MULTILINGUAL MATTERS

English in Africa

After the Cold War

Alamin M. Mazrui

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To my parents,
Bwana Badi and Mama Ima,
whose generosity of heart and mind
knew no bounds.
In loving memory

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Contents

Acknowledgements

This book has grown out of several years of intermittent reflections on the state of English in Africa and the Black world since I joined the Department of African American and African Studies at the Ohio State University in 1990. My academic background as a sociolinguist, combined with my language-related experiences both in East and West Africa and later in the USA, and my encounters with a very wide range of informed people during my travels in Africa, have all led me to look at the role of this 'imperial' language in new ways, to appreciate its political complexity and see important connections across the seas.

Two of the chapters in this book are extensively revised versions of essays that were published elsewhere. Chapter 2 is an expansion and a re-crafting of 'The English Language in Education: Beyond Decolonization', which first appeared in Tollefson (2002: 267–281). Chapter 4 started as a co-authored article with Ali Mazrui entitled 'Linguistic Dilemmas of Afrocentricity: The Diaspora Experience', that appeared in a collection edited by Dirven, Hawkins and Sandikcioglu (2001: 141–164). In the process of revising the chapter for this book, however, I omitted Ali Mazrui's contributions altogether (partly because they were not directly relevant for the theme of this volume), with the exception of parts of the section sub-titled 'Between Islamophobia and Swahiliphilia'. The original source of Ali Mazrui's ideas in this section is duly acknowledged in the text. I thank the publishers for permission to re-use this material.

The book is a also a product of many interactions – too many, in fact, to acknowledge them here. None of these, however, have been more important than Professor Ali A. Mazrui of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, whose intellectual challenges and generosity continued to nourish my mind in this reflective exercise, and my wife, Professor Ousseina Alidou of the Department of Africana Studies at Rutgers University, whose inspiration and constructive feedback were indispensable to the project from its very foundation. To them both I owe a monumental debt of gratitude.

Introduction

In the course of the 20th century, many languages died or became severely weakened – the highest proportion of these being located in the southern hemisphere. It is even possible that the 20th century had a higher casualty rate in languages than any other century in history. Of the thousands of languages estimated to exist in the world today as many as 50% are said to be in danger of extinction (Wurm, 1996: 5). If this is indeed true, the situation makes it all the more necessary that the 21st century should try its best to engage in 'language conservation' instead of permitting reckless 'language erosion'.

As elsewhere in the world, of course, language displacement and language obsolescence have been part of Africa's history over the centuries. It is reasonable to assume that even in the pre-colonial period languages of conquering peoples – e.g. Mandingo in Mali, Kanuri in Kanem-Bornu and Twi in Ashanti – may have repeatedly landed death blows on the languages of subjugated and assimilated peoples as they moved into new territories. The effects of population decimation caused by enslavement on the language picture in Africa may also remain one of those permanent gaps in Africa's sociolinguistic history. When all is said and done, however, the 20th century within which the colonial and post-colonial phases of Africa's history have been located, precipitated new forces whose threat to linguistic diversity may be unprecedented. Combining linguistic, archeological and genetic data, Cavalli-Sforza (2000: 168) has demonstrated that the oldest linguistic families to have emerged in the world are in fact African. As the continent that 'invented' language, is Africa now threatened with the possibility of linguistic attrition?

One of the major forces behind the consolidation of some languages and the reconfiguration of the linguistic world map has been, no doubt, the process of globalization. By globalization I mean the process by which regions of the world become linked, at various levels of society, through an expanding network of exchange of peoples, goods, services, ideas, traditions etc. across vast distances.

The change in economic fortunes and the decreasing ideological

polarization precipitated by the end of the Cold War, for example, have stimulated new efforts towards regional integration between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. With this development we are beginning to witness an increasing exchange of people, trade, capital and labour. At the same time, the decline of the state in Somalia, Burundi, Zaire, has led to a massive influx of refugees into the three East African countries. These dynamics are likely to be to the advantage of Kiswahili at the lower horizontal level of interaction. But, in the process, will they also threaten the 'smaller' languages of the region?

Globalization is also making the English language in Africa more and more triumphant in demographic as well as functional terms. It is true, of course, that economic globalization has intensified the immesiration of large sections of African populations, further limiting their access to traditional sources of English acquisition, like the school. But also precisely because of globalization, new and non-formal channels for the spread of English seem to have developed, allowing even marginalized sections of urban society to have repeated contact with the language. These channels include tourism from the West, American and local popular literature, music and films, and the mushrooming world of informal trade that brings Africans traders in frequent contact with English-speaking customers. If the African market-place was once a preserve of local *lingua franca* like Kiswahili, impressionist evidence suggests its increasing penetration by the English language. My conversations with a cross-section of people, both academics and non-academics, in Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana indicate that the language is getting more widely distributed across urban class lines.

This global spread of English has often been seen as a serious threat to the survival of indigenous languages. Are whole languages and cultures in Africa being imperilled by the success of the English language? That is probably how a 1977 book on the spread of English came to be dedicated to 'those speech-and-writing communities utilizing "small languages" that have already learned to live creatively in the company of "the mighty" and, even more, to those still learning how to do so' (Fishman, Cooper & Conrad, 1977). Some have described the effects of the spread of the language as outright 'linguistic genocide' (Day, 1985). Others still have regarded the language as essentially 'omnivorous' (McArthur, 1999), an uncontrollable creature that devours everything linguistic on its path. Such views of English have even been the subject of poetry and song as demonstrated in the following South African verses by Johnny Clegg and Savuka:

Bits of songs and broken drums
are all he could recall
So he spoke to me
in a bastard tongue
carried on the silence of guns.

It's been a long long time
since they first came
and marched thru the village
they taught me to forget my past
and live the future in their image

Chorus:
They said I should learn to speak
a little bit of english
don't be scared of a suit and tie
learn to walk in the dreams of the foreigner
– I am a Third World Child.

(quoted in Pennycook, 1994: 2)

In the specific context of the African continent, however, available evidence seems to suggest that English and other European languages inherited from the colonial era are not the 'killers' of African languages that they are often presumed to be. Rather it is the local trans-ethnic languages, the African expansionist few, which are the real linguistic predators. In the words of Brenzinger, Heine and Sommer (1991: 40):

> European languages are often labelled as being the primary danger to African languages and cultural heritage. A closer look at the reality in most African nations today reveals, however, that it is African *linguae francae* and other African languages with a national or regional status which spread to the detriment of vernaculars. Minority languages are still more likely to be replaced by those few 'highly valued' African languages, than by imported ones.

A fundamental factor underlying this anomalous situation – where the most prestigious, the most powerful, the most favoured languages by fiat of language policy, i.e. the European languages, are not the replacing languages – is, of course, the school. The acquisition of European languages in Africa still tends to be overwhelmingly through a formal system of education whose corridors are accessible but to a few. Even the most prestigious African languages, however, can be acquired in the streets, ready commodities for large proportions of people in their respective regions.

Though the situation seems to be changing towards some increasing 'democratization' of the European languages, the very mode and domain of their acquisition at the present time, therefore, have tended to reduce their immediate capacity to replace the African languages around them.

Furthermore, the domains of language use of the English language are still predominantly formal. One is more likely to hear and use the language in a government office than at the market place – even though, as previously suggested, this space has now begun to experience some competition from English. At the moment, then, it is possible that the role of English in Africa encourages language shift more primarily in the direction of quasi-diglossic bi/multilingualism than of total language loss.

As important are the multifarious counter-dynamics in Africa, precipitated by forces of globalization, which continue to reinforce the twin processes of linguistic competition and complementarity. Post-Cold War relations among NATO allies, the decline of nation-state sovereignty, the resurgence of political Islam as a global expression, the momentum of political pluralism are all having a bearing on the language situation in Africa, sometimes in favour of English and other times in favour of the local languages. These dynamics and counter-dynamics as they (re)configure the place of English, in particular, and the wider language picture in Africa, in general, constitute the subject matter of Chapter 1 of this book.

In the final analysis, however, to look at language endangerment purely in terms of potential displacement in the here-and-now is to adopt a rather narrow view of the problem. English, and other European languages, have continued to mesmerize African policy-makers long after the end of direct colonialism. The result has been a disturbing unwillingness to commit significant amounts of resources to the promotion and development of African languages. By fostering a psychology of linguistic neglect among policy-makers in a rapidly changing world, therefore, European languages do, in fact, pose a serious if long-term threat to the development of African languages in this age of information technology.

An equally important force in the Anglicization of Africa is the continent's relatively weak linguistic nationalism. By linguistic nationalism we mean that version of nationalism which is concerned about the value of its own language, seeks to defend it against other languages, and encourages its use and enrichment (Williams, 1994). One of the factors underlying this relative difference in linguistic nationalism has to do with the distinction between the oral tradition and the written. The overwhelming majority of sub-Saharan African languages belonged to the oral tradition until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There is no ancient written literature outside Ethiopia and Islamized city states of East and West Africa (see Gerard,

1981). Without a substantial written tradition, perhaps, a linguistic nationalism is slow to emerge, although there are exceptions, such as the linguistic nationalism of the Somali based mainly on the oral tradition.

The African situation contrasts sharply with that of India, for example. The main Indian languages have a long written tradition, with ancient poets and many written philosophical treatises (Singh & Manoharan, 1993). Works of literature, written when most of Europe was still in the Dark Ages and maintained and transmitted over the generations by priests and scholars, are invaluable in promoting linguistic pride among the speakers of the language. These help to deepen the propensity for linguistic nationalism.

But the written tradition can include one additional element – *sacred* literature. Because most African languages were unwritten until relatively recently, those oral languages do not have sacred scripture. Sacred scripture itself provides additional fertilizer for linguistic nationalism. Linguistic nationalism among the Arabs, for example, has been greatly influenced by the Holy Book, the Qur'an, as well as by the great Arab poets of the past (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998: 5–6).

All these are, of course, massive generalizations with a lot of exceptions. Some Ethiopians were literate and sophisticated long before the written word was common currency among the Anglo-Saxons in the British Isles. Large sections of the Tanzanian population today have shown strong nationalistic attachment to the Swahili language as an additional language (Blommaert, 1999). So strong has been their linguistic nationalism in fact, that translated into government policy, it has led some observers of the Tanzanian scene to express the fear that it may have put many smaller Tanzanian languages under threat of extinction (Mekacha, 1994).

And yet Africans describe their countries as being 'English-speaking' and 'French-speaking' in spite of the fact that the proportion of speakers of these imperial languages is so small, and in a manner never encountered in ex-colonial Asia. One of the gross linguistic anomalies of post-colonial Africa, in fact, is that whole classes of countries are named after the imperial languages they have adopted as their official language. We do constantly refer to 'Francophone Africa', 'Anglophone Africa', 'Lusophone Africa', and the like. Asia, too, was colonized; and yet nobody refers to 'Anglophone Asia' or 'French-speaking Asian countries'.

What, then, is the difference between Africa and Asia? It lies in the scale of political dependence on the imperial languages, linking them much more firmly to the African countries, and their very identities, than to the former Asian colonies of European powers. Business in government offices, in legislatures and judiciaries in much of sub-Saharan Africa is conducted primarily in European languages. Not only is the fundamental

law based on European principles, but the laws are expressed entirely in European languages. And, in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda, Senegal and Gabon, all speeches addressed to the nation have to be given in the relevant European language. This is quite apart from the educational systems of sub-Saharan Africa, almost all of which are predicated on the supremacy of European languages as media of instruction, and some of which completely ignore indigenous languages as worthy topics of educational study.

It is in this sense that terms like 'Anglophone' and 'Francophone' Africa are appropriate – not because they describe how many people in those countries speak those languages, but because they describe the degree and perhaps nature of the lingo-cultural dependence in the societies concerned.

What is of more direct significance for our purposes, however, is that strong linguistic nationalists (as in Asia, the Middle East and Europe, for example) tend to resist any massive dependence on languages other than their own. Except in a few cases, like those of the Somali, the Amhara and the Afrikaners, sub-Saharan Africans are rarely strong nationalists in this linguistic sense. As Mazrui and Tidy (1984: 299) explain:

> There is less linguistic nationalism generally in Africa than has been observed in places like Malaysia, India and Bangladesh. The African situation is characterised by an expanding use of English and French. Commonwealth African governments are introducing English at an earlier phase in the educational pyramid than the British themselves did.

The prediction, made a quarter of a century ago by Conrad and Fishman (1977: 56), that 'as the demand for English instruction continues to increase, competition from national languages … will nevertheless bring about a decline in English medium schooling at the primary and secondary levels', seems more far-fetched today in African education than ever before.

Indeed, education is one sphere where the English language exerts its control in the most hegemonic manner. It is through English as the medium of instruction in African educational institutions that structures of intellectual dependency are reproduced and deepened and of economic dependency reinforced. It is not surprising then that a wide range of international agencies in the vanguard of globalization, from the World Bank to the British Council, have demonstrated strong commitment to the maintenance of English language instruction in African schools (Phillipson, 1992). But how does this interplay between English in education and the fact of dependency get manifested in real terms? And is there a way out of this cycle of dependency for Africa? These are some of the concerns that are treated in Chapter 2.

If linguistic nationalism in Africa is relatively weak, however, could African languages benefit from other types of nationalisms whose manifestations may include a protective orientation towards peoples' 'own' languages? It is true that the humiliation of Black people has been much more on the basis of their race than on the basis of their language. As a result African nationalism is much more inspired by a quest for racial dignity than by a desire to defend African languages. But is it possible to have a certain degree of linguistic nationalism deriving from the more over-arching nationalism of race? It has been suggested that, in contrast to the African elite, the African 'masses' do, in fact, maintain an anti-imperialist, and by derivation even anti-capitalist, racial nationalism that has a direct bearing on the future of African languages. In the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993: 35):

> What prevented our languages from being completely swallowed up by English and other oppressor languages was that the rural and urban masses, who had refused to surrender completely in the political and economic spheres, also continued to breathe life into our languages and thus helped to keep alive the histories and cultures they carried. The masses of Africa would often derive the strength needed in their economic and political struggles from those very languages. Thus the people of the Third World had refused to surrender their souls to English, French, or Portuguese.

This spirit of derivative linguistic nationalism is amply captured in the following poem by the Rastafarian poet, Bongo Jerry:

> MABRAK is righting the wrongs and brain-whitening …
> Not just by washing out the straightening and wearing
> dashiki t'ing
>
> MOSTOF THE STRAIGHTENINGISINTHE
> TONGUE – so …
>
> Save the YOUNG
> from the language that MEN teach,
> the doctrine Pope preach
> skin bleach …
>
> MAN must use MEN language
> to carry dis message:
>
> SILENCE BABEL TONGUES: recall and
> recollect BLACK SPEECH. (quoted by John, 1999: 42)

But what is the future of race nationalism? Will we experience the end of racism in the 21st century – to which race nationalism has been a reaction – or merely its reconfiguration along a somewhat different axis? Is there a kind of global apartheid developing, as white folk in the northern hemisphere close ranks, which may in turn globalize race nationalism with a derivative linguistic effect?

The English language has always been significant in the specific kind of race nationalism called Pan-Africanism. It is even arguable that Pan-Africanism as a movement would not have attained the organizational achievements that it did without the instrumentality of English. In Chapter 3, however, I explore the possibility that the 21st century has precipitated new dynamics that require Pan-Africanists to rethink the place of English in their trans-continental relationship and to design a linguistic agenda that is in greatest conformity with the present needs of the movement.

A more recent expression of race consciousness among Africans and people of African descent, of course, has been Afrocentrism. And precisely because this current emerged and continue to have its strongest base in the USA, it has had to reflect seriously about its relationship to the English language, the pros and cons, the opportunities and the limitations, in its quest for liberation from Eurocentric terms of reference. But, as shown in Chapter 4, even in the USA, across the vast distances traversed by the Atlantic Ocean, the tension between the English language and African languages has continued to feature quite prominently in Afrocentric circles. Is Afrocentric nationalism sufficiently strong to give a fresh impetus to African languages in the African Diaspora?

There is, on the other hand, the rather paradoxical possibility that the same factor of limited linguistic nationalism which may expedite the spread of English, may also be the one that may save African languages from rapid extinction in the short run. Weak linguistic nationalism probably fosters an orientation to language that regards it primarily in terms of its instrumental value rather than of its political symbolism. It is this linguistic orientation, in fact, which may have contributed to the unusually high rate of multilingualism on the continent (Fardon & Furniss, 1994: 24), with each language in the repertoire being valued and maintained for its practical benefits in its respective domain(s). Ironically, therefore, the African capacity for multilingual proficiency may help in preventing the destruction of its linguistically diverse environment.

In contrast, an uncritical instrumental view of language may promote a kind of 'do-nothing' attitude even as some languages are facing the threat of extinction. It may foster a linguistic *laissez-faire* – an abstention from any management, direction and planning – which may allow languages to die

gradually only because they are deemed less and less instrumental over time. When instrumentality is seen out of the context of power relations that define specific communities, then it fails to appreciate that language too is linked to the struggle to reshape the world that we all share. Such an attitude accords additional advantage to the languages of the powerful at the expense of those of the less powerful. Strong linguistic nationalism, however, can inspire continuous efforts towards expanding the instrumental capacity of the relevant languages, subsequently improving the chances of those languages to survive even under the great threat of linguistic 'invasion'.

As English continues to spread under the momentum of globalization, it is also being challenged to carry the weight of the African experience. In the process it is being transformed, giving the language multiple identities and multiple voices to a point where it is deemed, by some, as capable of 'speaking' for and on behalf of Africa. Hassana Alidou (2003: 104) recommends, for example, that English and other ex-colonial languages be adopted as African languages in spite of the fact that, with the exception of places like Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa, they are yet to develop a significant Black constituency of native-speakers and their standards of propriety and correctness are still determined abroad. But is this transformation in the mill of experience sufficient to avert the effects of dependency that weak linguistic nationalism is wont to deepen? And what are the conditions of its successful appropriation? This is an issue of continuing debate (especially in post-colonial studies) and is treated here in the concluding chapter of the book.

The interplay between language and the 'envoicement' of Africa naturally raises the question of who is best placed to speak for and on behalf of Africa. This issue has been assuming greater and greater prominence with the ever growing 'brain drain' from Africa to the West. For Oyekan Owomoyala (1994), for example, only African scholars are deemed qualified to represent Africa for, in his opinion, Africanist scholars, even the well meaning among them, have just promoted notions of Africa that never was. But is there an attempt among African intellectuals based in the West – including Owomoyala – to monopolize the (re)presentation of Africa and its canons, a 'post-colonialist' tendency fostered by the communicative advantage that these intellectuals have by reason of their new location relative to those African scholars based in Africa itself? Aijaz Ahmad (1992: 1–43) is particularly critical of canonical constructions of Africa and Asia by the respective Third World scholars located in the West.

According to Achille Mbembe the dividing line in who has the right to represent Africa is between those who are resident in Africa and those who

are not. In the Introduction to the special volume of the *African Studies Review*, entitled 'Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism', Achille Mbembe argues that 'Without erecting geography or place as an absolute in the calculus of knowledge production …' there is 'at times, a distinctive sensitivity on the part of those scholars [living and working in Africa, the "insiders"], ways of "writing Africa" and interpreting contemporary social life which are indeed different from the dominant narratives' of Africanists and those in exile from Africa in the West, the "outsiders"' (Mbembe, 2001: 2).

In the final analysis, what has emerged from this debate so far is the idea that there are many 'Africas' and multiple ways of seeing, writing and (re)presenting Africa that have become contested terrains in the academic spaces of the USA and elsewhere. When all is said and done, therefore, what appears in this volume is just one way seeing, one voice in the stadium of African voices in dialogue with itself and with the rest of humanity. And, ultimately, it is partly in this process of intra- and trans-African dialogue and engagement that Africa's own intellectual liberation may lie.

Part 1

Continental Africa

Chapter 1

Post-Cold War English in Africa: Between Complementarity and Competition

Introduction

The end of the Cold War, resulting partly from the collapse of the USSR and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, has precipitated a number of dynamics and counter-dynamics with international ramifications. Among these we may include:

(1) the emergence of the USA as the only super-power and the increasing Americanization of the character of globalization,
(2) greater competition within the NATO alliance, especially between America, on the one hand, and members of the European Union, on the other,
(3) the decline of state-nationalism and the subsequent widening of the political space for the renewal of regional experiments,
(4) the (re)construction of Islam as the West's ultimate cultural 'other',
(5) the demise of autocratic regimes and the growing momentum for political pluralism, and
(6) the intensification of World Bank and IMF pressures for economic liberalization in Africa.

These global reconfigurations, individually and collectively, have had certain sociolinguistic implications for Africa and for the destiny of the English language in that continent. And it is to a discussion of these implications that we must now turn.

Globalism with an American Face

The momentous changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union which were just beginning to unravel in the late 1980s led Francis Fukuyama to advance his controversial thesis that the world as a whole was increasingly moving towards a liberal democratic capitalist system

that was destined to be the final sociopolitical paradigm of all human evolution. As Fukuyama (1992: 5) put it:

> What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as a final form of human government.

While Fukuyama's conception of world history can itself be described as 'ahistorical', he is not altogether wrong in his conceptualization of Western capitalism, in its economic, political and cultural manifestations, as a growing trend of evolution, imperialist as it may be, towards a hegemonic world culture.

Being the only super-power in the post-Cold War period, the USA has naturally become central in this globalization process. The globalization of empire that the British attempted in the formal sense has been carried further by America in an informal manner to a point where 'Americanization in its current form is a synonym for globalization, a synonym that recognizes that globalization is not a neutral process in which Washington and Dakar participate equally' (Readings, 1996: 2). And, in time, Americanization is increasingly coming to imply the end of national culture (Readings, 1996: 3), the many varied responses to it notwithstanding.

As the single largest English-speaking country in terms of number of native-speakers, and with its economic, political and technological pre-eminence, the USA is expanding the frontiers of the English language at an unprecedented scale. A 1996 British Council survey has estimated that world wide today:

> there are over 1,400 million people living in countries where English has official status. One out of five of the world's population speak English to some level of competence [and] Demand from the other four-fifths is increasing … By the year 2000 it is estimated that over one billion people will be learning English. English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising' (quoted by Goodman & Graddol, 1996: 181).

For the same reason of American dominance in world affairs, then, the emergent 'global English' may increasingly be assuming an American articulation. What George Steiner said in his presidential address to the English Association (of the United Kingdom) that, 'so far as it is indeed the

world-language, English is, essentially, American-English' (1996: 2), is probably truer today in the post-Cold War era than at any other period in history. And one may speculate that if a world standard English were to emerge within the next few decades, it is more likely to be founded on the American, rather than on any other one variety of the language. The Americanization of world Englishes is, of course, given a further boost by the TOEFL establishment and network world wide and American dominance of cyberspace and information technology (Goodman & Graddol, 1996: 132).

This sociolinguistic process is by no means limited to Africa or Asia. Even in Europe, in places like Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, the march of English seems almost irreversible. In Germany, with its over 100 million or so speakers, there is now growing willingness and need 'for Germans to operate more and more in English', and American English, in particular, which is seen as an essential move for successful business with Americans. It is claimed that Germans are beginning to talk to fellow Germans in English (McArthur, 1998: 2). The 1998 Frankfurt Book Fair was a clear display of the dominance of American popular culture, not only in Germany but in the rest of Europe as well. 'Just as European movie theaters and television channels have come to be dominated by American programming, so the displays of European publishers at Frankfurt heavily featured books that are on, or are soon to be on, America's best-seller list' (Schiffrin, 1998: B6–B7). In short, 'English has become the predominant medium of international communication throughout the European Union. Although it is the first language nowhere on the European continent, it has become the most widely spoken second language everywhere' (de Swaan, 2001: 153). And Janina Brutt-Griffler (2002) provides an excellent analysis of the various forces that have shaped the evolution of English as a world language across various continents, interrogating in the process established notions of linguistic nativity as both ahistorical and distorting. But, partly because of its demonstrably low linguistic nationalism (as argued in the Introduction) and partly due to other, both material and non-material, circumstances, Africa continues to be more vulnerable to this external linguistic penetration than many other regions of the world.

If American capitalism (in alliance, of course, with other Western powers) has provided the stimulus for the globalization of English, however, it is possible to argue that the language has now become important in its own right for the consolidation of the American rule of cash-nexus on a global scale. Within the international capitalist market, the 'centre' (and America, in particular) has been serving as the 'proprietor' while the periphery can be likened to the labour and consumer dimension

of the trans-national capitalist equation. And it is increasingly the English language which allows the proprietor nations of the centre to have contact with each and every consumer nation in a way that leads to the increasing consolidation of the global capitalist market. Even countries like Japan, passionately attached to their own national languages as they may be internally, have capitulated to English in the international marketing of their commodities. This sociolinguistic phenomenon is gradually bringing about a greater convergence of economic-cum-cultural values, albeit disproportionately to the advantage of the West.

This realization that English has become an important instrument for the globalization of Western liberal capitalism may, in turn, serve as a motive for more aggressive, even if subtle, efforts on the part of the USA (and Britain) to expedite its spread in the rest of the world. At the same time, however, with the technology of communication under the control of the West, the increasing global dependence on English may be yet another factor contributing to the widening gap of privileges and opportunities between the North and the South, between the global Rich and the global Poor.

Intra-NATO Competition

As long as the presumed threat of Communism was alive, members of the NATO alliance had reason to exercise self-restraint in terms of competition with each other in the global arena. Former colonial powers thus had the room to exercise a certain degree of control over their former dominions without the anxiety of interference from other NATO allies. Even as the USA continued to hold the status of an economic and political super-power, therefore, Francophonie continued to hold sway in parts of Africa throughout the Cold War period partly because of the lack of serious challenge to France from fellow NATO allies in the stadium of African politics and economics.

With the end of the Cold War, however, America has felt less constrained to 'encroach' on territories hitherto regarded as falling under the French domain of influence. It is true that the majority of French-speaking people globally are still in Europe, especially in France itself. But the majority of French-speaking states are, in fact, in Africa. These include Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoîre, Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Malagasy, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Reunion, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia. The Francophone movement would be virtually empty without

Africa. Now, however, is the French language on the retreat in Africa and indeed globally?

While the evidence so far is still inconclusive, the USA, through its tacit support of Uganda and Rwanda, seemed to have been indirectly involved in trying to bring about the fall of Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Between 1996 and 1997, Kabila had mobilized Kiswahili as the medium of command in a multi-ethnic army of rebellion, aided and abetted by Rwanda, Uganda and Angola (Shiner, 1997). But, in fact, the rise of Kabila improved the fortunes of both English and Kiswahili in this former Belgian colony. The threat of his fall to the Congolese Assembly for Democracy, a militant opposition with a strong Tutsi core (Mamdani, 2001: 204–282), posed the possibility of consolidating the English language even further. This proposition follows from the fact that many Tutsis have themselves been converted to English through their connection with Uganda.

English acquired a new status in Rwanda since the Rwanda Patriotic Front came to power. A large proportion of the leadership of this movement grew up with English as refugees in Uganda. Anti-French sentiments due to alleged French complicity in the Rwanda massacres, on the one hand, and the prominence of American aid in the reconstruction of Rwanda's educational system, on the other, have given a further boost to the English language in the country. A bilingual French–English programme is now in place as early as the elementary school, and English is a *de facto* second official language of the country (Personal communication with Professor Rocha Chimerah of the Institute of Education in Kigali, Rwanda, January 19, 2001). Will English eventually replace French completely to become the only official language of Rwanda?

Many of the indigenous Congolese Tutsi had for a while increasingly emphasized the regular use of Kiswahili rather than their native Kinyarwanda in their own homes precisely in order to reduce their being mistaken for Rwandan immigrants. And, for this same reason they avoided English which had come to be associated with Tutsi 'returnees' from Uganda. Kiswahili thus became a kind of linguistic asylum for many Tutsi to reduce their ethnic vulnerability as speakers of the 'language of Rwanda', Kinyarwanda or of returnees from Uganda, English. While they could not entirely conceal their being Tutsi, they could at least de-emphasize it in the face of ethnic prejudice (Duke & Rupert, 1997)

When Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2000 and was succeeded by his son, Joseph Kabila, prospects in the Congo improved for both Kiswahili and English. The young Kabila grew up in Tanzania, acquiring a high proficiency in Kiswahili. He also studied the English language and ended up

having less exposure to French than his father did. He has so far pursued non-militaristic options in resolving the tensions with Rwanda which, as noted earlier, is becoming increasingly Anglicized in linguistic culture. The rise of young Kabila, then, seems to have been a further boon for both English and Kiswahili in the Congo.

