions, whose educational values are western is a challenge to the learner. The use of a western language to teach western

educational values is perfect, yet it is still a challenge to an African who is neither a mother-tongue nor native speaker of the language. An example drawn from the Zimbabwean situation is necessary at this point.

The Midlands State University of Zimbabwe has two departments of Local Governance and of Human Resource management. Educationists in the departments use a lot of western coinages during the teaching and learning exercise, coinages such as democracy, human rights, universal declaration of human rights, good governance, post-colonialism, internationalism, globalization and many others. It is noteworthy that, there are no equivalent terms in the indigenous Zimbabwean language such as Shona to most of the given terms. This is all because the terms are Western and not African centred. What that means is, use of an indigenous Zimbabwean language in these departments may distort the meaning of these terms and the total implications they carry on governance and on the principles of human resources. At the end of it all the learner may become confused. Given this sort of an arising, most educationists and researchers like Hadebe (2000) recommend term creation as an exercise that will help to aid indigenous languages to become suitable for use in educational proceedings that are Western oriented. Be that as it may, term creation is also a challenge in itself when it comes to using indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions.

Term creation and indigenous languages' education

In essence, new terms which are the products of term creation, can potentially fill in the gaps that are created when an indigenous African language is used to teach Western educational values. The problem with term creation in most African countries is that, it is elitist and supremacist in its nature and approach. It is the elite of Africa who are at the helm of creating terms for use in education. In Zimbabwe, the African languages Research Institute of the University of Zimbabwe has published specialized dictionaries which include: *Duramazwi reUrapu noUtano* (Medical Terms Dictionary 2004), *Duramazwi reMimhanzi* (Musical Terms Dictionary 2005) and *Dudziramazwi reDudziramutauro noUvaranomwe* (Dictionary of Linguistic and Literary Terms 2007). In all these dictionaries, term creation is quite evident. The problem is that, the moment elites sit down in offices and create new terms for use in institutions of learning is the moment when elitist and supremacist terms will be coined and imposed on the society. This is very unethical and as such it leads to serious problems especially to the learner at institutions of higher learning.

Although the new elitist terms may reflect a high degree of 'nativization', some of them remain as difficult to master and to interpret to the learner as what is the case with the alien terms. Chimhundu and Chabata (2007) have some of these

terms *chihwerengedzi* (plus sign), *chirerutsamutauro* (euphemism), *chidoonyera* (discord), *izwifanana* (homonym, homophone). Terms, such as these ones are not easy to remember since they are very long and complex in construction. The terms are a product of a top-down as opposed to the bottom-up approach to term creation. When a top-down approach to term creation is used for the purpose of creating terms, for use by the society in its life schemes and skills, it is a small group of elites that will be at the centre stage of that business. The bottom-up approach to term-creation has the society or the majority of the members of the society at the centre. This bottom-up approach allows the society to create new terms to fill in gaps that result when indigenous languages are there to express either new or alien ideas, concepts and skills. The duty of the elite in the bottom-up approach to term creation will be simply to tap the new terms from the society for the purpose of compiling them possibly in form of a dictionary. This sort of understanding informs Chiwome (2000: xx) when he says,

New terms are continuously integrated into existing structures as part of the speakers' knowledge of their world and their languages. The argument that term-creation is the sole province of terminologists can be elitist as it tends to exclude the majority of people who are terminologists by virtue of their empirical knowledge of their respective languages. To interpret the field of term-creation narrowly can amount to appropriating a public sphere for private use.

A bottom-up approach to term creation will also allow the majority of the learners, of the educationists and of the members of the society at large to take part in the creation of terms that are meant to be used at tertiary institutions. If that sort of approach is not used: if a top-down approach is preferred the resultant elitist terms will definitely confuse both the learner and the educationist further and further.

The whole idea is that, when indigenous African languages are used to teach Euro-American values there is incompatibility between the language of instruction and the concepts to be taught. On the other hand, the use of English in the teaching of Euro-American values, which in most cases inform postcolonial African education, is perfect. However, an African learner who is neither a native nor a mother tongue speaker of English fails to grasp the taught content or part of the content. At the end of the teaching-learning process the learner will be totally confused. Therefore, Africa should work on its educational philosophies which guide tertiary education to make sure they have roots in African cultures. Once that is achieved, it will be time for Africa to promote its indigenous languages to official languages and to languages of instructions in tertiary institutions of learning.