But it is not only on the French side of the turbulent Great Lakes region that America may be extending its hand: It may now be moving to establish a presence in the 'core' Francophone region of West Africa. President Bill Clinton's June 1998 visit to Africa was primarily Anglophone in geographical scope. Four of the six countries he visited – Ghana, Uganda, South Africa and Botswana – are 'English-speaking'. The fifth, Rwanda, continues to be regarded as Francophone even though, as just indicated, its status is now being contested, with French fighting to resist replacement by English. But it is significant that Clinton's sixth stop-over was Senegal, a 'heartland' Francophone nation. President George W. Bush's 2003 visit to Africa also included Senegal. This is a development that is unlikely to have taken place during the Cold War period. And these American incursions into Francophone Africa are bound to increase its economic and political influence in the area, providing a further catalyst for the spread of English at the expense of French.

Then there is the effect of the new migratory trend to the English-speaking West, and especially to the USA, that has been precipitated by forces of globalization. As with English in Anglophone Africa, French in Francophone Africa was still a medium to be acquired at school. The prestige of the imperial language converted it into a resource which was relevant for class formation. By the time of independence from colonial rule, the balance of influence had shifted in the direction of those who had acquired the cultural symbols and educational skills derived from the imported metropolitan civilization.

Opportunities for the educated and the semi-educated were disproportionately located in the urban areas. Young women and men who had been educated enough to speak and write French moved to the cities in order to capitalize on their new skills. It might even be argued that these young people joined the migration to the urban centres partly because they were already equipped with the potentially profitable French language. This relationship between the imperial language and rural–urban migration has been true of Francophone Africa as it has been of other regions of the continent.

Throughout the Francophone African region, however, there is now increasing demand for English to facilitate individual migration to the USA. The educated went to the cities because they had already acquired the

French language; the educated (and even the less educated) now seek to acquire English because they want to move to America. The acquisition of French linguistic skills provided motivation for further migration to the urban areas; whereas in the case of many today, it is often the desire of widening the network of relations for professional and other reasons and moving to the Anglophone West that have provided the motive for studying English in the first place. English instructional centres are sprouting up almost throughout the region; and, if it continues, the trend is likely to serve as a new source of competition for French in this part of Africa.

This linguistic trend in parts of Francophone Africa is well demonstrated by Issifi Mayaka, a petty trader from Cote d'Ivoîre and now residing in New York city. Having initially moved to Abidjan, the capital of his native country, Issifi

> realized that he would improve sales if he cultivated clients in the considerable and well-healed expatriate community of Abidjan. With his impeccable French, he could visit the homes of French expatriates and give them private showings. By studying English he began to court diplomats from England, Australia and the United States … As Issifi's English improved so did his business. (Stoller, 2002: 15)

And it is partly this new linguistic skill that eventually facilitated his migration to the USA to establish a business in New York city.

For a variety of reasons, of course, French was already losing out to English, especially in Europe, even before the end of the Cold War. The decline of the aristocracy in Europe who had favoured French, Britain's entry into the European Union (previously European Economic Community), the predominance of the English language in the Internet and the vast expansion of American influence in the 20th century are among the factors that have led to growing ascendancy of English at the expense of French. France has sometimes had to combat the invasion of English even within its own borders. Until recently, for example, French cockpit crews and controllers defied international aviation authorities by insisting on speaking exclusively in French with each other at all of the country's airports. French phrases filling radio frequencies have often befuddled non-French pilots and have sometimes been a cause of potentially dangerous mix-ups. Now, putting safety concerns above Gallic pride, Air France 'for the first time has ordered its pilots to use only English when talking to air-traffic controllers at this bustling field outside Paris. Controllers will have no choice but to respond in kind' (*The Wall Street Journal*, March 23, 2000, p. A1).

But in Africa, specifically, the post-Cold War era may have set the stage for a new decline of the language. The end of the Cold War has unleashed a debate in France as to whether France should continue with its traditional role of a special relationship with its former African empire or whether it should now re-focus its orientation towards East and Central Europe and become a major economic and diplomatic player among former members of the Warsaw Pact (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998: 196).

Russia, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia may never adopt French as their official language but Congo, Senegal, Niger and Cote d'Ivoîre already have. The question now is whether the French language and culture in Africa will be compromised in the wake of post-Cold War developments. As Eastern Europe has opened up with economic possibilities for France, is France likely to invest less in promoting its language and culture in Africa?

For the time being, France may have decided to combine economic interests with cultural presence by promoting its language more aggressively in precisely those African countries which also promise to offer great economic opportunities. At times this may mean 'counter-penetrating' the Anglophone sphere without minding the competition that such an initiative may imply within the NATO alliance. This may explain French President Jacques Chirac's July 1998 visit to Southern Africa – virtually on the heels of Bill Clinton's visit to the continent. Regarding his visit as an enlargement of 'France's field of interest in Africa' by maintaining 'its traditional relations with African Francophone countries while opening others', Chirac was able to secure the assurance of several of the governments of the region that 'they would give French language the status of a useful pan-African language' (*Daily Nation*, Nairobi (Kenya), July 2, 1998). And so the competition for linguistic converts in Africa continues between English and French even as we enter the new millennium, with English still having the upper hand.

The Decline of State-Nationalism

The end of the Cold War has reduced ideological competition between capitalism and socialism within Africa (where socialism was itself often a by-product of nationalism). Globalization, however, has compromised the sovereignty of the nation-state. As Bill Readings asserts,

> Under globalization the state does not disappear; it simply becomes more and more managerial, increasingly incapable of imposing its ideological will, which is to say, incapable of imposing its will as the *political* content, of economic affairs … This hollowing out of the state is

> a process that appears to the erstwhile national population as 'depoliticization': the loss of belief in an alternative political truth that will authoritatively legitimate oppositional critique. (Readings, 1996: 47)

The combined effect of these two trends of development in Africa has been the decline of state-nationalism and state-nationalist ideologies, a decline that has had some obvious linguistic consequences.

The fortunes of French in Asia may well serve as a good illustration of the interplay between language and nationalism. French colonies in Asia included Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – the former French Indo-China. Each of those colonies was more or less linguistically homogenous indigenously. And so upon the departure of the imperial power, the native language could more easily assert supremacy, especially when it was accompanied by militant nationalism and radical socialism. What the end of the Cold War has done is to reduce the militancy of nationalism in Indo-China and deradicalize its socialism. As a result, the French language in Vietnam and Cambodia may have a new lease of life, even if in the shadow of the English language (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998: 197).

A similar political dynamic has also come into play in Tanzania. Even though Tanzania is linguistically heterogeneous, it has had a local *lingua franca*, Kiswahili, with a strong sentimental and instrumental value to a large section of the local population. The aftermath of British colonialism in that East African country saw the rise of the nationalism of self-reliance, *Kujitegemea*, and the socialist ideology of *Ujamaa*. The linguistic expression of this socialist-nationalism was Kiswahili, the common-person's language of Tanzanian nationhood. Tanzania thus came to distinguish itself as the one ex-British African colony with a language policy that posed a genuine challenge to English as an imperial language. And 'Tanzaphilia' (Mazrui, 1967) – that attractiveness of Tanzania to the Western intellectual mind that was particularly prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s – was as much a product of the country's radical politico-economic policies as it was of its linguistic revolution.

With the end of the Cold War and the increasing role of the World Bank and IMF, however, *kujitegemea* and *ujamaa* as nationalist ideologies lost their hold on the Tanzanian imagination, opening new spaces, in the process, for the 'rehabilitation' of the English language. Just as post-Cold War globalization was threatening the supremacy of French in Senegal, it was also having its linguistic effects felt in Swahiliphone Tanzania. The very leader, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, who was instrumental in the

Swahilization of Tanzania, was now desperately attempting to save English from total annihilation. As Nyerere was reported to have said:

> English is the Swahili of the world and for that reason must be taught and given the weight it deserves in our country … It is wrong to leave English to die … 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. (quoted by Roy-Campbell, 2001: 100)

With this presidential endorsement, the demand for the language began to grow rapidly, especially in the urban school system.

Early in 1998, the Tanzanian federal government and the Dar-es-Salaam City Commission were locked in a controversy over the re-introduction of English as the medium of instruction in the city's primary schools. The government was opposed to the move to phase out Kiswahili in city schools on the grounds that this would create a rural–urban disparity in student performance in the various school subjects. On the other hand, the City Commission insisted that it was merely responding to parental pressures – coming, most likely, from the urban middle and upper class sections of the society – for more English for their children (*The EastAfrican*, Nairobi (Kenya), February 2–8, 1998). Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1997) record the continued efforts in the country to re-centre the English language in the country's education, even at the more elementary levels.

By the end of the 20th century, the federal government had indeed capitulated to these pressures. There was now already 'a scramble by Tanzanian parents and guardians to send their children to schools in Kenya or Uganda and the mushrooming of legitimate and fake English-medium schools' in the country (*The EastAfrican*, Nairobi (Kenya), September 25–October 1, 2000). These private academic ventures, so far still restricted to the urban areas, have been operating under the name of 'international schools'. And the University of Dar es Salaam has now reportedly introduced an English proficiency test for aspiring students. Does Tanzania face the 'danger' of full (re)Anglicization? If such a trend is indeed taking place, it need not be at the expense of Kiswahili: But might it eventually imply a certain degree of deSwahilization?

In contrast, the decline of nationalism has created space for the renewal of experiments of regional integration. The East African Community once collapsed partly because of tensions precipitated by nationalist ideological differences. Now, ideological convergence in the post-Cold War era has rekindled the initiative. But in spite of the fact that Kiswahili has been recognized as an important regional language, it is English that has been

established as the official language of the new regional body by its treaty between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (*Sunday Nation*, Nairobi, Kenya, July 19, 1998).

Of course, regional interaction in Africa has never fully depended on official sanctioning. The literature about Africa as a whole is replete with references to the artificiality of its colonial borders. And what makes these borders particularly artificial is neither the multi-ethnic societies they have created nor the 'tribes' they have divided. It is rather the very concept of precise borders in Africa's 'traditional' cultures. This partly explains why those living around border areas find it difficult to respect these boundaries as they seek to respond to the pull of family and culture, of employment and business enterprise, across the borders. The reality on the African ground, then, is one where borders have often served less as walls that divide than as bridges that connect the people. So, even non-English-speaking countries like the Congo, Mozambique, Somalia and Burundi are under pressure to expand their own English horizons, among other language competencies, because of the seemingly more lucrative economic opportunities afforded by their Anglophone neighbours 'next door'.

But official sanctioning of regional integration has no doubt increased cross-border human traffic, both at the 'upper' horizontal level of elite and business class and the lower horizontal level of the average citizen. The end result of this demographic exchange may be not only the continuing entrenchment of regional *linguae francae* like Lingala, Hausa and Kiswahili, but also the consolidation of regional dialects of English, especially of West African English (WAE), East African English (EAE) and Southern African English (SAE).

This localization of the English language has been taking place, of course, independently of any policy but East Africa and probably South Africa still lag behind West Africa in this respect. There is not yet an East African English in the way in which there is a West African English. And that is mainly because English in East Africa is still much more of an elite language than it is in West Africa. A 'foreign' language gets localized when it begins to be, at least in some respects, a language of the marketplace as well as the classroom, a language of the person in the street as well as the bureaucrat in an office.

But even in East Africa, there is evidence that English is rapidly filtering 'downwards' into the urban mass sections of the regional population even as global capitalism casts its web of immesiration wider and wider. The language is beginning to bear the marks of usage by those who are not purists, of the influence of those who are not at home with the 'Queen's

English'. The localization of English may be part of its democratization as it serves the needs of the 'common people' and gets reconfigured in the mill of mass experience. Will this process of Africanization of the English language regionally enable the language to cope more efficiently with the nuances of African cultures without compromising its universal currency?

Exit from Ethnicity

But it is not only the borders of the nation-state that have been challenged by globalization. Sometimes boundaries of ethnicity too have experienced the weight of globalization. This is particularly true of 'minority' communities, like women and homosexuals, who have regarded English as an instrument of 'escape' from culturally sanctioned constraints on their lives.

To the extent that it is associated with education, English is seen to have a liberating potential for women in a systemic sense. Throughout Anglophone Africa there are reports of 'falling standards' of English, judged of course on the basis of a putative linguistic norm, as the language itself undergoes change in the mill of African social experience. At the same time, however, it has been reported that female students, whose access to the language has generally been more restricted, are increasingly performing better in English language examinations than their male counter-parts. This is certainly true for Kenya (Personal communication with Kimani Njogu of the Kenya Examination Council, October 4, 2002).

There are probably several possible reasons for this gender difference in English proficiency among school children. But, in a pilot survey of the subject in the city of Mombasa, Kenya, during the Summer of 2000, close to a half of the 48 female respondents provided more or less the same explanation for the greater success of their sex in English school examinations: That women were more highly motivated to learn the language because it accorded them new opportunities to escape from their ethnically ascribed status on grounds of their gender.

These results concur with the findings of a South African study on gender and patterns of English usage among Zulu-speaking people, contrasting rural with urban contexts. In the more 'traditional' rural setting, where women are regarded as the custodians of ethnic culture, female students are not encouraged to develop too high a proficiency in English. We are told by Dhalialutchmee Appalraju that:

> For a male, it is important to be proficient in English, in that this will give him increased status and furthermore improve his chances in the job market. His proficiency in English is one sign of his success as a

> male in the community. Females must therefore guard against being too proficient in English, lest they be seen to encroach on male identities. Zulu remains central to female identities, in that women are required to transmit cultural values to children. Retention of Zulu is more important for their identity than developing skills in English. (quoted by De Kadt, 2002, 88)

And in conclusion the study suggests that through the observance of the restrictions imposed on their acquisition and use of English, females in fact acquiesced to their subordinate status within the ethnic community (De Kadt, 2002, 93).

For student respondents in urban schools, on the other hand, the study found that not only do female pupils claim to use English in many more social contexts than male pupils, but that they are also even more convinced than their male colleagues 'that English is a far more desirable and important language than Zulu' (De Kadt, 2002: 89). From both the South African and Mombasa studies, therefore, we may be witnessing a situation in which, through English, African women are seeking to relocate themselves culturally, challenging the ethnically defined patriarchal boundaries of their identities in new ways.

As in the case of women, gay people in Anglophone Africa may also have found English a useful facilitative tool in their quest to live a gay identity. We know, of course that, with the exception of South Africa where gays and lesbians are constitutionally protected, male homosexuality is a criminal offence in virtually every African country. In some cases the anti-gay laws have been given the added force of presidential decrees. Many people still remember the verbal onslaught of President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, angered by the sight of a booth of gay and lesbian literature during the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair. As Mugabe declared, 'What we [Africans] are being persuaded to accept is sub-animal behaviour and we will never allow it here. If you see people parading themselves as lesbians or gays, arrest them and hand them over to the police' (quoted by Dunton & Palmberg, 1996, 12–13). Similar homophobic remarks have been made by some other African presidents, including President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda.

These laws and presidential sentiments notwithstanding, there are societies in Africa where homosexuality has existed for centuries and, though frowned upon and considered immoral, is definitely tolerated and practised relatively openly. What is important for our purposes here, however, is that gay people from these communities have not had to rely on English in the performance of their gay identities. They are not constrained to live a

gay life only because their linguistic repertoire may be restricted to their own ethnic languages.

There are many Afro-ethnic societies, however, especially in their more rural articulations, where homosexuality is considered a cultural taboo of enormous proportions. Many rural-based gays from these communities, therefore, have to migrate to urban areas to escape the cultural sanctions against their preferred way of life. In addition, it is in the multi-ethnic urban spaces that they hope to connect with similarly oriented people, usually from other ethnic groups, often from other countries altogether, to belong to a community. Under these circumstances, English is likely to have become an indispensable aid in this attempted escape from the anti-gay ethnic traditions that are particularly prevalent in the rural areas, in search of new spaces to live a gay life. Recent biographical studies of African gay life – e.g. Murray & Roscoe (1998) – do suggest a critical role for the English language in the interplay between ethnicity and homosexuality in urban Anglophone Africa.

The West and Dissident Islam

Globalization and its Westernizing impact have had free reign virtually everywhere in the world except in predominantly Muslim regions. There, they have met some stiff and sometimes militant resistance. Throughout the Cold War period the West tried to woo the Muslim world because it was perceived to be staunchly anti-Communist. We now know, for example, that Usama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network have their history of origin, in part, in this USA support of the *mujahideen* fighters against the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan (Chomsky, 2001: 18–19). In the post-Cold War era, on the other hand, the West has tried to demonize Islam after discovering that the religion can be an equally powerful inspirational force against Westernization. In the words of John E. Woods, a professor of Middle Eastern history at the University of Chicago, 'Almost immediately after the collapse of Communism, Islam emerged as the new evil force' (*The New York Times*, August 28, 1995) in the American government's imagination. Just as Islam inspired Muslims in their struggles against Western colonialism, therefore, it has now become the most formidable ideology of resistance against the Western cultural incursion in the new world order. The ally of the Cold War has turned the major foe of the post-Cold War dispensation. But far from subduing this alternative cultural and ideological paradigm, Western hostility against Islam has only served to intensify militant responses from its followers across the globe. The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the USA is

perhaps the tragic culmination of this confrontation between the West's hegemonic global agenda and sections of Muslim reaction to it.

The linguistic significance of this Muslim reaction was demonstrated by Algeria's anti-French move of July 1998 that made Arabic the only official language of the country. Like the 'English Only' movement in the USA, the 'Arabic Only' law in Algeria provoked protests in several parts of this North African country. And it has been suggested that 'many Algerians consider the Arabic-only law an attempt by the military-backed government to court favour with supporters of Islamic movements' (*Daily Nation*, Nairobi, Kenya, July 6, 1998). But, even if this were the case, the need to satisfy political Islam by this manifestly anti-Western linguistic symbol is a demonstration of the popularity of Islam as an anti-Western cultural ideology.

Algeria is, of course, one of the countries hitherto regarded as Francophone. In 1996, however, it opted to make English the chief foreign language in schools (Crystal, 1997: 115). With militant Islam on the ascendancy, however, the Arabization policy may be at the expense of both French and English. But in the final analysis it is French that has been the real loser.

Where Muslim reaction to the West may have phased out English more decisively is in the Sudan. When the country gained its independence in 1956, English was the language of instruction throughout post-elementary education. Then in 1969 English was replaced by Arabic at the secondary level, while English continued to be the primary instructional medium at the University of Khartoum except in subjects like History, Islamic Philosophy and Shari'a. English also served as an important working language in a variety of white-collar professions (Thewal, 1978: 2–3).

The place of the English language in Sudanese society, however, came under sudden threat within the last few years. Even though Sudanese nationalism has always been a source of pressure for the gradual replacement of English by Arabic, it was during the Islamicist period of Umar Hassan el-Bashir that it faced its greatest challenge. By 1996, and without adequate planning, the language's domain of operation as an instructional medium had been reduced to a few science subjects – notably Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy – in the country's universities and higher institutions of learning.

However, Arabic has often been regarded as a hegemonic language by the predominantly non-Islamic, multi-ethnic population of Southern Sudan. To this extent, the conflict in the Sudan is as much linguistic as it is ethno-religious. Part of the dynamic relates to the assimilative quality of Arabic such that those who acquire it as a first language can be regarded as

ethnically Arab. This ethno-cultural quality of the language has sometimes triggered fears of Arab ethno-linguistic imperialism. Protective of his Dinka ethnic culture and identity, for example, Kelueljang criticizes his cousin in the following verses:

> My cousin Mohamed
> Thinks he's very clever
> With pride
> He says he's an African who speaks
> Arabic language,
> Because he's no mother tongue!
>
> Among the Arabs
> My cousin becomes a militant Arab –
> A black Arab
> Who rejects the definition of race
> By pigment of one's skin.
>
> He says,
> If an African speaks Arabic language
> He's an Arab!
> If an African is culturally Arabized He's an Arab!
>
> (quoted by Chinweizu, 1988, 35)

In this volatile dual polity, the South has, ironically, favoured the retention of English as its official language against the imposition of Arabic – in spite of the fact that Arabic has been spreading rapidly in the region even among non-Muslims. In cases of ethno-linguistic nationalism in Africa, then, the 'ecumenical' quality of English has sometimes been its strength. People feel comfortable to make the language 'their own' partly because, in doing so, they do not have to assume the identity of the other. The tendency of Arabic to assimilate 'others' who acquire it as a mother tongue, on the other hand, has generated fears of Arab hegemony. And the more recent Arabization wave in the Sudan may have triggered an even more resolute Southern Sudanese response in favour of the promotion of the English language. Indeed, if the South achieves some measure of autonomy, it is likely to make English rather than Arabic its official language.

Resurgent Islam, emerging partly in reaction to the Western cultural face of globalization, has also prompted growing efforts among other Muslim peoples in non-Arabic-speaking societies to learn the Arabic language as a matter of religious identity as well as for purposes of gaining greater access to Islamic knowledge. In some instances, there have been demands for Arabic within the corridors of local academies as part of a

wider struggle for religious rights. This language shift has been taking place throughout the Muslim world, including in African Muslim communities, whether in Kenya or Nigeria, in Ghana or Tanzania. In her incisive study of women's counter-hegemonic discourses in Niger, for example, Ousseina Alidou (forthcoming) demonstrates how rapidly community-based Arabic language education is spreading in the country in the wake of new Islamicist responses to globalization. This push for Arabic as an additional language, however, is not likely to threaten the position of English in any way, at least not in the immediate future

The Tide of Pluralism

Since 1990 the political situation in Africa has been changing as military and single-party autocracies give way to the politics of pluralism. Many autocrats have capitulated to popular demands for democratic change from the local populations as well as from the international community. And those, like Mobutu Sese Seko, who refused to relinquish power through the ballot, were ultimately forced out by the power of the bullet. It now seems unlikely that Africa will again witness a proliferation of single-party regimes and military dictatorships on the scale experienced before, in spite of the continuing record of authoritarianism of leaders like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

These pro-democracy movements in Africa were partly inspired by protests and riots that took place in various African locations, from Soweto to Algiers, at a time when internal conditions within individual African states had themselves become ripe for the exercise of popular pressure for change. But there was also the demonstration impact of Eastern Europe in Africa's political liberalization as the Cold War was coming to an end. As Ali Mazrui put it (1990: 15):

> The collapse of European one-party systems has given new legitimacy to the multiparty alternative worldwide. African liberals have found a new self-confidence and a new sense of purpose. The concept of one-party democracy – so popular in Africa soon after independence – has in any case become less and less credible. The speedy abandonment of one-partyism by Eastern European countries had made it harder for its African champions to carry adequate conviction on its behalf.

It is in that sense that *glasnost* and *perestroika* in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have helped the cause of the liberal revival in Africa – even

though that liberal revival was already under way regardless of events in Europe.

In many instances, this momentum for democratic change was also spurred and supported by the USA and its NATO allies. Throughout the Cold War period, the USA was known to support all shades of tyrannical regimes in the Third World (Chomsky & Herman, 1979) if, by so doing, it would prevent the Soviet Union from establishing a foothold in those countries. The end of the Cold War, however, saw a USA government eager to encourage political liberalization partly because of its greater conformity with the globalization agenda of its market ideology. In the process, the USA became such a key player in the struggle for democracy in some Anglophone African countries that it virtually came to be regarded as a 'hero and liberator'. And just as Tanzania's participation in the liberation of Uganda from the clutches of Idi Amin's reign of terror gave Kiswahili a momentary boost in Uganda, America's role in the democratization struggle in Africa may have given its language, English, added prestige. This development may favour not only the further consolidation of the English language in Africa but also its increased Americanization.

But it is not only in Anglophone Africa that political democratization may go hand-in-hand with linguistic Americanization. As indicated earlier, the USA has been involved, even if indirectly, in the quest for change in Francophone countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. And in the Congo, English may be getting a further boost from the local resentment towards the French due to their support of the now fallen dictatorial regime of Mobutu. In Francophone Africa, therefore, in addition to the language's perceived role in augmenting economic opportunities for the individual, the success of English may also be derivative, based partly on anti-French sentiments. This trend can be likened to the South African and Southern Sudanese preference for English as a reaction against Afrikanerdom and Arabism, respectively.

The favourable environment for the spread of English that has been created by the opening up of the political space has received further nourishment from the centrality of the African *petit-bourgoisie* in the struggle for democracy. Drawing on popular support from the 'masses', members of the *petit-bourgeoisie* overcame the culture of fear and silence that had become characteristic of their lot throughout the pre-1990 era to lead their nations towards more open and more pluralistic societies. Having grown in numbers over the years, this is the class that is particularly keen on seeking the political patronage of the USA and its Western allies even as it is continuing to bargain away the sovereignty of Africa. As the most Westernized section of the African population, the political ascendancy of this class

in Anglophone Africa, therefore, can only be to the advantage of English in the years to come – unless, of course, there is a monumental transformation of the political landscape.

In contrast, pluralism in Africa has also given fresh expression to ethno-nationalism. As Jan Naderveen Pieterse (1996: 26–27) rightly observes:

> Ethnic politics may represent a deepening of democracy as a mobilization of hitherto passive, alienated constituencies in reaction to regional uneven development or internal colonialism, for instance when indigenous peoples who have been passive in earlier rounds of nation-building, assert their rights. Ethnicization may also be a consequence of a shift to multiparty democracy; conversely, it may be used and manipulated as a means to sabotage multi-party democracy as in Kenya recently.

All these ethno-nationalist tendencies have, in fact, come into play in post-Cold War democratization in Africa to one degree or another. And the resulting effect in some cases has been renewed emphasis on ethnic languages for a wide range of ethno-nationalist articulations. In 1999, for example, the University of Nairobi claimed to have introduced three new languages, in addition to Kiswahili, into its African languages programme: Gikuyu, Dholuo and Luhya (*The EastAfrican*, Nairobi (Kenya), March 15–21, 1999). Though justified as a response to the country's needs, it is noteworthy that the move – advocated by some nationalists since the late 1960s – did not come to maturation until during this period of democratic transition

In the same country of Kenya, the so-called 'vernacular' press virtually died out with independence from colonial rule. It has now been resurrected and has acquired new legitimacy as we see a mushrooming of periodic newspapers in local languages. In Malawi, after decades of an exclusively Anglo-centric and Chewa-centric policy, local languages like Chilomwe, Chiyao, Chitumbuka and Chisena began to find a voice, in both the print and electronic media, after the introduction of multi-partyism (Mchombo, 1998: 45). And several other African countries have manifested similar linguistic tendencies of ethno-nationalism as a direct product of the rise of political pluralism. This ethno-linguistic phenomenon, however, has not in any way been at the expense of the English language: by and large, it has just complemented English.

Regimes in power have not always been in favour of such 'vernacular' traditions. The Gikuyu language radio station in Kenya, 101.1 Kameme FM, for example, came under heavy attack from the government in 2000

presumably because of the political material it chose to air and the non-English-speaking audience it sought to reach. In that reaction, the then

> President Daniel Arap Moi directed the Attorney General and the Information, Transport and Communication Minister to ban broadcasting in Kenya's many mother tongues. The president argued that the existing radio stations broadcasting in various mother tongues were promoting tribal chauvinism. (Namwaya, 2000: 1)

As the top-most opponent of political pluralism in Kenya, therefore, Moi also became a leading opponent of ethno-linguistic pluralism in the media partly because the latter appeared to be inextricably tied to the former.

Democratization in South Africa – which is perhaps least connected with post-Cold War events – has also given a fresh impetus to English. With the end of political apartheid, ethno-nationalism has indeed become a new manifest destiny. This has led South Africa to declare eleven official languages. These include Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. While theoretically reducing English to one-eleventh of the official status, however, this new policy has actually only demoted Afrikaans, the historic rival to English in South Africa (Kamwangamaku, 2002; McLean & McCormick, 1996).

Before the 1990s, English was officially the co-equal of Afrikaans but sometimes receiving fewer resources from the government within the media and within publishing. But the end of apartheid has raised the question of whether Afrikaans should be treated in the same camp as the nine indigenous languages. Should Afrikaans be treated as just another 'native vernacular'? The distribution of language resources for the media and for education is at stake.

The end of apartheid in South Africa represents the triumph of a particular kind of African nationalism – the struggle against overt racial oppression and for cultural parity. Paradoxically, this struggle (but not necessarily its triumph) sometimes enhanced the status of the English language among the oppressed. English became not just a language of oppression but also a language of liberation.

By a strange twist of destiny English has now also become the language of de-segregation. Set in the conservative, rural heartland of South Africa, the University of Orange Free State, for example, had always been a proudly Afrikaans and very white institution. Pressures leading to change in its language-of-instruction policy, however, became significant in its integration. According to Stef Coetzee, the university's first Black vice-chancellor:

> The population of Free State province is 84% black, and the university wanted to serve that community. But it was only after the institution changed its language policy, in 1993, and began offering courses in English as well as Afrikaans, a language not widely spoken by black Africans, that it was able to significantly increase its enrolment of black students. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 4, 1998)

Ironically, therefore, democratization in South Africa has accorded the imperial language, English, a new legitimacy as an instrument for the reconfiguration of the racial landscape in South African education.

But as one would expect from the politics of pluralism in Africa, Afrikaans has not accepted its demotion lying down. As its official space began to shrink, it fought to widen its unofficial domain of public presence. It is said that since the demise of apartheid, literature in Afrikaans has paradoxically opened up to writers of 'mixed race' as well as to a broader range of Afrikaners themselves (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 2, 1998). Afrikaner ethno-nationalism, then, has also found a new voice in a more plural South Africa, with language as a continuing demonstration of the centripetal pull that is legion in many parts of Africa.

The World Bank and IMF Factor

Another result of the post-Cold War dispensation was the growing demand for privatization and structural adjustment by the IMF and the World Bank. Of course, the Bretton Woods institutions have always been pushing for economic liberalization as part and parcel of the economic and ideological globalization agenda of the West. But the effort became particularly aggressive and less compromising in the period after the Cold War. It is also in the post-Cold War era that the World Bank and IMF sought to link its agenda of economic liberalization with modest demands for political liberalization, even though when the chips were down, they continued to prefer 'stability' to pluralism.

The linguistic implications of these IMF and World Bank policies, however, have generally been mixed. The de-regulative arm of their conditionalities has, of course, encouraged trade activities, giving fresh impetus to long-distance movement of populations within nation-states and across national boundaries. This demographic dynamic resulting from de-regulation is likely to enhance the position of both English and the African *linguae francae*, nationally and regionally.

There is also the cost-sharing package of the IMF/World Bank prescription. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have viewed state subsidies to African universities as having been too high and parental

responsibility for financing the education of their children too low. As a result parents are now required to pay more and more to educate their children. This new policy now raises the possibility that university education in Africa will become even more elitist, accessible disproportionately to the children of well-to-do parents who are increasingly growing up with English as their second first language. On the other hand, by their increasing promotion of elitism in higher education, the IMF and World Bank programmes may be slowing down, inadvertently, the processes of Westernization and de-Africanization that have been under way in the linguistic and cultural domains of African societies.

IMF and World Bank demands that African governments shrink the public sector of employment may also have linguistic consequences. The government has been the largest single employer of skilled labour in many African countries and its reduction is likely to increase the proportion of the educated, who already have some command of English, within the ranks of the unemployed and the underclass. With African higher education becoming more elitist and upper class, on the one hand, and a growing number of the educated getting increasingly proletarianized, on the other, the stage may be set for the 'vertical' differentiation of English in Africa. In addition to national and regional varieties, in other words, we may also witness the beginnings of social class varieties of the language in parts of the continent.

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War has obviously precipitated some dynamics that seem to have the potential of slowing down the pace of linguistic Anglicization in Africa. But these counter-dynamics are so far too modest to really challenge the march of English. The linguistic balance sheet, therefore, is one of increasing spread and consolidation of the language on the continent. This unprecedented spread of English and the lack of sufficient linguistic nationalism underlying it, are likely to contribute to the growth in the number of 'Afro-Saxons' on the continent – that is, of Africans to whom English has become a native tongue (Mazrui, 1975: 11). But as Europeans between East and West are closing ranks against the South in a post-Cold War phenomenon of global apartheid, a question arises as to how much Afro-Saxon in identity must Africa become before its contributions to English and in English can be recognized.

In 1998, for example, the Modern Library Board of the USA released a list of 100 novels deemed the best in English published in the 20th century. *Ulysses* by James Joyce was ranked first and *The Magnificent Ambersons* by

Booth Tarkington was ranked 100th. What is significant for us is that no African novel in English made it to this top 100 list – not even works by Chinua Achebe, the Nobel Prize laureate, Wole Soyinka or the 1998 Neustadt Laureate, Nuruddin Farah. Indeed, the only authors who made this list of the century who are not native-speakers of English are Joseph Conrad, Vladimir Nabolev and Salman Rushdie. All the rest – including Africans in the Diaspora like Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and James Baldwin – are native products of the Anglo-Saxon linguistic culture to one degree or another. This means one of two things: Either writing in English when English is not one's native language is a far bigger handicap than assumed, or that the judges of the top 100 novels of the 20th century were simply too Anglo-Saxonic themselves. In light of the growing Anglo-Saxonism in the West, the latter explanation is, in fact, not totally implausible.

The ghost of Anglo-Saxonism, however, is by no means limited to Anglo-Saxons. On February 18, 2002, the jury of 'Africa's 100 Best Books of the 20th Century' competition, released its list of winning titles, with special emphasis on the top twelve. The sub-list of the twelve included: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Meshack Asare's *Sosu's Call*, Mariama Ba's *Une si Longu Lettre*, Mia Couto's *Terra Sonambula*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Cheikh Anta Diop's *The African Origins of Civilization*, Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, La Fantasia*, Naguib Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy*, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*, Wole Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood*, Ngugi wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* and Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Oeuvre Poetique*. This top category does not include any titles in African languages except, perhaps, Naguib Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy*, a novel originally written in Arabic. Yet Mahfouz's also happens to be the only text in the list not mentioned by the title of its original language of composition. All the others are identified by their original Euro-linguistic names, whether in English, French or Portuguese. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the one text that comes closest to having been composed in an African language was, in fact, assessed on the basis of its translation in a European language, English. The question arises, then, whether members of this all-African jury were not, in fact, too Europhonic in their terms of reference for judging submissions to this entirely African competition.

All this, however, is not to deny that the English language has been of tremendous pragmatic value on the continent. And contrary to the claims of African linguistic determinists, it has demonstrated its potential for creating counter-hegemonic discourses, a fact that even Ngugi wa Thiong'o – hitherto the leading linguistic determinist of Marxist persuasion – now seems to acknowledge (Ngugi, 1998). But the English language

has also deepened Africa's scientific and intellectual dependency on the West. Is there a way out?

There is urgent need in Africa for a reversal from language policies which marginalize indigenous languages to language policies which seek to strengthen them and conserve them. Of particular importance in this regard is to build the instrumental capacity of 'minority' languages, especially by increasing their use in science and technology. Even the more powerful local languages stand in danger of atrophy in the long run if they are not consciously cultivated in the direction of greater compatibility with the present state of knowledge. At the same time, planners must seek to ensure continuity in inter-generational language use at the community level. As the location of bonds of intimacy, loyalty and identity, the community, with its varied dynamics and counter-dynamics, could be crucial to the survival and vibrancy of otherwise endangered languages.

But given what we have witnessed of the history of governance in much of the Third World, so far, the elite cannot be entrusted with making the necessary political commitment to centre local languages in their respective countries. Under the circumstances, a reversal of the destiny of endangered languages may depend more on spontaneous developments than on governmental intervention. Some of the possible developments include the following:

First, as already indicated earlier, the collapse of the nation-state under the weight of globalization has unleashed both centripetal and centrifugal cultural forces. On the centripetal plane has been the resurgence of regional experiments which may ultimately favour the consolidation of African *linguae francae*. On the centrifugal plane, however, has been the greater assertiveness of ethnic and sub-ethnic nationalisms of various shades. Some of these may involve derivative linguistic nationalism, even if at the level of the subconscious. This development may lend support to the observation that,

> not only are millions upon millions of speakers of small languages on all continents convinced of the creative and continuative contributions of their languages (usually their mother tongues) to their personal and collective lives, but that many millions are engaged in individual and collective efforts to assist their threatened mother tongues to reverse the language shift processes that have engulfed them. (Fishman, 1992: 293)

In some cases, these efforts have assumed the form of popular struggles for self-determination in a multifaceted manner that combines land rights, cultural rights and linguistic rights. The challenge to human genius is now

to find a balance between the centripetal and the centrifugal, in language as in other areas of human experience.

Second, the post-Cold War convergence of interests between the North-west and Northeast may provide yet another 'escape' for Africa. With the capitalist imperative increasingly reconfiguring the world along a North–South divide, and new economic opportunities opening up in Eastern Europe, Africa is gradually being neglected. But this neglect may prove, in the long run, to be a blessing in disguise. For it may put African leaders and societies under pressure to find more indigenous solutions for their national and continental woes. In the process, African languages too may be re-centred as part of a more organic development agenda on the continent. The renaissance that may emerge from Africa's ruins, in other words, may indeed include a linguistic revivalism that will slow down its linguistic Westernization.

Finally, Africa's linguistic future in the world may also benefit from a greater push for linguistic counter-penetration. The massive investments in non-Anglo societies for the acquisition of English must be counter-balanced by investments towards greater exposure of the Anglo population to other languages of the world. As far as African languages in the American academy are concerned, the push has so far come primarily from African Americans seeking to reclaim their heritage – a good case of race nationalism with a linguistic nationalist sub-text. The effort, however, has to be trans-ethnic/trans-racial if it is to deliver its full benefits to the human community. Just as Africa's excessive dependency on English (and other European languages) can be a denial of innovation, excessive linguistic insularity in the Anglo world can be one of the causes of its own cultural decline. The Anglo world needs to realize that, in the long run, the strength of its own voice may depend, in no small measure, upon the promotion of greater linguistic and cultural interdependence on a global scale.

Linguistic counter-penetration is, of course, already taking place spontaneously at an increasing rate. In spite of attempts to regulate the influx of people from Africa, the Arab world and Asia into the USA, for example, the proportion of immigrant populations is said to be swelling rapidly. In 1990 the United States Bureau of Census estimated that one in seven people in America spoke a language other than English at home. 'Since then the proportion of immigrants in the population has grown and grown' (Wallraff, 2000: 54) and every effort by the English-Only movement to inscribe English as the only official language of the USA triggers a new wave of linguistic ethno-nationalisms that seek to ensure the survival of linguistic and cultural diversity.

There are languages other than English that, because of their international market value, are already high on the demand scale in foreign language university programmes in a place like the USA. These include Japanese and Arabic; and the demand for the latter has increased significantly since the tragedy of September 11. But the growing number of immigrants within the USA is also encouraging the study of other languages of the world. Spanish is experiencing particularly high enrolment rates due to the expanding presence of people of Latin American origin. Proficiency in Spanish, in addition to English, is becoming an asset in its own right for job-seekers in the USA. Even presidential candidates George W. Bush (for the Republican Party) and Al Gore (for the Democratic Party) found it necessary to display their proficiency in Spanish during the 2000 presidential race. Will Yoruba in New York city or Somali in Columbus, Ohio, one day acquire substantial market and political value as additional languages? Is it possible that, in time, bilingualism in English and one or more immigrant languages may be a more marketable linguistic qualification in the USA than monolingualism in English alone? In its bid to hire more minority workers supposedly to reflect the American community better, the FBI Agency made a special attempt to target people with bilingual competence. In addition to Arabic, people who could speak 'the African languages of Swahili and Yoruba' were also said to be 'in great demand' (*The Columbus Dispatch*, Columbus (Ohio), February 13, 2001).

As a deliberate policy, linguistic counter-penetration is, of course, partly based on the belief that linguistic diversity is itself a desirable, if not an altogether necessary pursuit of the human community. It is important, however, to recognize the limitations of the ideology of linguistic diversity under the present politico-economic world order. This ideology presupposes that all languages are morally equal and that, therefore, each has the right to have an unrepressed presence at the global linguistic banquet. In the real world, however, languages are not equal. While some are privileged as the languages of politico-economic power and control, others are marginalized and still others are pushed to the verge of oblivion.

If global linguistic diversity is to take root, then, it must be built on politico-economic empowermnent based on a new world order. For a long time the world was polarized between two politico-economic super-powers, the USA and the Soviet Union. Then the world was essentially bicentric. Now the world is contending with only one super-power, the USA. The world has become virtually unicentric. A linguistically diverse world, however, may require a more polycentric equation, a globe which, in Samir Amin's conception, has multiple centres of politico-economic power and one which is respectful of different economic

and social paths of development (1989: 151). Advocates of linguistic diversity, therefore, may also have to be engaged in a much wider struggle for the politico-economic reorganization of the world system.

In the short run, Africa needs to rethink its own language policies especially as they relate to education. The school, after all, continues to be the primary transmission belt for English and its cultural baggage in much of Anglophone Africa. This interplay between the English language and African education is the subject matter of the following chapter.

Chapter 2

English and African Education: Between Linguistic and Intellectual Dependency

This chapter is concerned with the question of language as the medium of instruction in African education. The process of colonial education had the effect of marginalizing African languages in favour of Euro-languages, thus creating a linguistic configuration that served to legitimize and reproduce the unequal division of power and resources between the speakers of Euro-languages and the speakers of African languages. The overwhelming majority of post-colonial African governments thus inherited educational systems with imperial languages as the predominant media of instruction. We define an imperial language as one which was originally imposed by a colonizing power and which remains dominant without being the mother tongue of those who were colonized. In this sense English can be considered an imperial language in much of Anglophone Africa. To date, there is only a tiny minority of sub-Saharan African nations, like Somalia, Ethiopia, Tanzania and the Sudan, that have succeeded in extending instruction in African languages beyond the lower primary levels; and even in these anomalous cases, post-primary education has remained the exclusive preserve of imperial languages. This trend is well demonstrated by Bamgbose (1991), Legere (1996) and Roy-Campbell (2003), among many others.

This linguistic situation that was bequeathed to the African educational system by the colonial dispensation has prompted two kinds of responses over the years. There is, first, the functionalist response which stresses the inevitability and even usefulness of English, suggesting that because of its global status, because of its wealth of publications, because of its 'affinity' with the inherited school system, English is the natural choice as the medium of African education. As soon as Kenya became independent in 1963, for example, the Ominde Commission – set up to advise the government on educational policies – recommended that English be used as a medium of instruction starting from the first grade, on the grounds that it would facilitate learning in all subjects, partly by avoiding a presumed

difficult transition from the 'vernaculars' and partly because of the language's own 'intrinsic' resourcefulness (Republic of Kenya, 1964: 60). The report of this commission thus strengthened the already growing support for the introduction of English as the preferred medium of instruction at an earlier stage of the educational process than was the case during the British colonial period. The Kenyan government, then, is a prime example of a regime that has continued to be influenced by a functionalist ideology concerning the place of English in African education.

At the other extreme is the nationalist response which advocates the (re)centring of African languages in African educational instruction. This school of thought has been influenced principally by the views of the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) about the use of the so-called vernacular languages in education. Since the 1950s, it has been UNESCO's position that (1) the 'vernaculars' are superior to Euro-languages from the point of view of the development of cognitive skills in a child's early education and (2) 'vernaculars' can promote linguistic skills that facilitate, rather than inhibit, the acquisition of the imperial languages at a later stage of the educational process (UNESCO, 1953: 47–49).

This controversy about which linguistic medium of instruction provides the child the best learning facility has led to several experimental projects, both in Africa and elsewhere, especially in the 'Third World'. The results of some of these experiments have seemingly vindicated the functionalists, while others the nationalists.

In Uganda, for example, there was the 1968 Iganga experiment that was based on the teaching of geography and concluded in favour of English as the medium of instruction. The Six Year Primary (Experimental) Project at Ile-Ife (Nigeria), that was launched in 1970, on the other hand, arrived at the opposite conclusion: that instruction in a first language greatly facilitates learning (Bamgbose, 1991: 76–77). These conflicting experimental results do not necessarily demonstrate that one approach is as good as the other. Rather, they may be a reflection of the ideological biases of the experimenters themselves.

In spite of the extensive spread of English to the earliest levels of education, and in spite of the tremendous resources invested in its promotion, there have been numerous claims of 'falling standards' of English in the educational institutions as well as in the society at large. Catherine Mukiibi (1991: 40) notes that, in Uganda, there has been 'an outcry from different corners, the media for one, and even from the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB), at the gradual falling standards of English generally'. Mukiibi attributes this trend to the growing number of students in

individual classrooms, lack of teaching materials and supposedly insufficient time allocated to English in school timetables. In addition to being the only medium of instruction then, it is now deemed necessary to accord English more time as a subject.

In Kenya, the fear of falling standards in English has been a recurrent issue in government reports and the media. A 1993 report of the Kenya National Examination Council, for example, notes that 'the standard of English has been falling while that of Kiswahili has shown improvement since it was made a compulsory subject in the 8-4-4 system of education'. The report goes on to state that students cannot follow basic instructions in English and end up giving irrelevant answers in examinations (*Daily Nation*, Nairobi , Kenya, August 14, 1993).

But perhaps the most alarming statement on the falling standards of English in Kenya came from Professor J. Kiptoon, the vice-chancellor of Egerton University. Kiptoon claimed that many undergraduate students in Kenya's public universities are functionally illiterate in English and could not even write a simple application for a job in the language. Kiptoon went on to report that 'a good number of employers have complained that many graduates cannot communicate effectively in English which is the official medium of instruction right from the primary to university level' (*Daily Nation*, June 5, 1993). Kiptoon's 'revelation' triggered a long newspaper debate about the possible causes of this supposed decline in the standards of the English language.

One recurrent issue in this on-going debate is how the problem of the quality of English as an instructional medium is leading to poor performance in other subjects. The impression is thus created that the whole of education in Kenya is virtually in a state of crisis and that the only possible way to save the situation is to invest immensely more resources in raising students' English proficiency. The Primary Education Strengthening Project and Secondary English Language Project, both sponsored by the British government, have in fact been launched partly to redress this academic problem (*Daily Nation*, June 5, 1993). And these concerns of Kenya and Uganda are shared by most other former British colonies in Africa.

Particularly noteworthy in this entire debate is the total absence of voices suggesting, even mildly, that perhaps the policy of English-medium instruction from the earliest years of an African child's education deserves another look altogether. The question that preoccupied the British colonial administrators and missionaries as to which language was most suited to learning in early childhood education has virtually disappeared in current African debates among policy-makers on English as a medium of

instruction and its implications for the acquisition of knowledge in other subjects in general. The situation affirms once again the triumph of the 'English Only' ideology and policy in education in many British ex-colonies in Africa.

But what have been some of the implications of this pro-English educational policy for Africa in relation to global configurations of power? And what alternative strategies are available to the continent to address some of these implications in the new millennium?

The World Bank and the Question of Instructional Media

The World Bank is certainly one of the greatest agents of globalization today. In that role, it seems ironic that it has identified itself with the more nationalist school of thought that encourages the use of African 'mother tongues' as media of instruction, at least in the lower levels of elementary education. In spite of the rhetorical commitment of several African governments to the promotion of African languages as instructional media, the World Bank has compiled data demonstrating that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the imperial languages – English, French and especially Portuguese – continue to be predominant, from the earliest phases of the educational process, almost throughout the continent. And, by all indicators, these Euro-languages are becoming increasingly consolidated in the African educational process, as in other domains of African society. The present direction in Africa, then, is towards a maximum convergence between Euro-languages and secular education and, conversely, towards a maximum divergence between Afro-ethnic languages and the school. This is a picture that obviously portends a gloomy future for the 'development' of African languages and explains, to some extent, the persistent calls by some nationalists for policies assisting the (re)centring of African languages in education and in the lives of the African people.

Like many functionalists who argue that English in Africa and in the 'Third World', has become vital in its own right, in spite of its colonial roots, the World Bank too recognizes that fluency in the imperial languages 'may help promote political stability and build national unity as well as serve economic purposes'. Unlike the functionalists, however, the World Bank tries to project an image of sensitivity to the pedagogic advantages of using the tongues that are more familiar to the average African pupil as media of instruction. It notes that 'current research suggests that … the acquisition both of oral fluency and of literacy in a second language is most successful when there is a strong foundation in the first language …' (World Bank, 1988: 44).

Against this backdrop, the World Bank claims that the most effective educational approach is one that begins instruction in a local language and switches to the second language – almost invariably the European tongue of colonial origins – at a later stage. 'With this approach', we are told, 'children are able to acquire basic literacy, learn the fundamentals in various subjects and adjust to the school and its demands before they confront the task of learning a new language' (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991: 167).

In another World Bank publication on strategies and priorities for education, the pedagogic merits of instruction in a language that is most familiar to the child are expressed once again. 'Learning is more effective', it is claimed 'if instruction in the first several grades is in the child's native language. This approach allows for mastery of the first language and promotes cognitive development needed for learning a second language' (World Bank, 1995: 79). Clearly, then, the World Bank's view seems to conform to the linguistic position that has always been espoused by UNESCO with regard to the preferable medium of instruction and has continued to influence African pedagogists and language nationalists to this day.

The World Bank, however, accepts an even more radical proposition. Not only does instruction in a student's first language enhance learning and the development of basic cognitive skills, instruction in a less familiar, second or foreign, language is actually detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

> Children who speak a language other than the language of instruction [which here refers to the European languages] confront a substantial barrier to learning. In the crucial, early grades when children are trying to acquire basic literacy as well as adjust to the demands of the school setting, not speaking the language of instruction can make the difference between succeeding and failing in school, between remaining in school and dropping out. (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991: 153)

In view of the presumed consequences for the educational future of African children arising from instruction in a 'foreign' linguistic medium, finding ways of centring African languages in education should be a high priority for any institution claiming to have the educational welfare of the continent at heart.

However, in spite of its proclaimed conviction about the pedagogic and educational value of 'mother-tongue' instruction, the World Bank claims that it cannot impose an educational language policy on African countries. Each country, we are told, must be free to determine which language policy is best commensurate with its own unique political, economic, cultural and

linguistic peculiarities. This same institution that has been coercing African governments into overhauling their educational structures virtually overnight, suddenly becomes mindful of the national sovereignty of these countries and of their right to linguistic self-determination. Thus, it well understands,

> that there are many instances when early immersion – that is, instruction in the European languages, in an all European language environment, from day one of schooling – is more appropriate than instruction in local languages, and that such immersion may be the only pragmatic option available to a nation. (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991: 167)

With this seemingly democratic (albeit patronizing) posture, the World Bank's real position on the question of the linguistic medium of instruction becomes transparent. Behind the mask, a view transpires that encourages the consolidation of the imperial languages both in Africa and, more generally, in much of the 'Third World', and favours education in the local languages in the earlier years of schooling merely as a means of facilitating the students' acquisition of the imperial language at a later stage. This may explain why the World Bank never raises the possibility of using African languages beyond the first few years of elementary school. UNESCO has indeed campaigned for a shift to local languages in the earlier years of a child's education but it has also recommended, on educational grounds, 'that the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible' (UNESCO, 1953: 47). Still the World Bank does not seem to regard the linguistic Africanization of all primary education and beyond as a worthwhile effort. Its publication on strategies for stabilizing and revitalizing the universities, for example, makes absolutely no mention of the place of language at the tertiary level of African education (Saint, 1993).

The World Bank's structural adjustment prescriptions with regard to African education further betray its Euro-linguistic agenda. The shortage of instructional materials in local African languages is, in many instances, as pressing today as it was in the 1950s, when UNESCO carried out its survey on 'vernacular' instruction. According to the UNESCO document:

> One of the most important and difficult problems connected with the use of vernacular languages in education is that of providing reading materials. It will often happen that even a language which is quite capable of being used as a medium of instruction will be almost entirely without books or other materials. The difficulty is … above all to find the money. (UNESCO, 1953: 50–51)

At least in the initial stages, then, establishing the conditions for sustainable instruction in the local languages – which, in the quoted World Bank's opinion, is crucial to the uninterrupted educational progress of a child – requires substantial government investments in the generation of educational resources. Yet, the World Bank's prescriptions continue to place heavy emphasis on the reduction of government subsidies in education, which are indispensable to the promotion of instruction in the local languages. The self-proclaimed democratic World Bank that supposedly allows African nations the freedom to choose their instructional media accords them no choice at all in fact. For, under the World Bank–IMF structural adjustment programmes, the only path open to African nations is the adoption of the imperial languages from the very outset of a child's education.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes are also contributing to the consolidation in the use of the imperial languages in education in a different demographic sense. In its attempts to justify its pressure on African governments to cut down educational expenses and to require students to assume part of the cost of higher education, the World Bank has sometimes argued that the majority of students can afford to pay for their education because they come from fairly affluent backgrounds. Subsidies to public universities, in particular, are considered an inefficient educational investment, and a regressive social spending because supposedly university students are disproportionately from the upper end of the scale of income distribution (World Bank, 1994: 3).

In absolute terms, however, the same World Bank figures show unequivocally that the majority of students in Africa (an average of about 60%) come from the ranks of the peasantry, workers and petty-traders, who are not likely to have the means to meet the increasing cost of university education. The natural outcome of the tuition fees increase, then, is a rise in drop-out rates among students from poorer families. In Kenya's Moi and Egerton Universities, for example, with their combined population of about 6000 students, over 2000 students were deregistered in early May of 1996 because of the non-payment of fees and tuition (*Daily Nation*, Nairobi, Kenya, April 4, 1996). Thus, the net effect of the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes in education is to transform the African university into a 'white-collar' institution, as far as the background of the student body is concerned.

This potential population shift in African universities has definite linguistic consequences. The imperial languages in Africa have their strongest demographic base among the children of white-collar families. In

some African cities, English is increasingly becoming the tongue with which middle- and upper-class children feel most comfortable in virtually all conversational situations and domains. As Mohamed Abdulaziz has observed with regard to Kenya, there is a growing

> number of high cost, private and international schools, where many of the teachers are expatriate native-speakers of English. Children who go to these expensive schools come from rich, Western educated elite families, normally with both wife and husband possessing high competence in the English language. The children live in exclusive and expensive multinational suburbs where the primary language of the playground, shopping centres, schools, places of entertainment, churches and hospitals is English. (Abdulaziz, 1991: 397)

In essence, then, the exclusionary effect that the World Bank prescriptions will have on the children of the lower classes will further consolidate the use of the imperial languages in African education.

The World Bank's linguistic Euro-centredness in the educational arena is further demonstrated by its views on the educational achievements of Tanzania. Outside 'Arabophone' Africa, Tanzania is one of the few African countries that, after 1967, managed to completely replace the imperial language, English, with a widely spoken indigenous *lingua franca*, Kiswahili, in all the seven years of elementary education, while English continued to be maintained as a school subject. It was further envisioned that a time would come when Kiswahili would be the sole medium of instruction from the earliest to the latest stages of education. In a 1982 report of the Presidential Commission on Education that was set up by the then president of the country, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, it was recommended that teaching of both English and Kiswahili be strengthened, while the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction be extended to post-primary education. In the words of the report:

> In order that the nation be able to develop its culture and ease the understanding of most of the populace at the different stages of education that … plans be made to enable all schools and colleges in the country to teach all subjects in Kiswahili beginning with Form I in January 1985 and the University beginning 1992. (quoted by Roy-Campbell, 1992: 178)

By all indications, however, this pressure for linguistic change in favour of Kiswahili in the Tanzanian school system was brought to an abrupt end after the country capitulated to the IMF and its draconian conditionalities,

which forced it to reduce its subsidies in education and other social spheres. Prior to this,

> donors had accepted certain conditions put forth by the Tanzanian government, especially with respect to its autonomy in the area of educational planning … [But] by the beginning of the 1980s the Tanzanian government had embarked on intense negotiations with international donor agencies, in particular the International Monetary Fund (IMF).The negotiations were driven by food shortages resulting from drought, and severe problems with financial resources to purchase petroleum products and other inputs needed for the maintenance of its economic sector. (Roy-Campbell, 2001: 113–114)

All this dealt a blow to Tanzania's sovereignty to determine its own educational destiny. Nonetheless, the country has continued to use Kiswahili as its main medium of instruction in public schools and even in those colleges that train teachers of primary education.