Elites of Africa as obstacles to indigenous languages education

One other challenge which African societies face when they want to use indigenous African languages as languages of instruction in tertiary institutions of learning are the elites of Africa who occupy the positions of leadership in their societies. Chinweizu (1983:355) has called these elitist rulers of Africa, 'Modern black slavers' while Fanon (1963:120) has termed them 'the national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries'. WaThiongo (1981) labels them 'the robbers who rob the majority of Africans'. Chimhundu (2001:22) says of them "The language that the colonial master introduced as the language of colonial administration is used by the present elite as means to maintain their power and position ..." By virtue of their being rulers, the elites of Africa are also at the helm of educational activities in tertiary institutions and other institutions of learning. For instance, in Zimbabwe, it is the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe who is chancellor of the ten state universities in the country. As chancellor, he has the duty of appointing vice chancellors and pro-vice chancellors for all those state universities. As President he has the duty of appointing the minister of Higher Education and a Permanent Secretary for the same ministry. The arrangement may allow him, if he so wishes, to handpick his right-hand men and women to occupy those positions. His role as both the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe and chancellor of state universities reverts together politics and education. What that means is, those who are at the helm of politics have both a direct and an indirect say on the language of tertiary education.

These elites are products of a Western education and therefore of colonial educational language policies. As a matter of fact, they were nurtured in the womb of colonialism. As such, they approve of the diglossic reality which permeates tertiary institutions of learning. On one hand, the elites of Africa approve of the use of foreign languages at tertiary institutions of learning. On the other hand they are opposed to the promotion of indigenous languages at those institutions. Their approval of use of indigenous languages at rallies and other political gatherings is mere rhetoric which constitutes political gimmick and equivocation (Magwa 2008). The elites of Africa do not approve of the use of indigenous languages at tertiary institutions since they use a western-oriented yardstick to measure quality of African education. They are proud of the type of education they attained in Western countries. As such they make a comparison between those western institutions they attended and the institutions in their country. Colonel Afrifa, who overthrew Nkrumah in the early years of post-independence Ghana, was ever dreaming of Sandhurst, which is a European institution of higher learning that he attended in the prime of his youth (Chinweizu, 1983: 356). Kamuzu Banda, the late and former president of Malawi established an academy of English in independent Malawi.

He allowed only native and mother-tongue speakers of English to teach English at that institution. He made these recommendations on the understanding that Malawians should be taught Standard English. Nyerere is quoted saying that,

English is the Swahili of the world and for that reason it must be taught and given the weight it deserves in our country...English will be the medium of instruction in secondary schools and institutions of higher education because if it is left as only a normal subject it may die, (cited by Roy-Campbell, 2001: 100).

The elite of Africa uses his position as president of a state, as chancellor of a state university, as minister of education and/or higher education, as permanent secretary in ministries of education and higher education, as vice chancellor and pro vice chancellor of a state university, as lecturer at a university, as member of parliament and legislature to suppress the possibility of using indigenous languages at tertiary institutions of learning. The same elite approves of a top-down approach and denigrates a bottom-up approach in matters relating to language choice and practice at tertiary institutions of learning in order to perpetuate his political dominance over the masses. Unless his negative attitude towards use of indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions of learning, especially those that are directly and indirectly run, owned and controlled by the state, changes for the better, promoting indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions of learning will remain a dream that has yet to come true. Furthermore, unless the elite of Africa allows educational activities at higher institutions of learning to be under the direct control of the majority of the members of African people, the need to use indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions of Education will remain unfulfilled and therefore a great challenge if not a problem to the whole continent of Africa.

Conclusion

This article has thrived to add some facts to the existing body of knowledge on challenges that emerge when Africans seek to promote indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions. It has thrived to achieve that through exploring and evaluating the role played by politics (at national and international levels), economic imbalances (at national and global levels) and the ideas of colonialism, neo-colonialism, internationalism and globalization in debates on language choice and practice in African tertiary education. Predecessor researchers in this area have spent most of their time focusing on micro factors which militate against the promotion of indigenous languages at tertiary institutions. They have paid very little attention to the macro factors which give birth to those micro factors which they discuss in their written discourses on the need to promote indigenous

languages in Africa's mass education. As such, this article has endeavoured to make it clear to researchers in this area that it is high time for them to turn to the macro factors, which militate against the use of indigenous languages as languages of instruction in Africa's institutions of higher learning, that is if they have the hope of aiding Africa to overcome challenges of linguistic nature that are rampant in its institutions of higher learning.

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