The World Bank, however, is not comfortable with the Tanzanian model. In a comparative analysis of high-school performance in Kenya and Tanzania, it casts doubt on the prudence of Tanzania's educational language policy. It suggests that Tanzania's high-school education is qualitatively inferior to that of Kenya and that this educational inferiority can, in part, be attributed to the exclusive emphasis on Kiswahili as a medium of instruction at the primary level. In the words of a World Bank document on education in sub-Saharan Africa:

> The Tanzanian system also greatly emphasized the use of Swahili at the primary level, which may have made it more difficult for students to learn in English in secondary school. Research indicates that for any given combination of inputs of individual ability and years of secondary schooling in the two countries, cognitive output (as measured by scores on academic achievement tests) are substantially higher in Kenya than in Tanzania. (World Bank, 1988: 56)

The basis of this cross-county comparison and the conclusions drawn from it are, of course, of questionable merit on purely methodological grounds. But that aside, we are suddenly asked to believe that, empirically speaking, basic educational instruction in a more familiar indigenous language is not, after all, the academic asset that it was claimed to be by some educational theorists but is instead a cognitive liability. The Kenyan model, which uses English from the very first years of primary school, and sometimes as early as the kindergarten, to the complete exclusion of more

indigenous languages, is now upheld as the more effective instructional arrangement.

From these examples, then, it is clear that the World Bank is speaking from both sides of its mouth. It gives the impression of being philosophically in sympathy with educational instruction in local languages but proceeds to pursue pro-imperial language policies in practice. Indeed, it is no coincidence that soon after Tanzania had submitted to the clutches of the World Bank and the IMF in the 1980s, the British Overseas Development Agency (ODA) moved in, in full force, to launch the multi-million dollars English Language Teaching Support Project in 1987 (Roy-Campbell, 1992).

As indicated earlier, virtually throughout Africa, there have been alarm bells about declining academic standards. Yet, neither the World Bank–IMF pair nor the British ODA has even questioned the wisdom of educational instruction in European languages. On the contrary, in the one country, Tanzania, that has dared challenge the hegemony of the imperial language by replacing it with Kiswahili in the primary school, its educational language policy has been quickly singled out by the World Bank as the culprit for its supposedly poor academic standards. The double standard here is evident; and, behind it, we may get a glimpse the World Bank's hidden agenda for linguistic Eurocentrism in African education.

Language, Education and Development

What, then, could be the motives for the World Bank's 'camouflaged' advocacy of European language instruction in Africa? The World Bank and the IMF have become the principal organizations through which the capitalist 'West' seeks to control the destiny of the rest of the world. In this respect, the establishment and reconstitution of structural inequalities (in institutional set-ups and financial allocations) and cultural inequalities (including attitudes, pedagogic principles etc.), between the imperial European languages and other languages (Phillipson, 1992: 47) become indispensable strategies towards that attempted control. The question, then, is how a specific language policy – overt or covert – comes to serve as an instrument of imperialist control.

Some nationalists have sought to explain linguistic imperialism in deterministic terms. In conformity with the ideas of Benjamin Lee Whorf (Whorf, 1956), they have sometimes argued that there is a culturally-bound 'tyranny of language', such that the semantic structure of one's language, as well as the linguistic habits it fosters, determine one's perception of the social world. While Whorf was interested in explaining the cognitive

impact of language on its native-speakers, the nationalists have made a cross-cultural leap, claiming that the world view inherent in any particular language can be transposed to speakers of other unrelated languages. When Western countries and institutions seek to impose their languages on Africa, therefore, the quasi-Whorfian interpretation of the African nationalists is that 'the West' intends to imbue the collective mental universe of the African people with a European world view. This perspective, however, is not wholly tenable. As I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, it is inadequate for explaining the imperialist role of European languages in Africa (Mazrui, 1995).

A different perspective on the place of language in the West's global control focuses on its economic imperatives, both from the labour and the market viewpoints, arising from the World Bank's new paradigm of the African academy. Mahmood Mamdani (1993: 13) reports that:

> At a meeting in Harare in 1986, the World Bank argued that higher education in Africa was a luxury: that most African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates [abroad].

In one of its studies on the state of higher education in the world, the World Bank has recommended the restructuring of African universities with the goal of transforming them into regional polytechnics for the production of mental and manual labour, of graduates who supposedly have the practical skills needed by African economies (World Bank, 1994: 3). These prescriptions of the World Bank and IMF for education in Africa are essentially intended to consolidate the globalization agenda. By calling into question the role of the nation-state, globalization has direct implications on education to the extent that the quality of a nation's education and training system is seen to hold the key to future economic development.

Far from serving the needs of Africa, the World Bank/IMF proposal only deepens Africa's under-development and consolidates the international labour hierarchy to the advantage of foreign capital. The old Western champions of national protectionism have now tried to break free of their national roots, creating a global auction for investments, technology and jobs. As capital has become footloose, the mass production of standardized goods and services has become located in countries, regions and communities which offer low wage costs, light labour market legislation, [and] weak trade unions …' (Brown & Lauder, 1997: 172)

With these developments, there has been a shift in routine production jobs from the North to developing countries in the South. Thus the fortunes of routine producers in the West itself has been declining, while those of symbolic analysts and thinkers – who create new models and identify and

broker new problems – have been on the rise. As Africa is forced to go more practical in its academic focus, the North itself proceeds to put greater and greater premium on knowledge producers of the symbolic, theoretical type.

This labour configuration has sometimes been justified as 'a great boon to many workers [in the Third World] who otherwise would be jobless or working for much lower wages. These workers [from developing nations], in turn, now have more money to purchase symbolic-analytic services from advanced nations …' (Reich, 1997: 165). This is the kind of logic that seeks to legitimize both the global apartheid in the labour sector as well as the attempts to channel the African academy to educational training of the vocational type. In the process, of course, Africa's own intellectual potential and enterprise is de-valued as the intellectual hegemony of the North gets more and more deeply entrenched.

Partly instrumental in this development towards the dis-intellectualization of Africa has been the effects of SAPs imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. These have generally led to drastic cuts in educational investments in various African countries. Accompanied by rapid inflation and forced devaluation of local currencies, African universities and other educational institutions were now starved of crucial resources, from salaries to instructional materials. The book famine became the order of the day. With the very conditions for the (re)production of African academics now so adversely undermined, intellectual productivity and research began to suffer a severe blow.

The deterioration of the political and economic state of things triggered, in part, by local conditions and, in part, by international pressures, combined to constitute the 'push-out' force that has led to the flight of intellectual capital to the North. While there has indeed been a rapid growth in migration of African unskilled labour, the trans-location of highly skilled members of the African intellectual community has been equally momentous. Increasingly, therefore, Africa's own intellectual base is being sapped to enrich further the high level intellectual resources of Europe and the Americas. All this is part of the outcome (or design?) of the World Bank and IMF prescriptions for the nations of Africa, in general, and for their educational systems, in particular.

The labour needs of foreign capital in several African countries usually operate at three interdependent levels. They include: (1) workers qualified for unskilled or semi-technical jobs in light manufacturing and assembly plants; (2) technical maintenance workers and workers for other 'support' services for foreign and other businesses (e.g. hotels); and (3) middle management operatives, mainly for corporations investing in Africa. May

the World Bank's approach to the question of the language of instruction in Africa have something to do with the reproduction of this labour hierarchy?

Remember the World Bank's document quoted earlier that stated that using an instructional language alien to the student 'can make the difference between succeeding and failing, between remaining in school and dropping out'. If this claim is true, then, poor performance and high drop-out rates, resulting from the adoption of a Euro-language as the educational medium of instruction is likely to be a feature of lower-class children. They are the ones – not the children of the rich – who are least familiar with the European languages of instruction. And they are the ones who will have been conditioned to make up the 'modernized' unskilled and semi-skilled labour pool. The children of upper-class families, whose familiarity with the European languages is much greater, may be expected to end up in the universities and, eventually, in managerial positions. The Euro-linguistic provisions in educational instruction can be seen, therefore, as part of a wider global capitalist design. In essence, the World Bank's recommendations for the language of instruction in African schools demonstrates its continued preference for Euro-languages which create and maintain social divisions serving an economy dominated primarily by foreign economic interests and, secondarily, by a small aspiring African bourgeoisie.

The market motive of the World Bank's Euro-linguistic bias, therefore, has more to do with the role of the English language as a medium of global capitalism. Antonio Gramsci once argued that a universal language can only emerge organically and spontaneously from the ranks of 'the people', and that such a development is possible only under conditions created by socialist internationalism. In Gramsci' s words:

> The socialists are struggling for the creation of the economic and political conditions necessary to install collectivism and the international. When the international is formed, it is possible that the increase of contacts between people, the methodical and regular integration of large masses of workers, will slowly bring about a reciprocal adjustment between the Ayro-European languages and will probably extend them throughout the world because of the influence the new civilization will exert. (1985: 30)

But, Gramsci's Eurocentrism notwithstanding, it was the forces of international capitalism, rather than those of international socialism, which provided the unprecedented impetus for the globalization of European languages, and especially of the English language.

As indicated in Chapter 1, however, if international capitalism helped the fortunes of English, the consolidation of that capitalism on a global scale has now, to a certain extent, become dependent on that language. According to Naysmith (1987: 3), the role of English in the (re)production of global inequalities has a lot to do with the central place it has increasingly assumed as the language of international capitalism. And as leading institutional representatives of global capitalism, the World Bank and the IMF naturally have a vested interest in this interplay between linguistics and economics.

Unlike Holborow (1999), the analysis presented here is not one that seeks to advocate some 'economic determinism' in understanding the position of the Bretton Woods institutions towards the language question – whether that position is articulated is expressed in policy recommendations or in silence. Rather it is based on an acknowledgement that the World Bank and the IMF are essentially economistic bodies with an explicit economic and financial agenda. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that their policies on non-economic and non-financial spheres like education and culture are ultimately intended to contribute to their wider economic and market mission.

Finally, imperialist control can also be approached from the point of view of language, not as a reservoir of culturally bound world-views, but as an instrument of communication of ideas. The global hegemony of the English language, in particular, facilitates World Bank–IMF attempts to force Africa, for example, into a state of intellectual dependence on 'the West'. Quoting a publication of the Nigerian Civil Liberties Organization, George Caffentzis (1994: 17) has noted that:

> SAPs often require the hiring of foreign experts as part of the conditionalities attached to IMF–WB loans. For example, $120 million loan to the Nigerian university system puts the control of the importation of books and journals as well as expatriate staff in the hands of the Bank and its agents – hence foreign agents must be used to determine the very imports to be paid for by loans.

Had the medium of instruction in Nigeria been Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba, this degree of control of the country's academic and intellectual orientation by the World Bank and the IMF would certainly have been much more difficult.

To take another example, a World Bank loan to the Central African Republic (CAR), supposedly intended to improve the quality and accessibility of elementary education, came with a package of conditions requiring the nation to import its textbooks (and even French language

charts) directly from France and Canada. This draconian move was justified on the grounds that printing in these Western countries is cheaper than in CAR, making their publications more affordable to the average African child (Hymbound, 1995: 4). It has been estimated that, due to similar World Bank linkages and projects, over 80% of school books in 'Francophone' Africa are now produced directly in France (Nnana, 1995: 17). In this process, the World Bank has not only empowered 'the West' to further control the intellectual destiny of African children but it has also continued to weaken and even destroy Africa's infrastructural facilities, beginning with its publishing houses, needed for the local production and distribution of knowledge. In terms of sheer cost effectiveness, French and Canadian publishers would have found it far more difficult to participate in this World Bank agenda had the language of instruction in CAR been one of the local languages instead of French.

The European languages in which Africans are taught, therefore, are potential sources of intellectual control. They aid the World Bank's attempts to expose Africans to and get them to participate in the construction of knowledge that promotes the agenda of international capitalism. The hidden push for English, in particular, can be seen as part of a right-wing agenda intended to bring the world nearer to the 'end of history' and to ensure the final victory of capitalism on a global scale. Partly because of this Euro-linguistic policy, intellectual self-determination in Africa has become more difficult. And for the time being, the prospects of a genuine intellectual revolution in Africa may depend in no small measure on a genuine educational revolution that involves, at the same time, a widespread use of African languages as media of instruction.

The Problem of Intellectual Dependency

In contra-distinction to the World Bank and IMF position is a neo-nationalist African response whose reflections on the crisis of education on the continent suggests the need for a paradigm shift that draws from the past to formulate a more organic vision for self-development and self-determination. This spirit of Africa taking ownership of and responsibility for her development has sometimes been expressed in terms of a quest for an 'African Renaissance' or Renewal. This emergent thinking is well demonstrated in the 2001 series of publications under the general title of *African Social Scientists Reflections*, produced with the sponsorship of the German agency, the Heinrich Boll Foundation. Contributors to the series include leading African scholars like Archie Mafeje, Dani Wadede Nabudere and Peter Anyang Nyong'o.

There is growing consensus, in particular, that the primary economic problem in Africa has never been structural adjustment of the kind prescribed by the Bretton Woods institutions. The problem has always been how to carry out a cultural readjustment. The formal educational systems that came with European colonialism are part of the Western package of 'modernity'. But that package came to Africa with many cultural trappings. By design they have become the greatest purveyors of cultural alienation and intellectual dependency. Such excessive dependency is, by definition, a denial of innovation. The pressure now is for some readjustment towards a better balance between the continuities of African cultures and the new forces that have developed or been imposed on the continent. Within education this means making Africa's schools and universities more skill relevant and more culturally relevant. In this connection it may be worth our while to contrast Africa with the Japanese experience.

Japan's original attempts at capacity building involved considerable selectivity on the part of the Japanese themselves. The whole purpose of selective Japanese Westernization was to protect Japan against the West, rather than merely to submit to Western cultural attractions. The emphasis in Japanese education was, therefore, on the technical and technological techniques of the West, rather than on literary and verbal culture. The Japanese slogan of 'Western technique, Japanese spirit' at the time captured this ambition to borrow technology from the West while deliberately protecting a substantial part of Japanese culture. In a sense, Japan's Westernization was designed to reduce the danger of other forms of dependency (see Hayashi, 1990).

As indicated in another study (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1999: 177–182), however, the nature of Westernization in Africa has been very different. Far from emphasizing Western productive technology and containing Western life-styles and verbal culture, Africa has reversed the Japanese order of emphasis. Among the factors which have facilitated this reversal has been the role of the African academy.

One primary function of culture is to provide a universe of perception and cognition, a societal paradigm, a world view. Thomas Kuhn's work (1962) on the structure of scientific revolutions has provided new insights into the process through which scientific paradigms shift and new alternative systems for explaining phenomena that come to dominate scientific thought. But what about shifts in cultural paradigms? And how are these related to shifts in scientific ones?

Religion is often a cultural paradigm in its own right. Corpenicus and Galileo between them, by helping to transform scientific thought on

planetary movements, in time also helped to change the Christian paradigm of the universe. Charles Darwin, by helping to initiate a revolution in the biological sciences, also started the process of transforming the Christian concept of creation. These are cases in which paradigmatic changes in the sciences have led to paradigmatic changes in religion.

Historically there have also been cases where religious revolutions have resulted in scientific shifts. The rise of Islam gave the Arabs for a while scientific leadership in the northern hemisphere. Puritanism and non-conformity in Britain in the 18th century was part of the background of both a scientific and an industrial revolution in that country.

But paradigmatic changes are caused not merely by great minds like those of Copernicus, Newton, Darwin and Einstein, nor only by great social movements like Islam and the Protestant revolution, but also by acculturation and normative diffusion. And it is in this sense that colonialism constituted a major shift in the cultural paradigm of one African society after another. Traditional ideas about how rain is caused, how crops are grown, how diseases are cured and how babies are conceived have had to be re-examined in the face of a new epistemological culture of the West. At independence, therefore, the initial problem lay precisely in the model of the academy that Africa inherited from the West.

The lack of change in the conception of the transplanted academy in the post-colonial period caused a lot of changes in the attitudes, values and worldview of its products. Since the modern academy, especially the university, was so uncompromisingly foreign in the African context and was transplanted with few concessions to African cultures, its impact was more culturally alienating than it need have been. A whole generation of African graduates grew up despising their own ancestry and scrambling to imitate others.

This syndrome of self-abnegation is well captured in Okot p'Bitek's poem (1969), *Song of Lawino*, in which Lawino laments about how her husband, Ocol, pours scorn on everything African. She is proud that Ocol is well tutored in the ways of the European:

> My husband
> Has read at Makerere University
> He has read deeply and widely …. (p. 140)
>
> My husband has read much
> He has read extensively and deeply
> He has read among white men
> And he is clever like white men … (p. 200)

But what is the outcome of this reading? According to Lawino:

> … the reading
> Has killed my man
> In the ways of his people.
> He has become
> A stump (p. 200)

In fact, in Lawino's estimation, the entire class of educated African males had become virtually emasculated by 'this reading' introduced by Europeans:

> Bile burns my inside!
> I feel like vomiting!
>
> For all young men
> Were finished in the forest [of books]
> Their manhood was finished
> In the classrooms,
> Their testicles
> Were smashed
> With large books (p. 208)

Through a process of 'normalization', then, education is seen to have produced 'docile bodies' of African men, impotent and functionally ineffective in meeting the needs of production of their own societies – for their testicles had indeed been crushed!

Those African graduates who later became university teachers themselves have, on the whole, remained intellectual imitators and disciples of the West. African historians have indeed begun to innovate methodologically as they have attempted to grapple with oral traditions and its implications for historical research. There is also some academic experimentation with *mitishamba,* African herbal medicine, and African music and dance in some institutions but still at a rather symbolic level. But, on the whole, most disciplines are still condemned to paradigmatic dependency.

An important source of this intellectual dependency is the language in which African graduates and scholars are taught. For the time being, it is impossible for an African student or graduate to be even remotely familiar with the works of Marx or Ricardo without the help of a European language. *Das Kapital* is not yet available in major African *linguae francae* like Swahili and Hausa, let alone in smaller – i.e. in terms of number of speakers – and more ethnically confined languages like Kidigo and Lutooro. In short, major intellectual paradigms of the West that abound in

African university curricula continue to remain unavailable in a single African language.

As matters now stand, an African who has a good command of English has probably assimilated other aspects of Western culture as well. This is because the process of acquiring the English language in Africa has tended to be overwhelmingly through a formal system of Western-style education. It is because of this that the concept of an African Marxist who is not also Westernized is, at present, a sociolinguistic impossibility.

This need not apply to a Chinese or Japanese Marxist, where it is possible to undergo an ideological conversion at a sophisticated level without the explicit mediation of a foreign language. Japan especially has tamed its language to cope with a wide range of intellectual discourse. Of course the Japanese range goes beyond ideological and political literature. But today, in Black Africa, a university-trained surgeon who does not speak a European language is virtually a sociolinguistic impossibility. So is a modern physicist, a zoologist, an economist.

Nor is it simply a case of a surgeon or a physicist or an economist acquiring an additional skill called a 'European language' which (s)he is capable of discarding when (s)he discusses surgery or physics or economics with fellow professionals. Professional Japanese scientists or social scientists can organize a conference or convention and discuss professional matters almost entirely in Japanese. But a conference of African scientists devoted to scientific matters in an African language is not yet possible.

What is even more astonishing, perhaps, is that so many African intellectuals and scholars continue to regard the lack of seriousness about knowledge in African languages as perfectly justifiable. The situation at the beginning of the new millennium continues to lend credibility to the claim by Mazrui and Tidy (1984: 314) that,

> Recommendations about paying more attention to African languages, systematically building up their vocabularies for certain new areas of national life, and integrating them more fully into the educational system, have often encountered either silent skepticism among black intellectuals and scholars or outright derision.

The anomalies of cultural dependency thus continue to bedevil Africa.

We can say, then, that intellectual and scientific dependency in Africa is virtually inseparable from linguistic dependency. And since a major function of culture lies in providing media of communication, the choice of English as a medium of instruction in 'Anglophone' African academies has

had profound cultural consequences for the societies which are served by those educational institutions.

Towards Decolonization

How then can Africa achieve that elusive goal of educational and intellectual capacity building without the chains of dependency? Ali A. Mazrui (1995) has proposed that the process of decolonization in Africa needs to involve at least five processes – indigenization, domestication, diversification, horizontal inter-penetration and vertical counter-penetration. Indigenization involves increasing the use of indigenous resources, ranging from native personnel to aspects of traditional local technology.

Domestication, on the other hand, relates to Western institutions existing in Africa. It is the process by which such institutions are in part Africanized or traditionalized in local terms. Domestication involves making imported versions of modernity more relevant to local needs, conditions and society at large.

The third strategy, diversification, means, at the broader level of society, diversifying the ways of perception, sources of expertise, techniques of analysis, types of goods produced, markets for these products, general trading partners, aid-donors and other benefactors. The principle here is to help an African country diversify those upon whom it is dependent with the understanding that excessive reliance on only one alien culture is more dangerous for a weak state than reliance on half a dozen other cultures. Reliance on only the West is more risky than diversified dependency on both East and West.

The fourth strategy of decolonization is horizontal inter-penetration among African countries themselves. In the field of technical assistance, for example, it would mean that African countries with an apparent excess of skilled human power in relation to their absorption capacity should not only be prepared but also encouraged to facilitate temporary or permanent migration to other African countries. This may be likened to an horizontal brain-drain – the transfer of skills from say, Egypt to the Sudan, or from Nigeria to Zambia.

Finally, there is the strategy of vertical counter-penetration. A case in point is, again, the brain-drain. On the whole African countries cannot afford to lose their skilled human resources. But, according to Ali Mazrui (1995), it would be a mistake to assume that the northward brain drain is totally to the disadvantage of Africa. Intellectual penetration of Africa by the northern industrial states must, one day, be balanced with reverse intellectual penetration by Africa. Given the realities of an increasingly

interdependent world, decolonization will never be complete unless penetration is reciprocal and more balanced.

Three of the strategies outlined above – namely indigenization, domestication and diversification – have some direct relevance to our concern with the interplay between language and education in Africa. The promotion of Kiswahili as against English in Tanzania is a case of indigenization. By making the language a medium of instruction in its schools, for example, Tanzania has been able to reduce its dependency on, say, the United States Peace Corps teachers relative to other African countries that continue to rely on English in their educational institutions. More African countries need to experiment with their indigenous linguistic pool as part of a more general agenda to make the educational system more sensitive to local needs. The process of indigenization could also involve exposing African students to other indigenous forms of knowledge which continue to be articulated primarily in African languages.

As for domestication, this will involve the transformation of English, as an alien medium, and make it respond to local imagery, figures of speech, sound patterns and the general cultural milieu of the region. After all, this is in keeping with the English tradition itself, 'one expressed by Dryden in his efforts to modernize the English of earlier poets and by Coleridge and Wordsworth in seeking to return literary language to the domain of the 'real' language of ordinary people' (Bailey, 1991: 162). A wide range of studies on the linguistic features of African Englishes is already available. These include Chisimba (1984) and Schmied (1991) for sub-Saharan Africa in general, Bamgbose, Banjo and Thomas (1997) for West Africa, Brandford and Brandford (1978), De Klerk (1996) and Wissing (2002) for South Africa, among many others. It will also mean creating counter-hegemonic discourses with this same imperial language. English in Africa, then, needs to be Africanized in this broad sense that encompasses inscription of new meanings, while African languages need to be elaborated to make them more compatible with the present state of knowledge.

Clearly the two strategies of domestication and indigenization are closely related and are sometimes impossible to disentangle. This is particularly so when we apply these strategies of decolonization to educational institutions. The Western school in Africa is, of course, more like the English language than, say, Kiswahili. The school is a piece of alien culture. Can it be domesticated?

The domestication of the school would first require increased indigenization of personnel. This would in turn require:

(1) greater commitment by African governments to promote relevant training at different levels for Africans;
(2) readiness on the part of both governments and employers to create a structure of incentives which would attract Africans of the right calibre;
(3) greater political pressure on education officials and school principals to develop Africa-related curricula;
(4) stricter domestication of the foreign component in the syllabus to make it more relevant to the local context; and
(5) a gradual introduction of African languages as media of instruction, moving upwards slowly from lower to higher grades.

All this will, of course, require a gradualist and planned approach.

With regard to diversification, African languages must be made to respond to the stimulus of a range of civilizations than merely to the West. Christian missionaries long ago translated the four gospels into African languages. Some of Shakespeare's plays also exist in languages like Hausa, Kiswahili and Zulu. In Kiswahili, the field has expanded to include translations of some of the works of Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin and Frantz Fanon. But when will the Indian poet Tagore or the Chinese philosopher Confucius be available in an African language? The Qur'an is available in Kiswahili and Hausa. And so are the Arabian nights. But what about more recent classics of the culture of Islam?

In short, a language cannot be developed merely by appointing a special commission with the task of coining new words. A language has to develop through facing new challenges, confronting new ideas which need to be expressed. And the academy is a natural environment for such a challenge. If Kiswahili, for example, now abandons Arabic and borrows only from English, it may indeed become more 'modernized' – but also excessively Westernized. And if it limits itself to only Europe and the Arab civilization, it would deny itself the potential enrichment that can only come from more diverse stimulation.

Though less directly relevant, translation between different languages could also serve the objectives of both horizontal inter-penetration and vertical counter-penetration. Literature courses in East Africa, for example, may include the works of West African writers, but so far only those written in English. East African students will be exposed to Chinua Achebe and Ama Ata Aidoo, but not writers and verbal artists in indigenous West African languages. Likewise, a course on African literature in Nigeria may include Ngugi wa Thiong'o but is unlikely to include writers in Kiswahili like Muyaka or Kezilahabi. Governments and societies in Africa need to share with each other their cultural riches in local languages.

Likewise more and more masterpieces in African languages need to be made available in translation in the dominant world languages and taught in the academies of the West. The exercise can be part of the process of adding a new African component to global civilization. It is true, of course, that Africa has a rich history of contributions to world civilizations that go back to antiquity as Bernal (1987) and others before him have amply demonstrated. But the wealth of African languages today also has the potential of affecting further the texture of world culture itself as Africa increases its contribution to the total heritage of humanity.

Part 2

Global Africa

Chapter 3

English and the Pan-African Experience: In Search of Unity

As a case of collective humiliation of people of African descent, apartheid in South Africa served as the most important stimulus for Pan-Africanism – in its trans-continental sense – since the end of colonial rule in the rest of the continent. Expectedly, then, the end of political apartheid was, at the same time, a victory for the Black people of South Africa and, to some extent, a blow to the Pan-African movement as an expression of the racial unity and dignity of Black people across the globe.

At the same time, however, it is possible to argue that the death of apartheid in South Africa has, in fact, been succeeded by its resurrection globally on the ruins of the Cold War. The post-Cold War era has not only unleashed a greater momentum of globalization but has also created conditions for the emergence of global apartheid. There is now a post-Cold War convergence of interests between the Northwest and Northeast as Africa gets increasingly neglected in the process. The marginalization of African Americans within the USA, for example, goes hand-in-hand with the marginalization of Africa in the global context. Both Aid for Africa and Affirmative Action for African Americans are under assault from forces of neo-liberalism.

In 1972 the Pan-African Marxist from Guyana, Walter Rodney, produced his classic on *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. A little over a decade later, in 1983, another Pan-African Marxist, Manning Marable, published his own classic on *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*. Perhaps the time has come for a sequel to these two great works on just *How Global Capitalism Underdeveloped Global Africa*.

What is important for our purposes, however, is that as a child of globalization, global apartheid is leading to a new realization about the common location and common destiny of people of African descent in world affairs. And this closing of ranks of white folk in the northern hemisphere may be serving as a new catalyst for the renewal of Pan-Africanist energies.

Against this reconfiguration of the global order are the linguistic forces precipitated by globalization itself which have a direct bearing on the Pan-African movement. One of these is the linguistic Americanization of

Africa (and, of course, of some other parts of the world). Let us look at this phenomenon more closely.

Pan-Africanism and English: Between Slavery and Colonialism

The African Diaspora of enslavement – i.e. the dispersed population of people of African descent as a direct result of enslavement in the pre-colonial period – constitutes a stage both in the globalization of Africa and the Americanization of Africa. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was not only a case of planting African seeds in new parts of the globe but also of bequeathing an American culture to a section of the children of Africa. Of course, the American culture that this offspring of Africa ultimately acquired is one that its own ancestors helped to construct and shape in some fundamental ways.

An important pillar of this first wave of Americanization were the twin processes of the loss of African languages among successive generations of enslaved Africans and the acquisition of English, in some of its varieties, as a first language. Expectedly, then, this new linguistic gulf between people of African descent across the seas quickly placed the language question on the political agenda of trans-continental Pan-Africanism.

One of the earliest Pan-Africanists to reflect on this linguistic side of Pan-Africanism was, of course, Edward W. Blyden. It is certainly true, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2000: 2) argues, that while Blyden 'wanted the Greek and Latin Classics as part of the curricula for his visions of an African university, he also wanted African languages to be an integral part of it'. In this regard, he was particularly drawn to the Arabic language which he not only regarded as an African language but as one whose influence on other African languages was positively enriching (Lynch, 1971: 270). He went on to compare English and Arabic in West Africa in the following words:

> It is unfortunate for the English and other European languages that, in this part of Africa, they have come to the greater portion of the natives associated with profligacy, plunder and cruelty, and devoid of any connection with spiritual things; while the Arabic is regarded by them as a language of prayer and devotion of religion and piety, of that is unworldly and spiritual. (Blyden, 1994: 70)

Blyden might even have recommended Arabic as the language of Negritude, of that brand of Pan-Africanism that evolved in the Francophone Black world several decades later, drawing heavily on the idea that the African was inherently spiritual and non-materialistic.

The Pan-Africanist potential of Arabic was advocated with even greater zeal by the Ahmadiyya Mission in the USA which by the early 1920 had taken on 'a new militant internationalist tone, suggesting that Islam and Arabic could facilitate the primary political goal of Garveyism, the world-wide unification of all people of African descent' (Turner, 1997a: 129). And communities of 'orthodox' African American Muslims throughout the USA today have shown the same kind of receptivity to Arabic that Blyden once did.

In as much as Blyden advocated and established an academic place for Arabic, however, he also regarded the multiplicity of 'tribal languages' in Africa as divisive in its effect. And in his opinion, this is a linguistic gulf that could be bridged best, not by Arabic, but by English precisely because English itself was a product of a diverse ethno-linguistic heritage. In the words of Blyden (1994: 244):

> English is, undoubtedly, the most suitable of the European languages for bridging over the numerous gulfs between the tribes caused by the great diversity of languages and dialects among them. It is a composite language, not the product of any one people. It is made up of contributions by Celts, Danes, Normans, Saxons, Greeks and Romans, gathering to itself elements … from the Ganges to the Atlantic.

As history would have it, however, English became a potential tool of communication not only between Africans across the ethnic divide, but also between people of African descent across the oceans. And the language came to play an important role in the growth of the movement that came to be known as Pan-Africanism.

While individuals from the 'Francophone' parts of the Americas, like Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon, did make important contributions to African cultural revivalism, the early stages of the Pan-African movement were predominantly Anglo-American in orientation. Some of its more prominent figures included W.E.B. DuBois, George Padmore, Ras Mokonnen, Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, all from countries where English had become the official language. So minimal was the 'Francophone' presence in the early meetings of the Pan-African Congress that special efforts had to be made by the organizers to encourage Francophone African participation (Mazrui, 1974: 105).

This impression that Anglophone Africans were more nationalistic (in racial/cultural terms) than Francophone Africans has sometimes been explained in terms of the cultural psychology of language. It has been suggested that the French language commanded the militant love of those who spoke it: When that passionate love is aroused among Black people or

other non-French people, the result is a kind of cultural cosmopolitanism. And, 'in part, it is this militant linguistic cosmopolitanism among French-speaking African leaders which is said to have 'arrested the growth of real nationalism in their part of the continent. The English language, by the very fact of being emotionally more neutral than French, was less of a hindrance to the emergence of national consciousness in British Africa' (Mazrui, 1975: 50).

The entire Francophonie movement, in fact, was constructed on the ideal of a shared cultural experience through the instrumentality of the French language. Linguistic allegiance to French was the primary basis for admission into the Francophonie fraternity. Even nations that were not colonies of France, like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, qualified for membership by virtue of this linguistic criterion. To this extent, French came to have a more divisive effect on the Black world than English did. It is only recently that Francophonie has begun to alter its orientation and attempt to enlist non-Francophone countries into the fraternity as long as such countries, however, would be persuaded to teach some French in their schools.

More significant for our purposes, however, is that, because of the peculiar racial politics of their historical place and time, African Americans came to assume a central place in the leadership of trans-continental (political) Pan-Africanism. And because African Americans were English-speaking, they were able to establish links more readily with the Anglophone region of Africa than with its Francophone counterpart – not overlooking the fact, of course, that in the post-colonial period, some radical Francophone African countries served as safe havens for African American activists. In general, then, given the Anglo-American orientation of the early phase of Pan-Africanism, the presence of the French and Portuguese blocs within Africa was, to some extent, a communicational barrier to the continent-wide and the trans-continental consolidation of the movement.

In the post-colonial period, the consolidation of English in Africa, ironically, has been aided in part by forces of ethnic nationalism. Nationalism is usually regarded as a political ideology that is concerned about the value of its own culture and with protecting it against 'external' encroachments. But, in the context of power politics of the African nation-state, the 'out groups' are often perceived to be not the 'non-African other' but members of other African ethnic constituencies. Under the circumstances, the quest for a national language has often tended to favour English (and other European languages) because giving the language of any one ethnic group some official status over the others is seen as potentially hegemonic. When

Nigeria once considered having Hausa as the national language, for example, Chief Anthony Enahoro is reported to have said in the Nigerian parliament: 'As one who comes from a minority tribe, I deplore the continuing evidence in this country that people wish to impose their customs, their languages, and even more, their way of life upon the smaller tribes' (quoted by Schwarz, 1965: 41). Chief Enahoro was a strong advocate of English as the country's national and official language partly because of the fear of internal ethnic domination.

Upon reflection, then, if Blyden wished for English to become the trans-ethnic language of Africa, his dream has been moving closer and closer to becoming a reality. You may forge Pan-Africanism in North Africa and rely exclusively on the Arabic language. You may attempt a Pan-African union in East Africa and rely mainly on the Swahili language. But, for the time being, neither the Organization of African Unity nor the newly formed African Union have been conceivable without resort to the English and French languages.

For some scholars, the value of English goes well beyond its bridge-building potential across different Black 'tribes' of the world. It extends its power to the construction of an African consciousness itself: according to this school of thought, the very sense of being African as a collective experience would have been impossible without the instrumentality of the English language. Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian writer who was executed in 1995 in the course of struggle for the ethnic rights of his own Ogoni people, was particularly assertive of this view:

> With regard to English I have heard it said that those who write in it should adopt a domesticated 'African' variety of it. I myself have experimented with the three varieties of English spoken and written in Nigeria: pidgin, 'rotten' and standard … That which carries best and which is most popular is standard English, expressed simply and lucidly … And so I remain a convinced practitioner and consumer of African literature in English. I am content that this language has made me a better African in the sense that it enables me to know more about [fellow Africans from] Somalia, Kenya, Malawi and South Africa than I would otherwise have known. (Saro-Wiwa, 1992: 157)

A similar sentiment was expressed by Leopold Sedar Senghor, the first president of Senegal, who, in spite of his strong Francophilia, claimed that English has 'been one of the favourite instruments of the New Negro, who has used it to express his identity, his *Negritude*, his very consciousness of the African heritage' (Senghor, 1975: 85).

In a poem entitled 'The Meaning of Africa', the Sierra Leonean poet,

Davidson Abioseh Nicol (1968:59) defined 'Africa' in the following manner:

> You are not a country, Africa
> You are a concept
> Fashioned in our minds, each to each,
> To hide our separate fears
> To dream our separate dreams

And what Saro-Wiwa and Senghor are suggesting is that the English language was an indispensable stimulus to the very birth of that concept, painful as the birth process itself was.

English as a Divisive Force

It is not true, of course, that English has always been a force for unification. There have been instances where it has generated new identities and divisions within global Africa. As indicated earlier, English has worked in tandem with other European languages to reconstruct the Black world into Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone blocs. Within the Anglophone domain, there has been the divide between African American Vernacular English, Caribbean English, British Black English and several varieties of African English. George Bernard Shaw once said that England and America are two countries divided by a common language, English. Here we have Black folk scattered in three continents who are also divided by that same common language of European origin.

Within Africa, the earliest divisive effect of English came with the establishment of the colony of Americo-Liberians, the African American repatriates that came to settle in the West African country of Liberia. Americo-Liberians became a distinct ethnic group in their own right – demarcated away from indigenous Blacks by differences in lifestyle and by the English language as a standard of 'civilized' speech. The linguistic attitudes of the time were well captured by the pioneer Pan-Africanist, Alexander Crummell, who saw Africans exiled in slavery to the 'New World' as inheritors of 'at least this one item of compensation, namely, the possession of the Anglo-Saxon tongue' (Cummell, 1969: 23). And he wished for the rest of the Black race this same divine providence given to African Americans. He regarded the linguistic Anglicization of Africa, with Americo-Liberians as its pioneers, as a necessary step towards Africa's civilization.

Once English became established in Liberia, however, it remained the only African country for a while which owed its English to America. Other Africans on the continent who were exposed to the English language at all

were so exposed through their encounter with British colonialism. With post-Cold War globalization, however, there is evidence of increasing American influence on the English varieties spoken in Africa, even though the rate of this linguistic change may vary from place to place.

But if Liberia has its own ethno-linguistic class of Americo-Liberians, we see in much of the rest of Anglophone Africa the emergence of a new trans-national 'tribe' of Afro-Saxons. These are, in Ali Mazrui's definition, Africans who speak English as a first language, often as a direct result of inter-ethnic marriages, especially at the level of the elite.

> As the father and mother come from different linguistic groups, they resort to English as the language of the home. English thus becomes the mother tongue of their children, with a clear ascendancy over the indigenous languages of both the father and the mother. (Mazrui, 1975: 11)

In South Africa, the offspring of White and Black parentage are a distinct ethnic group called 'Coloured'. Will Afro-Saxons, the offspring of mixed ethnic unions, one day become conscious of themselves as a group independent of the ethnic affiliations of their parents? There is some impressionistic evidence that an 'Afro-Saxon' consciousness is indeed in the making.

The irony of Afro-Saxons, of course, is that while they are a group alienated from many of their ethnic and national compatriots, they are the most trans-ethnic, trans-national and trans-continental Africans in linguistic affiliation. Across the Atlantic, African Americans once led the Pan-African movement partly because of their facility with the English language. In his discussion on the origins of Pan-Africanism, George Padmore (1956: 39) also tells us about the role of English in forging a trans-ethnic national consciousness among the Creoles of Sierra Leone. Will Afro-Saxons now be in the forefront of the Pan-African movement, on a sub-continental, continental or trans-continental scale by virtue of the primacy of English in their lives? The answer is obviously in the womb of time.

The ethnic dynamics of the English language have a different manifestation altogether in the Republic of South Africa, partly because of the character of the country's white constituency. Of all the African states, of course, South Africa has always had the largest white population, estimated at five million. But this population is by no means monolithic: within it are differences that are maintained by marriage patterns, residential zones, ethnic-based commercial networks and so forth.

Until the 1990s, the great divide between Black and White in South Africa was indeed 'racial'. But the great cultural divide between White and

White was, in fact, linguistic. The White 'tribes' of South Africa were the Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaners, on the one side, and English-speaking Europeans, on the other. Language had 'tribalized' the White population of South Africa.

In time, however, this linguistic division between the white 'tribes' of South Africa also came to have its own impact on the Black population of the country. More and more Black South Africans felt that if they had to choose between English and Afrikaans, the former was of greater pan-African relevance. Two Germanic languages had widely differing implications. Afrikaans was a language of racial claustrophobia; English was a language of pan-African communication. The Soweto riots of 1976, precipitated in part by the forced use of Afrikaans as a medium of education in African schools, were part of that linguistic dialectic.

With the end of political apartheid in South Africa, the English language has made the clearest gains. Although South Africa has declared eleven official languages (theoretically reducing English to one-eleventh of the official status), in reality the new policy only demotes Afrikaans, the historical rival of English in the country. English has continued to enjoy the allegiance of Black people, almost throughout the country, as the primary medium of official communication.

This seeming consolidation of English in post-apartheid South Africa has inspired a new wave of Afrikaner nationalism, triggered by the fear that their language and identity would be compromised by the new linguistic dispensation. But the development has also stimulated an uneasy alliance between a section of 'Coloreds' and the Afrikaners. These cross-ethnic allegiances are particularly pronounced in the arena of party politics, i.e. which ethnic group is allied to which political party. In the words of Michael Chege (1997: 79):

> Fears that their language and identity will be swallowed by the new South Africa undergirds much Afrikaner resistance to ANC rule. This also accounts for the National Party's popularity among many of the part-Dutch 'coloreds' in the Cape – the so-called brown Africans, whose primary language is Afrikaans.

But, as suggested earlier, in the multiplicity of functions that English has played in Africa, one has been to plant new seeds of diversity between its inhabitants. One of the most prominent English features of Black diversity in Africa is, of course, that of 'pronunciation'. Ethnically marked varieties of English are legion in many parts of the continent and usually, to the experienced ear, it is not difficult to tell, from the English accent alone, who is a member of which ethnic group.

As much as Africans regularly make fun of each other's ethnically marked accents of English, however, attitudes prevail in some quarters that members of 'our' ethnic group speak better English than our 'other' ethnic compatriots – with 'better' judged from a foreign standard of propriety, from an imagined approximation to British Standard English. At times this linguistic attitude is accompanied by an ethno-centric belief that, consistent with the English language yardstick, 'our' ethnic group is somehow more culturally sophisticated than 'other' ethnic groups. This is the same tendency that Fanon observed in the 'Negro of the Antilles' in his relationship with 'natives' from Francophone Africa, or in the attitude of Martinicians towards Negroes of Guadeloupe (Fanon, 1967: 25–27), and is part of what he describes as the two-dimensional persona of the Black person,

But how real are these competitive claims of members of different African ethnic groups about their command of English? A leading African scholar, Ali Mazrui, once suggested that members of Afro-Islamic ethnic groups (like the Hausa of Nigeria and the Swahili of Kenya) 'have been both among those who have been relatively suspicious of the English language as a factor in cultural transformation and among those who have shown an aptitude for speaking it well' (Mazrui, 1975: 54). With regard to Nigeria, specifically, he points out that one of the ironies of the English language in that country is that southerners (like the Yoruba and the Igbo) have better *access* to the English language than northerners (e.g. the Hausa-Fulani), but supposedly northerners have better *accents* for the English language than southerners (personal communication, July 4, 2002).

Afro-Muslim suspicions of English and the relatively easier Afro-Christian access to it can be traced back to the interplay between the language, education and Christian missions in the colonial period. There was even a time when English proficiency was often associated with an Afro-Christian background. But it is said that when Africans from Afro-Islamic ethnic groups 'have finally capitulated to the pull of the English language as a medium of intellectual modernity, they have been among the better speakers of the language on the continent (Mazrui, 1975: 66).

There is no empirical evidence, of course, that supports this thesis on the relationship between English, ethnicity and religion in the African context. Yet, many (Afro-Islamic) Hausa and Swahili people that I have had occasion to talk to, both in the USA and in Africa, are adamant that, everything else being equal, they are 'better' speakers of English than members of other ethnic groups in their respective nation-states of Nigeria and Kenya. And so competitive religion and competitive ethnicity in Africa have sometimes met at the political stadium of ex-colonial languages.

Finally, there has been the interplay between English and class. In every Anglophone African country, the English language has been an instrument of communication between different ethnic groups at the upper horizontal level and a linguistic barrier between the elite and the 'masses'. English has helped erode ethnic behaviour (though not necessarily ethnic consciousness) and has accentuated class divisions. It has been at once a force in class formation and a means of 'detribalization' in the cultural sense.

It is true, of course, that Black perceptions of the linguistic politics of the white 'other' have sometimes led Black people to make claims about and celebrate the uniqueness of their own varieties of English. We are familiar, of course, with the debate on Ebonics which Molefi Asante (1987: 35) has described as the 'prototypical language of African Americans … to distinguish it from English'. But this sentiment in favour of a peculiarly Black version of the English language is by no means limited to the American scene. It is also found elsewhere in the 'Anglophone' regions of the Black world, even in Africa where there is a strong presence of local languages tied to specific ethnic identifications. In South Africa, for example, there has emerged a whole movement of 'People's English', a form which is deemed to be different from 'international English'. As one advocate of People's English comments:

> To interpret *People's English* as a dialect of international English would do the movement a gross injustice; *People's English* is not only a language, it is a struggle to appropriate English in the interests of democracy in South Africa. Thus the naming of *People's English* is a political act because it represents a challenge to the current status of English in South Africa in which control of the language, access to the language and teaching of the language are entrenched within apartheid structures. (Pierce, 1995: 108)

This South African effort, no doubt, is one with which the renowned African writer, Chinua Achebe is partly in agreement when he suggests that the African writer 'should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his own experiences … But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings' (Achebe, 1965: 29–30).

It is true, of course, that this Black nationalism that claims a peculiarly Black English (in all its diversity) is itself triggered at times by the seeming attempt of 'native' white speakers of English to be possessive about the language and monopolistic about setting its standards of correctness. When a certain Englishman once complained about the degeneration of

English in Kenya, for example, back came the following reply from Meghani, a non-British Kenyan:

> It is not at all wisdom on the part of a tiny English population in this wide world to claim that English, as presented and pronounced by Americans, Canadians, Africans, Indians and the people of Madras State, is not English. It may not be Queen's English, but then what? Has the Englishman the sole right to decide upon the form and style of a universal language?

Meghani then goes on to argue: 'Strictly speaking, English cannot be called 'English' at all, since it is a universal language belonging to all. It is difficult to understand why it is still known under that horrible name; it should have had another name' (*East African Standard* (Nairobi) February 15, 1965). Meghani thus sought legitimacy for particularistic varieties of English – including Black ones – by appealing to its universality.

When all is said and done, however, and in spite of their nationalist selves, Black people often have had to submit to what are seen as 'white' varieties of the language to beckon and reach out to each other across boundaries of ethnicity and nation.

English and 'Black' Rights

A central concern that has always galvanized the Pan-African movement has been Black freedom and dignity, itself a product of the unfolding of Black consciousness on a global scale. Within this quest has been the perceived role of English in the promotion of human rights consciousness among people of African descent. This is an issue that goes back at least to Alexander Crummell, the pioneer Pan-Africanist. Seeing African languages as lacking in 'clear ideas of Justice, Law, Human Rights and Governmental order, which are prominent and manifest in civilized countries' (Crumell, 1969: 20), he proceeds to outline the many progressive credentials of English. In his words,

> … the English language is characteristically the language of freedom. I know that there is a sense in which this love of liberty is inwrought in the very fibre and substance of the body and blood of all people, but the flame burns dimly in some races; it is a fitful fire in some others; and in many inferior people it is the flickering light of a dying candle. But in the English races it is an ardent, healthy, vital, irrepressible flame; and withal normal and orderly in its development. (Crumell, 1969: 23)

Justice, freedom, human rights and orderly governance, therefore, are seen to be part of the conceptual and cultural legacy of the English language. Following this determinist line of reasoning on the relationship between language and the culture of human rights, Crummell continues to argue:

> Once more I remark, that the English language is the enshrinement of those great charters of liberty which are essential elements of free governments, and the main guarantees of personal liberty. I refer now to the right of Trial by Jury, the people's right to a participation in government, Freedom of Speech and of the Press, the right of Petition, Freedom of Religion. And these are special characteristics of the English language. (Crumell, 1969: 25)

If the quest for liberty for the entire Black race was one of the fundamental pillars around which Pan-Africanism came to evolve, that liberty, for Crummell, faced the danger of rapid erosion unless steeled by the conceptual power of the English language.

Ngugi (1986, 1993, 2000) and many linguistic nationalists have argued that the (re)centring of African languages in the daily lives of African peoples was crucial to their mental liberation from the cognitive fetters imposed by European languages. Africans can establish democratic and human rights traditions only if they are willing to re-engage with the conceptual universe of their indigenous languages. Crummell, on the other hand, was proposing quite the reverse: It is English that would provide Africans with the kind of mental liberation from the confines of their 'primitive tongues' necessary to launch them into the civilized world of democracy, liberty and the rule of law.

Coming from a different angle altogether, Ali Mazrui too has tried to highlight the crucial role played by the English language in the formation of political and national consciousness in Africa and in the emergence of modern African politicians. The overall record demonstrates, according to Mazrui (1975: 102), 'the revolutionary impact of the English language on the intellectual and governmental experience of the African people in different parts of the continent'. In the process, the English language became the main medium for the articulation of African moral demands and rights.

This influence of English related not only to those territories which had no *lingua franca* apart from English itself but also to countries with a widespread *lingua franca* which could conceivably rely much less on English for their political, mobilizational needs. Indeed, in such cases, the English language is said to have extended its impact to the political vocabulary of indigenous languages:

> As political activity became more complex the need for a new language to cope with it became more pressing. Basic notions like 'vote', 'local government', 'responsible government' and 'constitution' sometimes needed to be rendered into African languages. It should be pointed out here that although the temptation to borrow available English terminology must often have been considerable, there were occasions when this was resisted and a word was coined from another language. (Mazrui, 1975: 99)

But even in such cases, the impulse to seek a new word from another language is said to have been stimulated, ultimately, by a new political idea that had come with the English language.

Implied in both Crummell's and Mazrui's positions is the idea that pan-African solidarity around demands for sovereignty, equality before the law and equal rights and freedoms for Black people across the globe was made possible, in part, by an expanded conceptual vocabulary of political culture wrought by the English language. But has the political discourse in the English language also limited our ability as Black people to conceive alternative and perhaps more liberating paradigms of freedom, democracy, liberty and justice?

If the imperial languages have fostered certain notions of rights and promoted a certain degree of human rights consciousness, however, they have done so within the confines of a Western liberal doctrine, a doctrine which, it can be argued, has not always been in the best 'developmental' interest of Africa. Is it possible that these languages, operating as they do within the current global imbalances of power, are in fact transmitters of a kind of discourse that precludes from the realm of the conscious the possibility of any other alternative system capable of reconfiguring the human rights agenda in a way that can be truly liberating for the continent?

In the struggle against colonialism, the nationalist politician in Africa also served as a kind of 'interpreter' between local interests and the British colonial establishment both in the colonies and in the metropole. The resort to English in the political exercise of advocacy of local rights at this particular historical juncture, therefore, was quite understandable. But almost half a century into the post-colonial period, when the needs of African peoples have shifted from mere independence to actual empowerment and liberation rooted in the daily struggles of the average citizen, the bondage of Euro-languages continues to be unbroken. This has remained true even in the new millennium under the new wave of democratic struggles that began in the 1990s.

A particular attribute of the so-called 'second liberation' of Africa is the

centrality of the Westernized, professional middle class – academics, lawyers, clerics, journalists etc. – which is competent in and feels comfortable with the imperial languages. Its members rightly oppose the relativist articulations of those in power in their individual nation-states as a camouflage of otherwise repressive practices. In the process, however, they espouse a universalism on the basis of terms of reference established by the neoliberalist order. It is no wonder, then, that this class is constantly seeking the patronage of the West (which the West, of course, is only too happy to provide) and to celebrate one American ambassador after another as heroes of the African democratic struggle! And because they take so much for granted the necessity of imperial languages in governance, they preclude the great majority of Africans from participating in the rights discourse and ensure, subsequently, that such a discourse will remain prisoner to a neoliberal orientation.

The enclosure of the African middle class through the instrumentality of the imperial languages, then, acts as a barrier towards the reconceptualization of human rights. It renders more difficult the development of a new perspective that, in Issa Shivji's words, involves 'an ideological and theoretical break with the dominant discourse of human rights' (Shivji, 1998: 72).

This claim, of course, is not to deny the transformability of imperial languages to serve counter-hegemonic functions. It is rather to affirm that, at this particular historical juncture, such a linguistic transformation is unlikely to come from the ranks of the professional middle class traditionally associated with the imperial languages. It is only by involving the mass of the African peoples, whose proficiency is tied to the indigenous African languages, as full and equal partners in the struggle to challenge the semantics of the dominant discourse and to inscribe new meanings and uses, that a counter-hegemonic discourse has the potential to arise.

The question has also arisen as to whether the primacy of imperial languages has itself caused a curtailment of legal and political rights. The paradox then is that while the imperial languages may have introduced Africa to certain new concepts of rights, they themselves are often impediments to the realization of the very rights they may have helped to initiate.

In South Africa two imperial languages came to serve drastically divergent roles. Afrikaans (linked to Dutch) was widely perceived by people of colour as a language of command. The English language, on the other hand, was accepted widely by the same people of colour as language of rights. Concepts like democracy, self-determination, human rights and civil liberties reached the South African peoples partly through the English language. Yet even in South Africa the question nevertheless persists as to

whether the English language becomes an impediment to the rights it espouses itself. Is African self-determination hampered by the primacy of European languages in Africa? Is the rule of law compromised when indigenous African languages are marginalized by the Euro-imperial languages?

What these considerations suggest with regard to the language of Pan-Africanism is the continued need to find the right balance between the quest for unity and the imperative of social justice, between a Pan-Africanism intended to foster unity among Black people worldwide and one that seeks to stimulate their liberation from all colours of oppression.

Pan-Africanism and English in the Era of Globalization

As argued in sections of Chapter 1 the English language is conquering new borders, penetrating rapidly into Francophone and Lusophone areas while consolidating itself further in the Anglophone region. It now seems to be only a matter of time before Blyden's dream is realized that one day English would become the trans-ethnic medium of communication throughout the continent of Africa. The Euro-linguistic wall is gradually crumbling and English is becoming the new intra-continental and trans-continental bridge among people of African descent. From the initial days of the movement, then, the potential role of English as a pan-African medium of communication has grown multifold.

We must bear in mind, however, that the homogenizing role of globalization which, in our instance, has helped the recent spread of English across the globe, also has its hegemonic side. At the same time that it conquers new regions, new peoples and new cultures, English carries with it a neoliberal ideology that seeks to legitimize the market philosophy of 'profit over people', the unequal power relations between north and south and the on-going construction of global apartheid. Its byproduct is 'a depoliticized citizenry marked by apathy and cynicism' (Chomsky, 1999), precluding any imaginable possibility of an alternative system or a credible path of revolutionary action. As a transmission belt of neoliberalism, then, English has the capacity to numb our consciousness and to reduce Pan-Africanism to a nominal exercise and mere conference gatherings. Is there a way out for Pan-Africanism?

One possibility, of course, is to make the English language itself an arena of Pan-African struggles, with the understanding that meaning is ultimately socially and politically constructed. The Pan-Africanist project here will involve taking advantage of all possible conditions not only to

domesticate English to carry the weight of Black experience(s), but also, more significantly, to articulate Pan-Africanist counter-hegemonic discourses in the language. One dimension of this position has been well expressed by James Baldwin when he tried to explain his change of attitude towards the English language. In the words of Baldwin:

> My quarrel with English language has been that the language reflected none of my experience. But now I began to see the matter in quite another way … Perhaps the language was not my own because I had never attempted to use it, had only learned to imitate it. If this were so, then it might be made to bear the burden of my experience if I could find the stamina to challenge it, and me to such a test … [An] immense experience had forged this language, it had been (and remains) one of the tools of the people's survival, and it revealed expectations which no white American could easily entertain. (Baldwin, 1964: 14–15)

bell hooks goes further by presenting the process of linguistic appropriation of English as a collective experience of Black people in the USA forged by the specificity of their historical location in time and place:

> I think now of the grief of displaced 'homeless' Africans, forced to inhabit a world where they saw folks like themselves, inhabiting the same skin, the same condition, but had no shared language to talk with one another … I imagine, then, Africans first hearing English as the 'oppressor's language' and then re-hearing it as a potential site of resistance. Learning English, learning to speak the alien tongue, was one way enslaved Africans began to reclaim their personal power within a context of domination. Possessing a shared language, black folks could find again a way to remake community, and a means to create the political solidarity necessary to resist. (hooks, 1994: 169–170)

The challenge, then, is one of rejecting the neocolonialist categories, of subverting the attempted imperialist control over the process of inscribing meaning in the language, and finally of re-locating the language in a Pan-Africanist cultural and political space. These are linguistic possibilities within imperial languages of which other Pan-Africanist crafters of language, from Chinua Achebe (1965) to Frantz Fanon (1967a: 89–90), have been quite cognizant.

Pan-Africanism Beyond the English Language

But to confine the Pan-Africanist linguistic agenda to a semantic transmutation of the English language would be a serious political limitation for

two main reasons. First, in spite of the evidence that the language is slowly filtering downwards to the Black masses, it is still essentially acquired, particularly in Africa, within the elite-producing environment of formal schooling with all the cultural trappings of Westernization that come with it. There is the danger, then, that the movement will not only remain 'class bound', limited to the upper horizontal level of communication between the Black elite – the legacy of the DuBoises, Nkrumahs and Padmores – but also culturally constrained by the 'Westernism' of the bulk of its users. Anglo-Pan-Africanism poses the threat of reproducing the class structures imposed by global capitalism and of perpetuating Euro-cultural terms of reference.

This latter consideration brings us to the second point. No matter how successful we may be in creating a Pan-Africanist counter discourse within English, we will not have broken the chains of Euro-dependency. After all, counter-discourse is not the same thing as independent discourse (Alidou & Mazrui, 1999: 101–118). As argued in Chapter 2, an important source of intellectual dependency in Africa is the language in which African graduates are taught. This lingo-intellectual dependency, resulting partly from our weak (pan-African) linguistic nationalism, is further consolidated by the Western stamp of approval. Commenting on this situation, Ali Mazrui has noted that,

> A Japanese may win the Nobel Prize for works written in Japanese; a South Asian for masterly use of Bengali, Urdu or Hindi; a Frenchman for genius of expression in the French language; and an Egyptian for creative accomplishments in Arabic. However, for the foreseeable future, the Nobel Prize for Literature is unlikely to be awarded for brilliant use of an indigenous African language'.

This is a clear case of the 'linguistic other precluding the linguistic self from ever being noticed as being of literary relevance (Mazrui, 1996: 5).

These two problems (of elitism and dependency), arising out of too excessive a reliance on the English language in pan-African struggles, demand a certain degree of 'return to the source' – to use Amilcar Cabral's phrase (1973) – a reconnection with the more indigenous tongues of the Black folk in which many Black people are almost invariably and exclusively rooted. Within this indigenous linguistic pool we must certainly include Ebonics, as well as the various creole varieties of European languages spread globally among the Black folk. The text on *Black Linguistics* (Makoni, Smitherman, Ball & Spears, 2003) opens up new horizons in our understanding of these varied 'Black languages'. Having ideas available in the languages that people at the grassroots understand is the only

way in which they can be genuine participants in the creation of new meanings towards the evolution of a truly revolutionary Pan-Africanism.

The struggle to maintain at least some of the major languages of Black people in both Western and African academies, therefore, must not be lost: in American educational institutions, the languages are already under serious threat from the right-wing attack on multiculturalism. To allow this right-wing to have its way will be a serious blow to the mass potential of the Pan-African movement.

The lessons of Euro-linguistic confinement can easily be drawn from the case of a great scholar-activist, Walter Rodney, whose commitment to the Pan-African socialist cause took him to Africa to work in Tanzania. At that time, the East African nation had just adopted the policies of *Ujamaa* (socialism) and *Kujitegemea* (self-reliance) complemented by a linguistic programme of rapid Swahilization. Walter Rodney's inadequate command of Kiswahili, however, became a handicap in his communication with the ordinary *mwananchi* (citizen). He could not convey his Pan-African socialism linguistically to the Tanzanian workers and peasants. In fact, a dilemma faced Walter Rodney in relation to the twin policies of Julius Nyerere's Tanzania. Under the Arusha Declaration, Nyerere's policy of socialism and self-reliance brought the national ideology of Tanzania closer to Walter Rodney's own leftist paradigm. On the other hand, Nyerere's simultaneous language policy of greater Swahilization made Tanzania less and less accessible to Walter Rodney's ideo-cultural skills. Nyerere's politico-economic policies were opening up ideological doors to Walter Rodney, while Nyerere's Swahilization policies were closing cultural doors to Walter Rodney.

In contrast to Rodney, Ngugi wa Thiong'o provides the example of Paul Robeson. Described as a Diasporan African genius, Paul Robeson 'was gifted in music, sports and performance. But he immersed himself in the social struggles of African American peoples. He was also interested in and followed the struggles of the African peoples on the continent. He learnt nine African languages including Yoruba' (Ngugi, 1998: 99). And it is from the likes of Paul Robeson that Pan-African activists and leaders must seek linguistic inspiration in their quest to link the Pan-African movement with the struggles of Black people the world over.

When we think of Pan-Africanism, however, there is a tendency to confine it to the trans-Atlantic space of Africa, North America and the Caribbean when, in fact, global Africa extends and continues to expand well beyond those geographical limits. Part of the African Diaspora of enslavement is, of course, located in parts of the Arab world and in Asia, especially India. This we can call the 'eastern' leg of the Diaspora of

enslavement. For reasons of genetic and/or cultural and linguistic assimilation, this is an African Diaspora that has virtually lost its African consciousness: For all political purposes it has become Arab or Asian, as the case may be, in identitarian terms. So it may not be particularly easy to bring this section of the African Diaspora under an active Pan-Africanist umbrella. But if part of the mission of intellectual Pan-Africanism is to understand the history of the (re)construction of people of African descent, then Pan-Africanists need to take greater interest in languages like Arabic and Gujerati than appears to have been the case so far. It is not always remembered that an Indian Muslim community, the Ahmadiyya Mission, may have had a crucial formative influence on nationalist, Pan-Africanist Islam within African America (Turner, 1997a). African and African American Islam, and the historical inter-play between Islam and Africanity, then, may provide the chemistry for the establishment of this much needed linguistic connection with the eastern Diaspora of enslavement.

There is then the Diaspora of enslavement in South America, in places like Brazil, Haiti and Cuba. Even as English is conquering new frontiers, there is a case for making Portuguese, French and Spanish and their creole varieties a new area of interest for linguistic Pan-Africanism if the movement is to reflect its global African character and seek to contribute to popular struggles on the ground.

On the African and Caribbean front, the erosion of the nation-state wrought by globalization has rekindled interests in experiments of regional integration. As indicated in Chapter 1, this process is fostering the consolidation of African *linguae francae* like Hausa, Lingala and Kiswahili at the lower horizontal levels of communication between African peoples on the continent. These are developments which Pan-Africanists cannot ignore when it comes to selecting which African languages to promote for purposes of mass mobilization and for fostering greater vertical linkages between Black people 'below' and the more alienated pan-African workers at 'the top'. Virtually every region in the Black world has its own organic language(s) of wider communication that can be galvanized for pan-African ends at the grassroots.

But it has been suggested that, given the regionalist reaction to the global tide, Pan-Africanism itself may need to be reconfigured in regionalist terms for maximum effectiveness of action. Should there be, for example,

> pan-African triangular linkages of a South Atlantic region perhaps anchored on South Africa and Brazil, a reconfigured North Atlantic region incorporating Western Africa, and an Indian Ocean region

> connecting Northeastern Africa to the Arabian peninsula and beyond? (Zeleza, 1997: 517)

These could be trans-continental extensions of otherwise intra-continental regional experiments with specific political and economic agendas. Such possibilities, again, have linguistic implications for pan-African networking.

The Expansion of Global Africa

The economic havoc wreaked on the African continent by international capital – first in its colonial form and now in its more globalist form (with globalism defined as 'the latest stage of imperialism' (Sivanandan, 1998)) – has led to a continuing outflow of the population, both skilled and unskilled, from Africa to other parts of the world. A 1993 United Nations report indicates that 'the world's population now includes 100 million immigrants, of whom only 37% are refugees from persecution, war or catastrophe. Migration, that is, is more of an *economic* than a political phenomenon' (quoted by Readings, 1996: 48). By all indications, the proportion of refugees from Africa as the worst-hit continent economically is increasing in leaps and bounds.

What we may be witnessing, then, is a kind of paradox: the economic and cultural Westernization of Africa may be leading to the demographic Africanization of the West, America included. The Westernization of Africa has contributed to the 'brain-drain' that has lured African professionals and experts from their homes in African countries to jobs and educational institutions in North America and the European Union. The old formal empires of the West have unleashed demographic counter-penetration. Some of the most qualified Africans have been attracted to professional positions in North America and Europe.

But by no means are all African migrants to the West highly qualified. The legacy of Western colonialism and neo-colonialism has also facilitated the migration of less 'qualified' Africans, as Stoller's study (2002) clearly demonstrates. Africans, in other words, are growing in number at both the top and bottom ends of the vertical pole of social class in the western hemisphere. As expected, many of those entering English-speaking countries like the USA come from the traditionally Anglophone countries like Nigeria and Uganda. But there is also an increasing number of migrants from Francophone and Lusophone Africa. Equally significant is the fact that these African immigrants tend to settle in states and cities which already have a high proportion of people of African descent and where the racial climate is considered relatively favourable (Takougang, 1995: 50–57).

The globalization of Africa is on the rise, as the new African Diaspora, the Diaspora of imperialism – of the dispersed of Africa resulting from the colonial and post-colonial dispensations – grows in numbers in both absolute and proportional terms. There are more American Africans, British Africans, French Africans and African citizens of other countries of the West – i.e. Africans located in America and Europe – than at any other point in time. The ranks of Arabian Africans and Asian Africans have also been growing. Partly because of their continued linguistic, cultural and blood linkages with Africa, the members of the first or migrant generation of the global Diaspora of imperialism – at least from the first generations – tend to be less race conscious than members of the global Diaspora of enslavement. This is a difference of orientation that has had its toll on Pan-Africanism in the past.

With regard to American Africans, in particular, it has been suggested that their conversion to an African American identity takes place at precisely the point when they lose their ancestral languages, when the linguistic umbilical chord with the continent of Africa is cut (Mazrui, 1999). The same linguistic equation can be extended to Canadian Africans, European Africans, Asian Africans in their identitarian transformation into Afro-Canadians, Afro-Europeans and Afro-Asians. More significant about this particular section of the Diaspora of imperialism is its potential bridging role. In as much as its members have become 'nativized' in their new homes in the Americas, in Europe and in Asia, they continue to have familial connections with the continent of Africa. As a result, they belong to both worlds, so to speak, and are in a position to identify with the immediate concerns, problems and struggles of both Diasporas.

But through which English language variety are the various African Diasporas in the USA likely to connect with each other? Will it be through mainstream American English or through the variety called Ebonics (Black English, African American Vernacular English and a host of other names)? Though associated with the African American community in the USA, Ebonics is in fact a child of pan-African encounters of trans-continental proportions. But, precisely because of its demographic constituency, it has not escaped the racial politics of the USA.

These linguistic politics in the USA came into sharp focus when, on December 18, 1996, the Oakland Unified District Board of Education in California passed a resolution recognizing Ebonics as the variety that many African American students brought to the classroom. Acknowledging this sociolinguistic reality, the board members argued, was essential in determining the appropriate instructional strategies that must be utilized to

enhance proficiency in standard American English among African American students.

Underlying this pedagogic concern, however, and behind the scenes of the national controversy generated by the Oakland School Board, was the overarching and urgent question of the relationship between language and (African American) identity in the racial context of the USA. Can people of African descent draw from the English language in its more or less standard American form to construct an identity that is peculiarly Black? Or could such identity derive exclusively from a black-specific variety like Ebonics?

A distinction has sometimes been made between three streams of African American identity formation: mainstream Americanization; Pan-Africanization; and separatist Black identity (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998: 32). How do standard American English, on the one hand, and Ebonics or Black English, on the other hand, relate to these identitarian categories?

If African American speech were to approximate the standard variety of American English, it could conceivably be an asset in mainstream Americanization of African Americans in the socio-cultural sense of the word. While the English language may indeed be exclusivist in racial terms – it precludes Black people who speak it as a mother tongue from acquiring an Anglo identity – it has the potential of bearing the African American experience and making it part of the American national menu. This could lead ultimately to some degree of integration and provide some further cultural consolidation of the American leg of the African American identity – a case of a shared tongue contributing to the promotion of a shared national identity. It is precisely this sense of linguistic Americanhood afforded by standard American English that James Baldwin came to discover when he was in France, forced to think and speak in the French language. Baldwin thus came to embrace the very language, English, which previously he had hated and considered as one of the instruments of his racial oppression (Baldwin, 1964: 14–15).

An approximation of standard American English as the variety adopted by African Americans may also be significant in pan-African relations. As indicated earlier, the linguistic affinity between African Americans and elite members of some African societies during the colonial period was probably crucial to the development of trans-continental Pan-Africanism.

The intellectual dimension of Pan-Africanism must also include the Afrocentric current which, so far, has had its strongest base in the USA. While many Afrocentrists have themselves drawn tremendous inspiration from the works of some French-speaking writers like Cheik Anta Diop of Senegal, their own formulation and articulation of Afrocentric ideas has

been primarily in English. If Afrocentricity were to emerge as an influential paradigm throughout the Black world, therefore, it is more likely to serve as a cultural bridge between English-speaking Blacks in various parts of the world than between sections of Anglophone Blacks and Francophone and/or Lusophone Blacks. It may indeed be significant that when Molefi Kete Asante, one of the leading architects of Afrocentricity, was enstooled as a chief during the summer of 1996, it was in English-speaking Ghana than in any of the Francophone or Lusophone African countries that he was so honoured.

The dual role of standard American English in African American identity formation has the potential, of course, of precipitating certain degree of tension between the bonds of (American) nationhood and the bonds of (Black) consanguinity. The national pull of mainstream Americanization engendered by the English language could be in competition with the more global pull of Pan-Africanism. The more successful standard American English may be in the integration of African Americans into the American mainstream, the more likely that it will weaken the bonds of pan-Africanity.

The role of Ebonics in African American identity formation, on the other hand, is more complex, partly because some questions about its origins and development remain unresolved. Nonetheless, one can identify at least three Ebonics currents in the construction of Black identity. The first current would favour a Black separatist identity within the USA. This is the current based on the idea that Ebonics is exclusively an American-grown medium of African Americans which, though essentially a form of American English, sets them apart from white America. Fay Vaughn-Cooke, the chairperson of the Department of Language and Communication Disorders at the University of the District of Columbia, for example, is among those African American linguists who seem to espouse this 'African-based' view of Ebonics and its relationship to Black identity (*Black Issues in Higher Education*, January 23, 1997: 26).

Somewhat related to this position is the hypothesis that Ebonics emerged in the USA as a creolized form of English. The bulk of the linguistic evidence, argues Adetokunbo Borishade, for example, 'supports the contention that Ebonics is a Creole language' (Borishade, 1994: 1). This view of Ebonics can also inspire a pan-African consciousness if it can be demonstrated that the variety has some linguistic parallels with pidgin and creole forms of 'African' English. How comparable to Ebonics is Krio, the language evolved by Black repatriates in Sierra Leone? What features does Ebonics share with West African Pidgin English and, indeed, with some of the West African languages which supposedly contributed to its

formation? Could such linguistic affinities constitute an additional cultural basis for a pan-African identity?

A contrasting view of Ebonics, perhaps best represented by the Princeton-trained linguist and professor at Indiana State University, Carol A. Blackshire-Belay, is the one that regards it as an African-based tongue. According to Blackshire-Belay, 'Ebonics falls into the African form of languages. It is not a dialect of English, even though it uses English words'. She proceeds to point to West African languages like Igbo, Yoruba, Ewe, Wolof, Fante and Mandinka as the relatives of Ebonics (*Black Issues in Higher Education*, January 23, 1997: 26). This is a position, of course, that clearly invokes the pan-African stream of African American identity formation and parallels the views of that 'Black languages, which bear a variety of names – Ebonics, African American Language, Patwa, Creole, Kreyol, Haitian, Nation Language – … clearly demonstrate their roots in the syntax and rhythm of speech of continental African languages (Ngugi, 2003: xiii).

The presence alone of African linguistic items and features in Ebonics need not, of course, foster bonds of pan-Africanity. But such Africanisms do have the potential of inspiring and consolidating a pan-African consciousness among those Black people who are so inclined ideologically. In general, as different positions on the presence, origins, nature and proportion of Africanisms in Ebonics continue to contend with each other, they may influence different sections of the African American population in different ways as part and parcel of the mythology of identity formation.

In this regard, the decision of the Oakland School Board to declare Ebonics as an independent language of the Black folk, rather than as a dialect of English, is indeed a reflection of the continuing quest for an ethno-linguistic identity – in this case, one with a pan-African orientation – among African Americans under conditions of 'internal colonialism'. In the USA, African Americans are about the only minority group whose linguistic heritage has been virtually obliterated by centuries of European enslavement and racial oppression. The struggle about the 'nature' of Ebonics, therefore, must be seen as an aspect of the wider African American struggle for self-definition and (re)possession of their history.

To return to our original question, then, which language variety is likely to serve as a bridge between members of the older African Diaspora (of enslavement) and those of the more recent African Diaspora (of colonialism and neocolonialism)? Like their middle- and upper-class African American counterparts, the offspring of the 'professional class' African immigrants may be more inclined towards some approximation of Standard American English which may, in turn, foster their mainstream

Americanization in a national-cultural sense – even though this national pull within American society may continue to be in competition with the more global pull of pan-African allegiance. As 'standard' (American) English succeeds in integrating some members of the new African Diaspora, as well as sections of the older Diaspora, into the American mainstream, is it also likely to weaken the bonds of Black consanguinity?

The working-class section of the African Diaspora of neocolonialism which often ends up sharing the Black neighbourhood space with African Americans may discover its identitarian links with the Diaspora of enslavement by adding Ebonics in its linguistic repertoire. Through the Ebonics current that regards the variety as an exclusively American-grown medium peculiar to African Americans, diasporized Africans may increasingly experience the pull of Black separatist identity within the USA. This linguistic response may be reinforced by the recurrent waves of Ango-Saxonism in American society and of the offensive against multiculturalism.

Naturally, then, the globalization of English is ultimately going to touch on the lives of these newer members of the African Diaspora as well, wherever they may be. And Pan-Africanists will come under increasing pressure to address the issue of linguistic bridge-building between these different Diaporas, both within nations and across nations. What avenues must be created to encourage American Africans on the road to becoming African Americans to be at home with both Ebonics (the indigenous language of African America) and mainstream American English (the tongue of the African American elite)? How must Pan-Africanists respond to the linguistic gap, for example, between African Americans, African Europeans and African Asians at the level of grassroots struggles? The situation calls for creative sociolinguistic engineering.

Pan-Africanism and the Rainbow Coalition

It is also important to bear in mind that globalization has affected not only people of African descent but the entire population of the South in its globalized form. The global apartheid that we talk about is not only between people of European and those of African stock: it defines the relationship between the entire European north and the entire multicultural South. Contrary to the claims of advocates of globalism that 'it is the world's poor who will benefit most' from globalization,

> every index of economic and social advance … suggests otherwise. Among most of the 4.4 billion people living in Africa, Asia and Latin America [and, one should add, in their enclaves and enclosures in

> Europe and the Americas] life has become a *more* desperate struggle for survival (Marfleet, 1998: 92)

and their lands are gradually being reduced to economic wastelands.

To combat such a hegemonic system of global apartheid effectively, then, may require a coalition of forces between Pan-Africanism and other nationalist movements of the South. This implies that, in addition to establishing linguistic connections between the various global African communities, Pan-Africanists must include, in their agenda, strategies for South–South linguistic bridge-building as we begin the 21st century, both as an instrument of facilitating politico-economic integration and promoting cultural sharing of relevant experiences.

The bottom-line is that Pan-Africanists in the USA, in particular, have tended to be linguistically insular, satisfied only with the advocacy and acquisition of indigenous languages of the African continent in the academy. The reality of the African condition on the ground shows that it is much more global, and is becoming increasingly so, than the linguistic concerns of Pan-Africanists seem to demonstrate so far. And, against the backdrop of global apartheid, it is a reality that is inextricably linked with the destiny of the rest of the peoples of the 'Third World' wherever they may be located. Pan-Africanists, therefore, need to break away from this linguistic insularity for Pan-Africanism to be truly global and more responsive to mass struggles at the grassroots.

Conclusion

What is clear from the above exposition is that globalization has had both benefits and costs for Pan-Africanism. The rise of English as a global language, combined with advances in information technology, have opened up new lines of communication between people of African descent; the same communicative tools, however, have widened the space for the exercise of Northern hegemony. The new wave of the globalization of Africa that has enlarged the demographic scale of Pan-Africanism is, in part, a product of the marginalization of African people and African economies that is leading further to the erosion of African languages and cultures. And trans-national economic and cultural developments are taking place at the expense of the African state and its influence in the United Nation's body.

Against this backdrop, a new linguistic agenda has become necessary. As part of that agenda, the following four strategies can be suggested, borrowing from Ali Mazrui's terminology introduced in Chapter 2:

(1) *Linguistic Appropriation*: Taking over the English language as a global medium, domesticating it culturally and transforming it into an instrument of ideological combat.
(2) *Linguistic Indigenization*: Centring the indigenous languages of people of African descent and cultivating them to a stage that is compatible with the present state of knowledge.
(3) *Linguistic Diversification*: As English continues to grow into a global language, the pan-African linguistic agenda must be diversified to include languages of people of African descent who do not speak English and/or African languages. Some of these languages too have an imperial history and, like English, need to be transmuted.
(4) *Linguistic Interpenetration*: Linguistic appropriation, linguistic indigenization and linguistic diversification constitute, in their different ways, part of the process of pan-African *linguistic counter-penetration* of the West. Equally important, however, is the strategy of linguistic bridge building between the nations of the South.

These strategies do not imply that all people of African descent must be polyglots at each and every level of the Pan-African agenda. Such an accomplishment requires the incredible genius of someone like Paul Robeson. But they do imply that we all seek to acquire those languages we are best located to learn with the aim of increasing the proportion of people of African descent who have proficiency in one or more additional languages of direct relevance to the Black experience. Subsequently, the idea is also to recognize that learning Portuguese, for example, can be as important a Pan-Africanist project as learning Kiswahili or Yoruba or Ebonics.

The question has arisen as to whether Black people should not, in fact, have 'their own language' of Black identity and unity. This is a sentiment that goes back to the colonial period. For example, at the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists that took place in Rome in 1959, a resolution was passed to the following effect:

(1) that free and liberated black Africa should not adopt any European or other language as a national tongue;
(2) that one African language should be chosen … [and] that all Africans would learn this national language besides their own regional language.

Almost 30 years later, the 1986 Accra meeting of the Union of African Writers declared:

> This Union finds it regrettable that twenty years have been wasted since the Congress of African Writers in Rome recommended the adoption of one language for the African peoples. Resolved to end this state of inertia, hesitancy and defeatism, we have, after much serious consideration, and in the conviction that all technical problems can and will be overcome, *unanimously* adopted Kiswahili as the logical language for this purpose. (quoted in Soyinka, 1988: 89–92)

It is in support of these resolutions that Wole Soyinka too recommended Kiswahili as the language of (African) continental Pan-Africanism. Drawing on the authority of Cheik Anta Diop, Soyinka (1988: 92–93) asserted that 'when it came to his [Diop's] choice of language for continental adoption, he unreservedly chose Swahili'.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o went even further to suggest the possibility that Kiswahili replace English altogether as the language of the world. In Ngugi's words:

> I have nothing against English, French, Portuguese, or any other language for that matter. They are all valid as far as they are languages and in as far as they do not seek to oppress other nations, nationalities and languages. But if Kiswahili or any other African language were to become the language for the world, this would symbolize the dawn of a new era in human relations between nations and peoples of Africa and those of other continents. (Ngugi, 1993: 41)

As the most popular African language among Diaspora Africans, and especially African Americans, then, there has been some consensus that Kiswahili should, in fact, be cultivated to transcend continental boundaries to become the pan-African language of global Africa.

From the Diasporic point of view there has been the argument, by Robert Twiggs, for example, that there is a certain inter-relation and a residual African lingo-cultural core in the language varieties of people of African descent throughout the 'Western Hemisphere' that transcend the 'surface' differences resulting from the influences of different Euro-languages (Twiggs, 1973). If Twiggs is referring to the creole origins of these languages of the Black world, then they also have an affinity with creole varieties of English, for example, that are spoken in West Africa. From this common linguistic base, then, should people of African descent develop their own Esperanto – the 'Aryan' based interlanguage designed by Dr Ludwick Lazar Zamenhof in 1889 – perhaps complementary to the promotion of Kiswahili?

This quest for a common pan-African language is an understandable

and a defensible one. But it is a quest that, no doubt, requires long-term planning and pursuit. It is a quest, furthermore, that must be pursued democratically rather than bureaucratically if it is to come to fruition. In the meantime, however, it might be best to conceive of the pan-African linguistic project as a multilingual one. This means, in part, taking advantage of the existing linguistic situation to create a communication network that has, as its base, speakers of the native languages of people of African descent, linking them through local regional languages, connecting them further through trans-regional media and ending, finally, with an appropriated English language. Pan-Africanism will have thus created its own constellation of languages that can respond effectively to mass struggles throughout global Africa.

As indicated earlier, one stream of pan-African consciousness has indeed been the Afrocentric stream. And because Afrocentricity is so deeply connected, in its history, with the interrogation of the epistemological terms of reference of Eurocentrism, it has been confronted with the language question more directly than any other version of Pan-Africanism. After all, language is not only a tool of communication and collective identity; it is even more fundamentally an instrument of thought. And it is this linguistic dimension of Afrocentricity that is explored more fully in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

English and the Afrocentric Voice: In Search of Authenticity

Introduction

In his study on the social dimension of cognitive grammar, Bruce Hawkins looks at how linguistic cognition can be influenced by the sociopolitical context of language use. He examines, in particular, a sub-set of textual references which he describes as iconographic. Hawkins defines an iconographic reference as 'one that constructs an image of the referent which is intended to evoke a strong emotional response to that referent' (Hawkins, 1997: 22). A textual reference, in addition, can range from a simple nominal to an extended text.

Hawkins then relates iconographic reference to the Althusserian notion of 'interpellation'. This, in our case, is the linguistically-mediated process through which, ultimately, individuals become subjects of the ideology of the ruling power/class. We acquire 'the categorization and modes of expression of our native language. We learn to conceptualize time, space and other experiential domains in the way that has become conventional within that community in which we are acquiring the language' (Hawkins, 1997: 25). In the process we submit to these 'modes of conceptualizing' our experience without, necessarily, becoming permanent prisoners to them. And it is this dynamic relationship between language and ideology, partly established through a system of iconographic and other references drawn from a culturally-based corpus of images, that this chapter seeks to examine in the specific context of Afrocentricity.

Throughout much of the 'Anglophone' Black world, the English language has sometimes been regarded as a carrier of a Eurocentric worldview built on a racialist premise of Black inferiority. Inscribed in the repertoires of Black folk as a language of white enslavement and colonization, it has accumulated a heritage of metaphors and imagery that has invested Black identity with negative meanings and under-valued their place in world history. In naming 'reality', in a way that has fostered Black marginality the Euro-world has gained control over it partly because it is through its languages that reality becomes known to us.

It is partly against this linguistic legacy of Eurocentrism that Afrocentrists have sought to rebel. Regarding language as 'essentially a means of controlling thought', with the potential of 'boxing' the victims into the concepts of the victimizer, 'liberation from the captivity of racist language' and ultimate control of one's 'own language' is thus seen as a first order of Afrocentric intellectuals in the quest to self-direct the future of the global Black community (Asante, 1989: 31).

But what is Afrocentricity and how does it relate to Pan-Africanism? What has been the role of the English language in both these ideologies of race consciousness and how have they responded to their linguistic circumstances? What have been some of the means of lingo-conceptual liberation espoused by Afrocentrists and what have been some of their implications? It is to a consideration of these questions that we must now turn.

Between Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism

I use the term 'Afrocentricity' to designate the movement of ideas of ontological rootedness in an African world and reserve 'Afrocentrism' for the conscious ideology arising from those ideas and its manifestations in verbal and non-verbal behaviour. To that extent, Afrocentricity is a view of the world which puts Africa at the centre of global concerns and idealizes its role in human affairs. It puts great emphasis on the agency of Black people in shaping not only their own history but the history of the world at large, ascribing to people of African descent a greater role in the construction of human civilization than has been recognized. In the final analysis, Afrocentricity seeks to restore the pride and confidence of Black people in their own African heritage.

Pan-Africanism, in contrast, is a doctrine or movement which believes in the common destiny of African peoples and seeks to unite them politically, economically and culturally. Whereas Afrocentricity regards Africa as a cultural complex in the widest sense of the word and is inspired by the idiom of Black dignity, Pan-Africanism sees the continent primarily as a political entity and its idiom draws heavily on the spirit of solidarity.

Of course, neither of these ideologies is monolithic and undifferentiated across cultures, time and space. There are certainly different schools and trajectories within Afrocentricity, ranging from those that celebrate Africa's glorious material achievements to those most comfortable with the continent's humanism. And Pan-Africanism can be global (the unity of all Black people worldwide), west hemispheric (the unity of people of African descent in the western hemisphere), trans-Atlantic (the unity of Africa and

its own Diaspora across the Atlantic), trans-Saharan (the unity of the African continent as a whole, both north and south of the Sahara) and sub-Saharan (the unity of Black people south of the Sahara) (Mazrui & Sharakiya, 1993: 441–444). Whatever their internal variations, however, Afrocentricity is united by a (re)interpretation of the global significance of Africa, while Pan-Africanism essentially coheres around a policy of the unity of Black people at some demographic plane or other.

While almost all Afrocentrists are Pan-Africanists, only some Pan-Africanists can be described as Afrocentrists. Only some Pan-Africanists believe that Africa is at the heart of the human condition or the centre of global concerns. On the contrary, a good proportion of Pan-Africanists are inspired by a perceived marginality of Africa and by the need, therefore, to unite its people and galvanize their energies towards achieving for it a greater centrality in world affairs.

In the second half of the 20th century Pan-Africanists (though a minority) are to be found in virtually every country in Africa and the Black world. They may be politicians or students, artists, writers or workers. Afrocentrists, on the other hand, are primarily a phenomenon of the African Diaspora, especially the Diaspora of the Americas and Western Europe. Because Black people in North America and Western Europe feel the centrality of the West in global affairs the most directly, they have felt the need most keenly to substitute Afrocentricity for Eurocentrism. And it is partly this reactiveness to Eurocentrism that explains some of the linguistic responses of Afrocentricity.

Between Relativism and Functionalism

The United States is arguably the cradle and the most important constituency of Afrocentricity and, to a much lesser extent, of trans-continental Pan-Africanism. In both these movements, the English language came to play a critical role.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, English has been the language of Pan-African conferences and festivals, going back to the Pan-African Congresses organized by W.E.B. DuBois. Because of the peculiar racial politics of their historical place and time, African Americans came to assume a central place in the leadership of Pan-Africanism in its early stages of evolution. And because African Americans were English-speaking, they were able to establish links more readily with the Anglophone region of Africa than with its Francophone counterpart – not overlooking the fact, of course, that in the post-colonial period, some radical Francophone African countries served as safe havens for African

American activists. And until today, English is the primary instrumental bridge between the Diaspora and continental Africans schooled in European languages.

With regard to Afrocentricity within the United States, however, the ideology seems caught between the instrumental value of English and the symbolic value of indigenous African languages. The instrumental value can include both a collective scale (of fostering community bonds, for example) and individual scale (of serving the communicational needs of individual users). The symbolic value relates more to concerns of collective identity, consciousness and heritage.

In more theoretical terms, the symbolic resort to African languages within Afrocentricity coincides with a quasi-Whorfian position. Cognitive linguistics has, of course, been quite influential in rehabilitating Benjamin Lee Whorf and his (and Edward Sapir's) relativist hypothesis. Not only is Whorf no longer understood to have been an absolutist in his linguistic relativism, there is now a considerable body of literature that is believed to support his argument, for example, that linguistic patterns do influence our patterns of attention and categorization in a culturally specific manner.

At the lexical level of Whorfian linguistics, a distinction has sometimes been made between two categories of words:

(1) *Culture-specific words*. These constitute the 'vast majority of words in any language [which] have complex and rather language-specific meanings' and which 'can often be seen as reflecting and embodying the distinctive historical and cultural experiences of the speech community'.
(2) *Cultural key words*. These are 'the highly salient and deeply culture-laden words in language' which often stand 'at the centre of a large cluster of fixed phrases, and appear frequently in proverbs, sayings, popular songs, book titles and so on'. (Dirven & Vespoor, 1998: 145)

It is from these culture-specific and culture key words in Africa's linguistic heritage that Afrocentrists have drawn in their efforts to centre Africa as the modal point of their ideology. But precisely because African Americans are not themselves direct products of the respective African lingo-cultural experiences, the terms drawn from African languages are, in reality, devoid of cognitive effect on African Americans. To that extent, the role of these linguistic Africanisms in Afrocentric discourse becomes primarily symbolic.

The instrumental side of Afrocentricity that is pegged to the English language, on the other hand, is predicated on a 'functionalist' view of

language that is somewhat akin to the phenomenon described by Hawkins (1997). The concern here is not with how language influences cognition but with how language itself is (re)structured in terms of the functions to which it is put. Racial assumptions and biases and exclusionary ideologies are not inherent in language but are reflected, perpetuated and naturalized in the way in which language is used. In essence, then, concepts in language can potentially have a multiplicity of competing meanings, each being determined by the social location of the user. To some extent, this sense of location can be loosely equated with *grounding* in cognitive linguistics in which a discourse text is seen to be relative to 'the speaker's experience of the world' (Dirven & Vespoor, 1998: 95). Within this framework, then, Afrocentrists see the English language as an instrument by which to inscribe the Black experience within which African Americans are grounded in a racially divided society entrapped in a hegemonic ideology that is decidedly Eurocentric.

Afrocentrists do not explicitly seek to resolve the seeming contradiction between their Whorfian and functionalist positions. But, in general, they seem to accept the uniqueness of language as shaped by its cultural-experiential environment without denying the universality of language as a human experience. They see language as operating in two domains: One that is particularistic, reflecting a heritage of Black people in Africa and its Diaspora, shaped by their historical experience over the centuries; the other, more plural (universal?) – malleable and potentially amenable to a multiplicity of accommodations (though often through a process of struggle and contestation).

Between English and Kiswahili

Many nationalists within the continent of Africa tend to advocate for the replacement of European languages inherited from the colonial tradition by African ones. In the forefront of this campaign – though somewhat less deterministic in his latest book (1998) – has been the Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who has repeatedly argued that 'the domination of a people's language by languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized' (Ngugi, 1986: 16). The process of radical decolonization proposed by Ngugi, therefore, involves a rejection of English, the subsequent refusal to submit to the worldview supposedly embedded within it and the recentring of African languages in the intellectual life of African peoples.

For Afrocentrists in the West, however, the range of linguistic alternatives to Eurocentrism is much more circumscribed. With English as their

first and often the only language, African Americans cannot easily exercise the kind of total linguistic shift advocated by African nationalists. The linguistic challenge and dilemma confronting the Afrocentrist, then, has been how to articulate a counter-hegemonic and anti-Eurocentric discourses in a language of 'internal' imperialism.

One path that has been pursued by Afrocentrists has been the deracialization of English. This process has sometimes involved attempts to inscribe new meanings or to create new concepts in the language so as to make it more compatible with the dignity and experiences of Black people. The development from a 'Black is Beautiful' position to the rejection of 'blackness' as an identitarian category in African America is all part of this momentum of linguistic revolution. So is the reformulation of terms like 'slaves' and 'slavery' to 'the enslaved' and 'enslavement' to emphasize both agency, force and resistance. Asante provides a list of examples of English words today which, in his opinion, 'must either be redefined or eliminated' altogether because they belong to the kind of language that 'can disrupt the thought of good solid brothers and sisters' (Asante, 1989: 46–47).

Asante is quite cognizant of the fact, however, that Eurocentrism in language transcends lexical semantics or meanings inscribed in individual words and phrases. It exists, rather, in the entirety of its symbolic constitution. Beyond the level of specific words, writes Asante (1987: 55), 'that are monoethnic there are substantive influences upon language (a sort of Whorfian twist) that make our communicative habits sterile. The writers who have argued that English is our enemy have argued convincingly on the basis of '*black*ball', '*black*mail', '*black* Friday', etc.; but they have not argued thoroughly in terms of the total architecton of society'. The Afrocentric challenge, then, is seen as one of subverting the entire symbolic generation of 'monoethnic' (i.e. Eurocentric) meanings in an otherwise plural world.

The deracialization of English among Afrocentrists has also taken the form of particularizing what had hitherto been portrayed as universal. When we make inference to 'classical music' – a phrase invariably taken to refer to the compositions of people like Beethoven, Bach and Mozart – Afrocentrists insist on knowing whose classical music we are talking about. Terms like 'discovery', 'modern languages' and many others are similarly subjected to this relativist reinterpretation which allocates meanings to their specific cultural-experiential contexts. As Tejumola Olaniyan (1995) aptly put it:

> Instead of one world, one norm, and many deviants, Afrocentric cultural nationalism authorizes several worlds with several norms.

> The universalist claim of Europe is shown to be a repression of Otherness in the name of the Same. 'Culture', as the West erects it, is hence subverted to 'culture', 'Truth' to 'truth', 'Reason' to 'reason', 'Drama' to 'drama'. This is the fundamental ethicopolitical point of departure of the Afrocentric cultural nationalist discourse, an empowerment of a grossly tendentiously misrepresented group to speak for and represent itself …

What is involved, ultimately, in this attempted recodification in the terrain of language and discourse is a challenge on who has the moral right to define.

Some Afrocentrists also believe that there is a certain Eurocentric structuring of thought in the construction of knowledge that is promoted partly through the English language. They associate with English certain conceptual tendencies including, for example, dichotomization (e.g. reason versus emotion or mind versus body), objectification and abstractification (where a concept is isolated from its context, its place and time, and rendered linguistically as an abstract). These features, it is argued, are in contradiction to the human essence and reality and their end result is the fortification of a Eurocentric ideology with all its conceptual trappings (Ani, 1994: 104–108).

All in all, then, in embracing English as their own, Afrocentric thinkers have refused to accept its idiom passively and uncritically. And, sometimes, they have risen to the challenge of constructing new and imaginative metaphors and meanings. They have aimed to follow in the tradition of Nat Turner and Henry Highland Garnet, two important figures in African American protest history, who are said to have stood 'against the tide of Europeanization in their discourse even though the representational language was American English', the language of their oppressors (Asante, 1987: 126).

Even as they seek to transform it, however, English has continued to serve as the main medium of an Afrocentric counter-discourse. Much of the theorizing about Afrocentricity and the formulation of models based on it has been done in English. And it is with the facilitating role of the English language that Afrocentricity gets communicated to Black people both within the USA and beyond. It is in this sense of articulation and communication of ideas that we have ventured to suggest that Afrocentricity is dependant on the instrumental value of the English language.

But in the attempt to affirm an African identity, to devise maxims based on that identity and to construct a symbolic bridge between the African Diaspora and African cultures, Afrocentrists have often had to turn to

African languages. Yoruba, for example, has come to feature quite prominently in libation rituals in many an Afrocentric gathering. Kariamu Welsh-Asante (1993) partly draws from the Shona language of Zimbabwe to define the conceptual parameters of an African aesthetics. And in spite of the fact that Alexis Kagame's work (1956) has been discredited by some African philosophers (e.g. Masolo, 1994: 84–102), his propositions of an 'African worldview' based on the categories of his native language, Kinyarwanda, have continued to exercise a strong influence on Afrocentric thinkers in the USA. In the words of Dona Richards, Kagame has made it possible for Afrocentric intellectuals 'to express African conceptions in African terms' (Richards, 1990: 223).

From the entire corpus of African languages, however, it is Kiswahili that has been Afrocentricity's most productive source of symbolic enrichment. Indeed, according to Karenga, African Americans have the same kind of claim to Kiswahili as Jews, for example, have to Hebrew. 'Swahili is no more frivolous or irrelevant to Black people than Hebrew or Armenian is to Jews and Armenians who were not born in Israel or Armenia and will never go there' (Karenga, 1993: 15). Kiswahili is the language of the most serious challenge to Christmas to have emerged in the African Diaspora. Inspired by African harvest ceremonies as markers of temporal cycles, an entire idiom drawn mainly from Kiswahili has come into existence to designate *Kwanzaa*, the African American end of the year festival, and its *Nguzo Saba* or seven pillars of wisdom. These include *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self-determination), *Ujima* (Collective responsibility), *Nia* (Intention), *Kuumba* (Creativity), *Ujamaa* (Socialism) and *Imani* (Faith). Every December hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of African Americans celebrate *Kwanzaa* in the name of Mother Africa.

The *Kwanzaa* festival is itself rooted, of course, in a wider ideology of Afrocentric nationhood propounded by Maulana Karenga (1978). This ideology, *Kawaida,* with its various concepts and axioms, is again built on an idiom that is entirely Swahili and seeks to unfold a creative motif for African American identity. Kiswahili continues to sensitize symbolically people of African ancestry in the Diaspora to the African cultures of the continent.

An even more controversial use of Kiswahili is made by Marimba Ani. Not only does Ani utilize Kiswahili words in wide currency in East Africa, like *asili* (origin, source, essence) and extends its meaning to include the 'underlying explanatory essence of culture', she engages in Kiswahili linguistic engineering to arrive at totally new coinages in the language. These include *utamawazo* (the cultural structuring of thought) and *utamaroho* (spirit life of a culture) (Ani, 1994: xxv). For Ani, it is as if English

is wanting as a critical medium against Eurocentric thought and she was seeking to complement its 'weaknesses' by a creative adoption of Kiswahili.

In spite of the revolutionary potential within English, therefore, Afrocentrists believe that there are areas of meaning and conceptualization which the language is simply not designed to handle with any degree of adequacy given the cultural context within which it developed. 'An Afrocentric perspective demands examination of the artifacts of African culture from the vintage point of the traditions of Africa. Therefore, it is unproductive to try to explain the concept *okyeame* from a Eurocentric perspective, particularly when that concept is not present in European culture' (Asante, 1987: 61–62). Too exclusive a reliance on the resources of the English language, it is feared, will ultimately constrain the very Africanity of Afrocentricity.

There are good reasons, of course, as to why Kiswahili has come to assume such an important place in the Afrocentric imagination. The language is second only to Arabic as the most international African language on the continent, employed by people across several national boundaries. In Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania it has acquired a national and official status. It has served as a medium of communication among people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in their struggles against European colonial rule. It is heard regularly on radio broadcasts throughout the world and is offered as a subject in universities in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. In Tanzania, Kiswahili also acquired a reputation as a counter-idiom to capitalist exploitation and as a tool of mobilization towards greater national self-reliance. It was also in the heartland of Swahili political culture that trans-continental Pan-Africanism found its 'resurgence' with the convening, in Tanzania, of the Sixth Pan-African Congress. And, as shown in Chapter 3, distinguished personalities, from both eastern and western Africa, like Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka, have at different times advocated for its establishment as the language of continental Pan-Africanism. A combination of these and other factors, in other words, was bound to make Kiswahili particularly attractive to those in the Diaspora seeking a symbolic linguistic connection with the land of their ancestors.

In spite of its credentials as the most triumphant African language after Arabic, Kiswahili is also decidedly Afro-Islamic. Its parenting civilizations have included both Africa and Islam: it is at once part of the heritage of Africa and part of the universal legacy of Islam. The Islamicity of Kiswahili lies partly in its readiness to borrow concepts, words and idioms from Arabic as the language of the Qur'an and of Islamic ritual and from the

Islamic civilization at large. Although its structure is completely Bantu and not remotely Semitic, Kiswahili has probably borrowed a higher proportion of its vocabulary from Arabic than English has from Latin. Basic sociological words not only for religion (*dini*) but also for language (*lugha*), trade (*biashara*) and kinship (*ujamaa*) are Arabic-derived. Moral and ethical vocabulary in Kiswahili is saturated with such Arabic loan words as *udhalimu* (injustice), *murua* (moral behaviour), *dhambi* (sin), *haramu* (taboo) and *halali* (ritually permissible) (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998: 170–171). The roots of all three of Marimba Ani's Afrocentric concepts central to her critique of Eurocentrism – namely, *asili* (essence), *-fahamu* (consciousness) and *-roho* (spirit) – are also of Arabo–Islamic derivation.

The Islamicity of Kiswahili had once split the ranks of Eurocentrists of the Christian missionary type in East Africa. One the one hand, there were the likes of Bishop A. Mackay who believed that since both Islam and Christianity were monotheistic religions drawn from the same Middle Eastern ancestry and shared a considerable number of spiritual concepts and values, Kiswahili could serve well for the conversion of indigenous Africans to Christianity – precisely because Kiswahili could already cope with the conceptual universe of Islam (Mackay, 1898: 103).

On the other hand, the language met some stiff resistance from missionary Swahiliphobes who regarded the association of Kiswahili with Islam as *ipso facto* dysfunctional to Christianity. Some of the earliest evidence of this religiously inspired Swahiliphobia came from Tanganyika under German rule. According to Marcia Wright (1971: 113):

> In Germany, Director Buchner proved to be an unrelenting foe of Swahili, going so far in a speech before the Kolonialrat in 1905 as to declare that it was irredeemably mixed with Islam that every expedient ought to be employed to obstruct their joint penetration … Buchner's opposition to Swahili was adopted and expanded by Julius Richter, a member of the Berlin Committee. Richter delivered a diatribe during the Kolonial Kongress in 1905 against the pernicious influence of Islam everywhere in Africa. Isolating East Africa as the scene of the worst danger, he envisaged a mosque alongside every coastman's hut, and took the official support for Swahili to be blatantly pro-Islamic.

At more or less the same time, similar sentiments were expressed across the border in Uganda by sections of British colonial opinion. Bishop Tucker, for example, was reported to have said that Mackay:

> … was very desirous of hastening the time when one language should dominate Central Africa, and that language he hoped and believed

> would be Swahili … That there should be one language for Central Africa is a consummation devoutly to be wished, but God forbid that it should be Swahili … English? Yes! But Swahili never. The one means the Bible and Protestant Christianity – the other Mohammedanism … sensuality, moral and physical degradation and ruin. (Mackay, 1908: 215)

As far as this school of missionaries was concerned, therefore, Kiswahili was too closely related to Islam to be welcome in Christian missionary work.

And so the question arises as to whether the Islamic factor in Kiswahili would also pose a dilemma for Afrocentrists as it once did for Eurocentrists. Does Kiswahili's part-Islamic parentage dilute its Africanity? Is Afrocentricity compatible with Islam on the linguistic plane? Or, like the missionaries of the colonial period in East Africa, are Afrocentrists also divided about Kiswahili's Islamicity?

Between Islamophobia and Swahiliphilia

This interplay between language and religion is explored quite elaborately by Ali Mazrui (1998) to whose ideas a large part of this section is indebted. Mazrui argues that Afrocentricity can be either Islamophilic or Islamophobic. Islamophile Afrocentricity in the African Diaspora has included people of African descent who have converted to Islam partly for reasons of racial dignity and Black nationalism. In the United States such people in the 20th century have included major political leaders like Malcolm X (al-Hajj Malik al-Shabbaz) and Louis Farakkhan, and outstanding sporting figures like Muhammad Ali (formerly Cassius Clay). And indeed many African American Muslims have actually equated Islamization with Africanization.

A 19th century Black pioneer in Islamophile Afrocentricity was indeed Edward Wilmot Blyden, the Diaspora African who returned home to Africa and became a precursor of such doctrines as Negritude, Pan-Africanism and Afrocentricity. Though himself a Presbyterian minister, Edward Blyden came close to saying that Islam was the right religion for Africa. As Director of Muslim Education in Sierra Leone in 1902, Blyden was seeking to persuade the new British colonial regimes in West Africa that Islam was 'the most effective educational force in Negro-land' and, although there is no record that he himself ever became a Muslim, 'Blyden so closely identified with them [Muslims] that his name is still well known and highly regarded among West African Muslims' (Lynch, 1971: 272).

More radical still, Blyden was so drawn to the religion's doctrine of 'brotherhood' (the *umma*) and its condemnation of racial prejudice that he was led to believe that Islam was the more appropriate religion not only for Africa but also for the entire Black world. According to Turner (1997b: 175):

> Although much of Blyden's work was tinged with a subtle Christian missionary agenda and a blatant disrespect for African traditional religions, the implication was not only that Islam might be a preferable religion for African-Americans, but also a focal point for an internationalist perspective with African and the darker races of the world, over and against white Europeans and Americans.

And these views of Blyden ultimately came to inspire later generations of African Americans who saw in Islam a cultural basis for a global African internationalism.

On the African continent, Islamophile Afrocentricity is perhaps best represented by the Pan-Africanist and first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah. In his book, *Consciencism*, Nkrumah explicitly projects Islam not as a threat to the African heritage but as a potential ally. 'With true independence', Nkrumah argued , '… a new harmony needs to be forged, a harmony that will allow the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa, so that this presence is in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society. Our society is not the old society, but a new society enlarged by Islamic and Euro-Christian influences' (Nkrumah, 1964: 22). And, in spite of his efforts to think of Africa in non-purist cultural terms, Nkrumah has remained one of the celebrated figures among some Afrocentrists.

In general, Islamophile Arocentrists have regarded Arab Africans as fellow Africans and accepted Islam as part and parcel of the African heritage. This affected their attitude towards the Arabic language and to other African languages influenced by Arabic, like Kiswahili and Hausa. Blyden's interest in Islam was aroused partly because he was concerned about religion and partly because Blyden was a philologist who became curious about the Arabic language. He spent three months in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria in 1866 partly in order to improve his command of Arabic. At that time Blyden was already a Professor of Classics at Liberia College and planned to introduce the language in his department there, which he later did (Turner, 1997a: 51). Overall, Blyden celebrated Arabic as an enriching experience to the African condition. In his words: 'Already some of the vernaculars have been enriched by expressions from Arabic… They have received terms regarding the religion of one God, and respecting a certain state of civilization …' (Lynch, 1971: 279).

Nkrumah, however, married a native-speaker of the Arabic language, and the mother-tongue of Nkrumah's children today is indeed Arabic. And Arabic continues to be studied by many African American Muslims today not only to gain greater access to the world of Islam but also as an additional symbol of Africanity. As a result, Islamophile Afrocentrists have generally felt comfortable with the Arabo-Islamic impact on Kiswahili.

The Afrocentric current that is hostile to the Islamic presence in African cultures is Islamophobe Afrocentricity which, by extension, also tends to be Arabophobic. This orientation is most noticeable on the issue of Egypt. Much of Afrocentric literature at large reveres ancient Egypt not only as the genesis of grand civilizations but also as the ultimate triumph of Black creativity. Most Afrocentrists regard ancient Egypt as having been a Black civilization. Today's Egypt is Muslim, a product of the Arab conquest of the 7th century. Islamophobe Afrocentrists regard the arrival of Islam as a negation of its Africanity, as the ultimate sabotage of classical African civilization – although the Arab conquest had, in fact, been preceded by the Greek, Roman and Byzantine conquest of Egypt. Islamophobe Afrocentrists view Arabized Egypt as a betrayal of the Afrocentric glory of pharaonic Egypt.

Islamophobe Afrocentrists also associate the Arab slave trade in Africa with Islam and regard both as a stigma on languages like Kiswahili. Is Kiswahili a product of the Arab slave trade? Islamophobe Afrocentrists like John Henrik Clarke and Molefi Kete Asante have been profoundly ambivalent about Kiswahili's links with the Arabic language and with the legacy of Islam.

Much more paradoxical are the Arabophobe Swahiliphiles. These are usually people who love the Swahili language and its heritage but wish to distance it from the Arab influence. Within Africa, Arabophobe Swahiliphiles are usually reacting to a pejorative definition of Kiswahili as a hybrid child of a union between the languages of Africans and Arabs – in the words of Captain Stigand (1915: 130) of the 'highest of animals', i.e. Africans and the 'lowest of human beings', i.e. Arabs. Half-baked ethnographic ideas from Europe thus went on to create the impression that the achievements of Kiswahili would not have been possible without its presumed 'more human' parentage. It is in reaction to this colonial conception that African nationalists were led to reject not only the suggestion that Africans were less than human but also the thesis that Kiswahili was less than wholly African. Kiswahili and its achievements now came to be regarded in quasi-purist terms as the product of the collective genius of the African people themselves with very little Arab participation in its formation (Mazrui & Shariff, 1994). What is involved in this enterprise is the

disArabization and re-indigenization of the origins of Kiswahili. The people concerned may be pro-Swahili but anti-Arab. The two positions are systematically related.

There is yet another kind of Arabophobe Swahiliphiles. This type includes people like the Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian writer and critic, Chinweizu, and the Ghanaian novelist, Ayi Kwei Armah. There is strong, if guarded, evidence of Arabophobia, for example, in Soyinka's 'African World and the Ethno-cultural Debate' (1990), in Chinweizu's *Decolonizing the African Mind* (1989) and in Armah's historical novel, *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), among their other writings. But there is even greater evidence of Swahiliphilia, especially in Soyinka. Quoting the pro-Swahili resolutions of the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists that took place in Rome in 1959 and of the 1986 Accra meeting of the Union of Writers, Soyinka too came out in support of Kiswahili as the language of continental Pan-Africanism. And drawing on the authority of Cheik Anta Diop, Soyinka (1988: 92–93) asserted that 'when it came to his [Diop's] choice of language for continental adoption, he unreservedly chose Swahili'.

Arabophobe Swahiliphilia is expressed even more passionately by Kwesi Otabil. Castigating Africans for being all too hypocritical to acknowledge Arab oppression of Africans, he continues to condemn 'the even more damning scandal' in the Organization of African Unity where 'Arabic enjoys the privilege of a summit language, along with the Euro-colonial languages, while Swahili – a potential African *lingua franca* – has never seriously been considered for a similar role' (Otabil, 1994: 81). Elsewhere he takes to task the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, Salim Ahmed Salim, for proposing that Arabic (or Kiswahili or Hausa) be considered as a possible candidate for an Africa-wide *lingua franca*. Otabil considers Salim's recommendation as treasonous which he can only attribute to 'the sway of the Afro-Arab unity lobby as well as Salim's own Muslim, hence arabized, background' (Otabil, 1994: 128). Clearly, Otabil is one of those Afrocentric thinkers who make little distinction between Islam and Arabism. To him one is systematically related to the other: His own Arabophobia, then, is intricately connected with Islamophobia.

On the whole, however, Arabophobe Swahiliphilia is still very much a product of continental Africa. But there is evidence that it has some modest manifestations in the Diaspora.

Conclusion: Towards the Democratization of Afrocentricity

I began this chapter by showing, following Hawkins (1997), how the relationship between language and ideology can be cognitively stabilized

through an internalized system of iconographic and other textual referencing. Hegemonic as such a system may be, however, it can also be linguistically subverted depending on the ideological location of different groups of users, through (re)referencing or creation of new references altogether. Where the new references are from the native language, their effect could indeed be cognitive; when they are from a 'foreign' language, however, they may simply be intended for symbolic effect.

Within the context of the USA, where the ideology has had its greatest success, Afrocentricity has relied on the instrumentality of English and the symbolism of Kiswahili and, to a much lesser extent, of other African languages. Each of these languages has posed its own challenges for Afrocentricity. As a language of their enslavers and internal colonizers, English is seen to have been tainted with racist images and metaphors degrading to the Black 'race'. To this linguistic condition, Afrocentrists responded by attempting to deracialize the language as they continue to put it into maximum effect for the benefit of Afrocentricity.

Kiswahili, on the other hand, because it developed within an Islamic culture and borrowed many Arabic words, has also carried considerable Islamic associations. This religious attribute of the language has endeared it to Islamophile Afrocentrists but rendered it suspect in the eyes of Islamophobe Afrocentrists. Will the latter, one day, seek to disIslamize Kiswahili as a way of reauthenticating its Africanity? Or will Kiswahili's Islamicity eventually be overshadowed by its increasing ecumenicalization and secularization?

As we indicated earlier, Kiswahili began as a fusion of two civilizations – indigenous Bantu and Islamic. The arrival of Christian missionaries helped to initiate a new phase in the history of Kiswahili – the use of the language for religions other than Islam. The language had now entered the ecumenical stage of its evolution. But its ecumenicalization was also the beginning of its secularization. As the language became the medium of worship in diverse religions, it became a medium of communication across religions. It gathered its own momentum, fostering trade in the Eastern African region as a whole, facilitating labour migration within and across national boundaries, in time developing into a major cross-ethnic *lingua franca*. In the process, Kiswahili increasingly took a universal dimension, becoming a language of science and technology. But has Kiswahili's transformation from a relatively provincial Afro-Islamic tongue into widening circles of overlapping constituencies sufficiently de-Islamized it to the comfort of Islamophobe Afrocentrists?

The uneasy balance between English and Kiswahili poses yet another problem for Afrocentrists. Afrocentrists are in search of a language of

counter-idiom and counter-discourse to the language of Eurocentrism. Bur precisely because Kiswahili is foreign in the American soil it cannot provide more than a symbolic relief to the Afrocentric cause. English, on the other hand, is indeed being transmuted into a potent tool of Afrocentric combat. It has the additional value of linking Afrocentrists in the Diaspora with continental Afrocentrists and Afrocentric sympathizers and supporters in Africa. But both in the USA among African Americans and even more so in Africa, English is at best a language of the elite. It promotes 'elite closure', serves as a barrier to keep ordinary people out and is a serious obstacle to the democratization of Afrocentric knowledge and thought. And unless this epistemological democratization is allowed to take place, Afrocentricity is creating linguistic conditions for its own demise. What, then, is the solution?

A possible linguistic alternative for Afrocentricity in the USA is, of course, Ebonics. As outlined in Chapter 3, there is in the USA continuing debate about whether Ebonics is merely a dialectal variety of American English, a creole born in the womb of African enslavement or a distinct language classifiable as African in structure. What is not at issue among the different schools of Ebonicists, however, is that the medium bears a significant proportion of Africanisms that are integral to it. In Ebonics, therefore, Afrocentrists may discover a natural synthesis between the instrumentality of English and the symbolism of Kiswahili. Ebonics, furthermore, may help break down the walls of linguistic elitism and democratize the Afrocentric struggle by allowing the common folk to participate in inscribing meaning in its language. By turning to Ebonics, in other words, Afrocentricity in the USA may create a more organic linguistic environment for its own growth and development.

Afrocentrists are keenly aware, of course, that Ebonics has long suffered distorted and adverse portrayals not only by people from other cultures but even by some African Americans themselves. This negative image was quite evident in the controversy that was generated in December 1996 when the Oakland Unified District Board of Education in California passed a resolution recognizing Ebonics as the language many African American students brought to the classroom and calling for adequate instructional strategies that take this fact into consideration. The media quickly became inundated with iconographic references of the caricature type – images to be reviled (Hawkins, 1997: 21). Like the colonialist perceptions of African languages, Ebonics too has been regarded as intrinsically deficient and incapable of articulating philosophical and scientific positions. The adoption of Ebonics, therefore, may not only convince its detractors of the fallacy of their own position and rehabilitate it in the eyes of many but will

also enrich and sharpen it for continued Afrocentric struggles. Afrocentric thinkers will thus have started doing for Ebonics what African writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Mazisi Kunene have been attempting to do for African languages on the continent for the last couple of decades.

It cannot be assumed, however, that the mere adoption of a different linguistic form like Ebonics will automatically lead to an alternative (i.e. Afrocentric) expression. As much as Ebonics is more reflective of the cultural history of African Americans, it may not be any less of a linguistic site of struggle over the inscription of new meanings than Standard American English is. In other words, if Ebonics is not challenged and put to subversive uses in the production of meanings it will end up reproducing the discourse of Eurocentrism – only now in an African American linguistic image.

In addition, understandable as it is in terms of historical context and evolution, Afrocentricity is essentially a reactive ideology. It is a particular kind of Black response to the prevailing hegemony of Eurocentrism. But its reactiveness makes it particularly vulnerable to entrapment in Eurocentric terms of reference. We have had occasion to refer to Marimba Ani's (1994) indictment of the dichotomizing tendency of English, valuing more highly one set in the dichotomies (associated with people of European descent) over the other (identified with the 'Other'). In looking for new ways to redefine 'reality', however, Afrocentricity faces a real danger of merely reversing the order of value of the sets in the dichotomies. This kind of semantic revaluation does little more than lend legitimacy to Eurocentric categories of definition. The real challenge to Afrocentricity, then, lies not in creating a counter-discourse to Eurocentrism (even though this may not be avoidable at times) but in constructing an independent discourse, one that will have liberated itself altogether from the lingo-conceptual prison-house of Eurocentrism.

Finally, and as Hawkins (1997) has argued, iconographic and other references that may go into constructing an ideology may be a single lexical item or entire volumes of text. Within Afrocentricity, however, the conscious attempt has been primarily restricted to the lexico-semantic domain. There is an almost underlying assumption that ideological language is limited, in a simplified way, to words, their meanings and their uses. To finally arrive at an independent discourse, however, Afrocentrists will have to confront the challenge posed by Molefi Asante (quoted earlier in this chapter) of grappling, not only with the lexicon, but also with clause level grammar and with discourse linguistics at large.

Conclusion

Linguistic Appropriation and Beyond

The chapters in this volume have demonstrated how a range of historical forces, from slavery and colonialism to globalization and neoliberalism, have combined to produce certain lingo-cultural tensions throughout global Africa. The quest for a resolution to these tensions has given rise to two contending schools of thought. The first advocates the shift of African languages from the margins to the centre of African life. This move, it is presumed, will be a crucial basis not only for African liberation from Western hegemonic control but also to African renewal in the cultural and intellectual domains.

The case for the recentring of African languages does not imply, of course, that these languages themselves cannot be galvanized to serve imperialist ends. Certainly they can, as they have been repeatedly, in Africa's colonial and neocolonial history. The promotion of African language education under Apartheid South Africa's Bantu Education policies, for example, should be ample lesson about the limits of linguistic 'nativism' and particularism in the discourse of cultural liberation. But as Ngugi (1998: 97–98) suggests, as long as the ideas 'are available in African languages, even anti-African ideas, the people will start developing them in ways that may not always be in accordance with the needs of the national middle classes and their international allies'.

Ngugi here is raising the question of class struggle over meanings of ideas and concepts in African languages and the possibility of their semantic transformation. The existence of ideas in a language is, of course, one important facet; conveying the ideas to the public, on the other hand, is quite another. The mere existence of ideas does not imply, in every case, their 'conveyability'. The one depends on the language's own capacity for expansion; the other, on the social rules on how the language is to be used. That is why some feminists regard European languages in Africa as both a blessing and a curse, as instruments of liberation on the one plane and vehicles of domination on another. For Assia Djebar, for example, the French language provided her with space for self-unveiling, to do with the language what her Arab patriarchal society of Algeria considered taboo for women to do with the Arabic language: But she understood, at the same

time, what she and, ultimately, her entire society stood to lose, often to the advantage of the West, by this 'capitulation' to a foreign tongue (Lionnet, 1996: 331–333). These social boundaries of language use were clearly demonstrated by Nawal el-Saadawi's attempts to publish her Arabic novel whose English translation has appeared with the metaphoric title of *God Dies by the Nile*. The English title was, in fact, the title of el-Saadawi's Arabic original which her Arab publishers in Lebanon rejected because it was considered to be in violation of the religious sensibilities of that predominantly Islamic society.

The points raised by the Djebar and el-Saadawi experiences, though based on Arabic, can be extended to any language. And the bottom-line is that the act of creating a counter-discourse cannot be restricted to inscribing new meanings. Often it has to involve challenging the social rules and cultural politics that govern language usage, that determine who says what to whom, how, when and where. This is an issue that I shall return to later.

The second school of thought is the one that seeks to come to terms with European languages as part of the post-colonial African reality, appropriate them as our own, reconfigure them materially to acquire an African identity and transform them to create a counter- (i.e. anti-imperialist) discourse. This is the position that is often associated with writers like Chinua Achebe and Esk'ia Mphahlele in 'Anglophone' Africa. But similar sentiments have also been expressed in and about other parts of post-colonial Africa. Seen as an increasingly hybridized space of peoples and cultures, the 'Francophone' world, for example, is said to have produced writers whose work has been essential in the transformation of the French language. The global mongrelization of cultural forms, we are told,

> … creates hybrid identities, and interrelated, if not overlapping spaces. In those spaces, struggles for the control of means of representation and self-identification are mediated by a single and immensely powerful symbolic system: the colonial language and the variations to which it is subjected under the pen of … Francophone writers who enrich, transform and creolize it. (Lionnet, 1996: 322)

In the process of this transformation, then, the imperial languages begin to lose the dominant conceptions they had hitherto been circulating and become imbued with a different vision and sensibility reflective of the new hybrid and heteroglottic universe and, supposedly, an anti-imperialist consciousness.

Within language (and, indeed, within culture in general) the fact of hybridity is by no means new and predates any notions of the post-colonial

and the post-modern. Translinguistic social relations have existed for centuries and have sometimes led to the adoption of new exogenous elements and to processes of pidginization and creolization. This has been true of English as much as of Kiswahili, of Nubi as well as of Afrikaans. Yet, this hybridization has by no means led the native-speakers of these languages to think of themselves as something other than English, Swahili, Nubi and Afrikaner, respectively, in identitarian terms. Hybridity in the post-colonial and post-modern discourse of the cosmopolitan elite, on the other hand, is a theoretical abstraction whose denial of ethnic, racial, religious, gender and other 'particularistic' affirmations of identity is not borne out by the actually existing hybridity on the 'ground'. It is not a coincidence, then, that even in its hybridized diversity, the English language continues to be exclusionary in its identitarian referencing.

The thesis about the evolution of the imperial English of the colonizer to post-imperial Englishes of the neocolonial peoples, is particularly pronounced in the body of work known as post-colonial criticism. In spite of its internal variations the post-colonial field of inquiry essentially affirms the centrality of English and the reactive discourses encoded in it at the expense of more local and independent articulations in indigenous languages. Whether one talks of 'hybridity' – that amorphous interface between the colonizer and the colonized – and the counter-narratives emanating from it, or of the 'sub-altern' who, though silenced by the fact of an imposed colonial medium subsequently appropriates it to 'write back', English becomes the presumed *sine qua non* point of departure of the post-colonial condition. Talking of writers who use English in the process of resisting imperialism, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, for example, have argued that:

> By adapting the alien language to the exigencies of a mother grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and by giving a shape to the variations of the speaking voice, such writers and speakers construct an 'english' which amounts to a very different linguistic vehicle from the received standard colonial 'English'. [Thus] … the belief that the English text is unable to communicate a 'non-English' cultural meaning is based on a misconception of the way language 'means'. (Asgcroft *et al*., 1995: 284)

A conclusion naturally arising from this reasoning, then, is that the flowering of African writing in the English language since the late 1950s somehow amounts to the envoicing of the colonial subject. In the process, 'it is more or less implied that until this flowering took place – showing that the colonized had mastered and subverted the colonial codes – the stunned natives literally could not articulate their responses to colonial rule'

(Barber, 1995: 6). Writers in African languages thus become virtually wiped out of the textual map of anti-imperialist discourse.

The potential for this transformation of European languages, as seen in Chapter 4, is by no means limited to spaces and peoples in Africa and Asia, whose first languages are other than European. English-speaking people of African descent in the USA and the Caribbean, for example, also see themselves as engaged in this transformative exercise within the English language. Black thinkers over the decades, from Audre Lorde to Molefi Asante, have expressed the necessity for Black people to confront the language of their oppressor, make it 'truly' their own by transmuting it to project the identity and consciousness of Black people and carry the weight of the Black experience. But under what conditions are these imperial languages genuinely 'appropriable'?

While I am essentially in agreement with these thinkers about the 'transformability' of imperial languages, it is disturbing that, in the majority of cases, the power to transform is located in individual writers (especially within the ranks of the intellectual elite) with little regard to the dynamics and counter-dynamics that are actually taking place in society at large. There is no doubt that the individual initiatives of writers to reconfigure the linguistic media inherited from the colonial era are important, especially in demonstrating the potential and capacity of these languages to create counter-discourses. But we must not mistake a transformed English in say Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* with a transformed African or even Nigerian English. At best it is just Acheben English unless it can be demonstrated that Nigerians and/or Africans have made it their own in real life. In other words, the only section of African societies that the imperial languages may have envoiced under this 'individualist' paradigm, is that of the disproportionately tiny class of intellectuals, many of whom are, in fact, resident in the West.

It is the contention of this conclusion that, historically, the anti-hegemonic transformation of imperial languages in a manner that captures a new consciousness and which is both enduring and threatening to the hegemonic powers, has taken place under conditions of collective struggle and mass movement. The liberation idiom in the English of the nationalist leaders, from Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana to Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, had its foundation in the broader African nationalist struggles against colonialism. But the linguistic transformation of English attained under this paradigm became constrained by the very limitations of nationalism as an ideology of African liberation.

Some of Frantz Fanon's views are particularly instructive with regard to the linguistic metamorphosis of the language of the colonizer. Nationalist

leaders did indeed appropriate, from the languages of their colonizers, the liberal vocabulary of rights which succeeded in mobilizing their compatriots against the colonial dispensation. In the majority of cases, however, this appropriation took place within the framework of the same institutional and social structures imposed by colonialism. Fanon's dissatisfaction with this nationalist discourse of rights led him to assert:

> The entire action of these nationalist political parties during the colonial period is action of the electoral type: a string of philosophico-political dissertations on the themes of peoples right to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle: 'One man, one vote'. The national political parties never lay stress upon the necessity of a trial of armed strength, for the good reason that their objective is not the radical overthrowing of the system. (Fanon, 1963: 47)

A revolutionary vocabulary that has unchained itself from the trappings of the oppressor's discourse framework can only emerge from new forms of organization, pitted in radical combat with the oppressor. In other words, 'the very forms of organizations of the struggle will suggest … a different vocabulary … Brother, sister, friend – these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on' (1963: 47). And it is this process of linguistic 'liberation' that Fanon came to observe as the Algerian struggle against French rule was unfolding.

Fanon describes how, during this struggle of the Algerian people, the French language changed from a medium of domination to one of liberation. In the earlier phases of the struggle, national resistance and identity was pegged exclusively to Arabic, and the use of French was virtually regarded as an act of cultural treason. Later, however, confronted with the reality of combat on a day-to-day basis, the Arabic language came to be stripped of 'its sacred character, and the French language of its negative connotations' (Fanon, 1967: 92–93) whereby its adoption was now no longer seen as act of self-abnegation or of slavish identification with the oppressor.

Very instrumental in this process of 'acquisition of new values by the French language', was the creation of a radio transmission of the combatants under the name of *Voice of Fighting Algeria*. In Fanon's words:

> The broadcasting in French of the programmes of *Fighting Algeria* was to liberate the enemy language from its historic meanings. The same message transmitted in three different languages unified the

> experience and gave it a universal dimension. The French language lost its accursed character, revealing itself to be capable also of transmitting, for the benefit of the nation, the messages of truth that the latter awaited. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is the Algerian Revolution, it is the struggle of the Algerian people, that is facilitating the spreading of the French language in the nation. (Fanon, 1967: 89–90)

And when the French occupiers realized what was becoming of their own language in the hands of the revolutionary forces of Algeria, it expectedly threw them into a state of confusion and disorder about the full implications of their policy of linguistic assimilation.

In the post-colonial Francophone world, George Caffentzis draws our attention to the appropriation of the liberal idiom of the North during Thomas Sankara's revolution in the 1980s in the West African country of Burkina Faso. Caffentzis demonstrates how the Sankara regime took possession of that idiom, infused it with a new logic and new terms of reference and 'claimed it for the great disinherited people of the world', challenging the hegemony of the North in new ways. By virtue of this 'inversion' of values and meanings, Caffentzis suggests, Sankara may have attracted the hostility of the global forces of imperialism that ultimately led to his murder following what may have been a Franco-American engineered coup led by Blaise Compaore in 1987 (Caffentzis, 1990: 3).

On the 'Anglophone' side, one can cite the example of the Caribbean island of Grenada, eloquently discussed in Chris Searle's brilliant text, *Words Unchained*. As in Africa, the Caribbean has experienced decades of cultural and linguistic domination, with the imperial languages being both the conveyors and mediators of colonial and, later, neo-colonial ideologies. But the 1979 revolution, led by Maurice Bishop,

> … set free the 110,000 Grenadian people to create their own political, economic and cultural destiny. It was the first sustained anti-imperialist revolution of the English-speaking world, and its impact upon the English language was proving to be as transformational as its impact upon many other of the institutions that it inherited … Language was [now] in their hands to be moulded according to their process and resources, to release all the history, energy and genius of their people's lives and creativity which had been damned underground for centuries. (Searle, 1984: xxi)

The language that had once appeared to legitimize racism and dependency and made the people lose confidence in themselves had now been set free to become the vehicle of a new consciousness, a new vision and the

construction of a new society. Devonish (1986) discusses other Caribbean experiences of this interplay between language and liberation. And similar, if more complex, contestations over language and meanings have been documented in Lusophone Africa (Stroud, 1999), all in the context of popular struggles.

These, and other radical cases that are not necessarily militaristic, then, are the types of struggles that can and do take place only on the ground, in the communities of struggling people in the streets and other spaces of Africa, the Caribbean, the USA and other regions of the world. Together they demonstrate that, ultimately, the radical transformation of the imperial language as a site of struggle must itself be organically rooted in the broader struggles for a radically new social order. The process cannot be the preserve of writers and intellectuals in the corridors of Western and/or African academies, totally isolated from the larger part of the social mill in which language is processed and (re)created. And to present this complex, collective process differently, often only in reaction to charges of linguistic betrayal from those advocating the centring of African languages, seems like a self-serving distortion of both the *social meaning* of language and the possibilities of its radical transmutation as a *social instrument* of communication and change.

Independent discourses for Africa do not, of course, imply disengagement from other discourses. On the contrary, and as suggested in Chapter 2, Africa needs to engage with a more diverse range of discourses and discourse paradigms than it currently does – looking only to the West – in order to foster conditions for more independent discourses. But if this engagement is to lead to genuine intellectual independence, it must take place not only horizontally with other civilizations of the world but also horizontally between Africa's own ethnic traditions as well as vertically between the new educated elite and the more organic intellectuals who continue to be the custodians of systems of indigenous knowledge.

The process of linguistic transformation is, no doubt, also impacting on African languages, even in their marginalized state, as their speakers continue to struggle against hegemonic structures and relations. But, as indicated in the Introduction, the languages continue to be endangered by policies which continue to privilege European languages and dilute the esteem in which the African languages were held. The psychological damage on the African has been immense: Many Africans not only seem to accept that their own languages are fundamentally inferior to the European ones, they have become convinced that it is not worth doing anything about it.

This post-colonial linguistic struggle is by no means limited to the contrast between languages of European origin and those from Africa's

own indigenous pool. It extends to the 'divide' between the written word and oral expression. Post-colonial criticism betrays a strong modal bias, once again re-enacting colonial prejudices and preferences. The modal bias concerns the value imposed on the written word which, even when peripheral, is given prominence over the oral. Whether in Amharic, Arabic or Roman script, it is written literature that has been taken to be the benchmark for the entire corpus of African creative expression. There is almost a quasi-Cartesian projection: 'I write, therefore I am', and what is not written is virtually non-existent.

It is this kind of modal bias that led Chantal Zabus, for example, to claim that in West Africa, 'the medium of literary expression is not the writer's mother tongue but the dominant, foreign European language imposed over the indigenous African languages in the process of Euro-Christian colonization …' (Zabus, 1991: 1). And what allegedly emerged from this imposition, we are told, is a kind of overlapping of space 'between other tongue [English] and mother tongue', a space defined as a palimpsest where 'behind the scriptural authority of the European language, the earlier, imperfectly erased remnants of the African language can still be perceived' (1991: 3). But as Barber points out:

> … the model proposed by post-colonial criticism – the model in which glottophagia silences the native until he or she masters and subverts the colonizer's language – is based on a fundamental misconception, almost a will to ignorance. By casting the indigenous as always and only outside or underneath the 'mainstream' literary discourses of modern Africa, it turns a blind eye to what is in fact the actual mainstream, the cultural discourses of the majority in most of Africa' (Barber, 1995: 11)

This line of reasoning has erased not only the written heritage in local African languages that has existed, and continues to exist outside the colonial loop of entrapment, but also the more pervasive dynamic of oral creativity that abounds in the African experience.

Post-colonial criticism has, in fact, an inherent need to marginalize both African language writing – especially in non-Roman script – and the oral tradition. More organic in its development, virtually untouched by the concerns of cultural alienation, and running parallel to the reactive literature bound by the terms of colonial discourse, a significant proportion of this body of African texts goes against the very *raison d'être* of post-colonial criticism. There is a wide body of works that continues to emerge in Africa which shows little of the 'material effects of colonization' and which does not belong to the 'huge diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden

responses' to the colonial experience and its aftermath (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995: 3).

As argued earlier, the quest for a counter-hegemonic idiom must first be rooted in the struggles of African peoples for survival against the onslaught of international market forces. But the quest must also transcend the written and find a place in the oral territory of the lived African experience. Given the low level of literacy, it is the inclusion of orality, in fact, that will provide the majority with the democratic space for genuine participation in inscribing new meanings and new usages.

Coming as he does from a society of the Somali that is characterized by one of the most enduring legacies of orality, it is surprising that the 'post-modernist' writer, Nuruddin Farah, finds little sense in drawing from the continent's oral heritage. In his words:

> I have problems with oral narration, in any case, not just because my memory is defective, but also because you can't run a metropolis efficiently using the oral tradition. I am a city person. I write; I am cosmopolitan; oral tradition, when you have put aside its ancient or current histories, is defective. Can you imagine a society going the industrial 20th century without it adopting the methods of a written tradition? How could you memorize all those sophisticated mathematical formulas? Let us not be romantic about the oral tradition. (Jussawalla & Dasenbrock, 1992: 50)

Yet the question is not so much whether the oral tradition has the potential of properly launching Africa into the technological age but about who participates in this journey of creating a scientific culture that is not excessively dependent on the West. The democratization of knowledge and indigenization of modernity require that the constructive process is responsive to input from multiple constituencies. And both African languages and the oral tradition have to be integral parts of this momentum of reformation.

The struggle to recentre African languages assumed more international proportions with the release of the Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures – see Appendix. Arising from the conference titled 'Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century', attended by writers and scholars from around Africa and beyond, the Declaration is a bold call for the recentring of African languages. In a sense, it was part of the continuing struggle around not only who speaks for Africa – a matter I discuss in the concluding remarks of the Introduction – but also the language(s) in which that speaking should take place.

In the quest to re-centre African languages, the Declaration highlights the need to recognize Africa's linguistic diversity as a strength rather than a weakness and the inalienable right of African children 'to learn in their mother tongues' – both as part of a wider strategy of enhancing the status of African languages. Each of these is a proposition about which books have already been written from a more global perspective. What I intend to do here is restrict my comments to parts of other 'strategic' propositions of the Declaration.

The first is the proposition that 'promoting research on African languages is vital for their development, while the advancement of African research and documentation will be best served by the use of African languages'. This proposition relates directly to a remark made by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in the same year that the Declaration was released. 'I find it contradictory in Africa today and elsewhere in the academies of the world', says Ngugi in a lecture at Cambridge University,

> … to hear of scholars of African realities but who do not know a word of the languages of the environment of which they are experts. Do they think the Cambridge here would give me a job as Professor of French Literature if I confessed that I did not know a word of French? And yet, scholars in Africa and abroad are peopled by experts – whether African or not, whether sympathetic to the African cause or not, whether progressive or not – who do not have to demonstrate any acquaintance let alone expertise of any African language. (Ngugi, 2000: 7–8)

The storage within which knowledge about Africa is generated in the academy is consequently assembled in European languages. And this assemblage, in Ngugi's opinion, is part of the process by which Africa continues to be interpreted through a Western linguistic prism. The entire Europhonic project is thus regarded as a parasitic enterprise 'which knows only how to take away but never how to give anything back to the languages and peoples on whose behalf it makes its claim in the global community of scholarship in the arts, science and technology' (Ngugi, 2000: 7).

Of greatest disappointment to Ngugi are the African scholars and intellectuals who are conversant with African languages but choose to write in European tongues. These he almost regards as intellectual opportunists who 'often steal whatever fire there is [in Africa] to add to the abundance of fires in the West'. They steal from Africa's inheritance made accessible to them through their African languages to enrich the heritage and cultural capital of the languages of Europe (Ngugi, 1998: 101). This cultural 'betrayal' presumably puts to risk the entire future of the people of the

continent of Africa. 'If some of the best and most articulate interpreters of African total being insist on interpreting in languages not understood by the subject of that interpretation', asks Ngugi (1998: 94), 'where lies the hope of African deliverance?'

Ngugi is not altogether right, of course, in his claim that African languages are totally ignored in the study of Africa in the Western academy. I believe most, if not all, doctoral programmes in African studies in the USA, for example, do require the study of at least one African language. But it is still true that many of us with an Africa study-focus feel no particular compulsion to retain and enhance our knowledge of African languages even as we continue to be active researchers in the field. And it is certainly true that many are employed to teach subjects like African literatures without any demonstrable competence in an African language.

Part of the problem – in the prevailing attitude that one can pursue (and, one might add, construct) knowledge on Africa in languages other than African – lies, of course, on the degree of Africa's linguistic dependence on the West. It has been argued elsewhere that, except in Arabic-speaking Africa and, perhaps, Somalia, Africans are yet to demonstrate a strong sense of linguistic nationalism. And because of this factor,

> … they are seldom resentful of their massive dependence on the imported imperial languages. And as long as this dependence continues to be a pervasive feature of the African condition, it would *not* be inappropriate to use the vocabulary 'Anglophone', 'Francophone' and 'Lusophone' to describe different regions of the continent. (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998: 7, author's emphasis)

It is virtually inconceivable for an academic to undertake research in China, Russia, the Middle East, Asia or Latin America without some proficiency in the respective languages of those regions (even if the research were to rely exclusively on written sources) or, alternatively, without total submission to the mercy of an interpreter. In the African context, however, it is quite possible to carry out primary research in the field at some level of data collection with little familiarity with local languages.

It is to this linguistic anomaly (or 'incongruity', as described in the Declaration) that the Asmara Declaration calls attention and encourages intervention of those among us in the Western academy and elsewhere who are 'studying and researching' Africa, challenging, in the process, the 'do nothing' linguistic attitude of policy-makers in Africa itself. Unfortunately, the funding for African language study in the USA, in particular, is fraught with hidden agendas of political control and domination. And one of the most serious challenges facing concerned scholars of Africa in the

West today is how to promote strong and vibrant African language programmes in institutions of higher learning without feeding the hegemonic interests of neo-liberalism.

In looking at the relationship between language and knowledge, Ngugi has also argued in his latest book, *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams*, that 'there can be no real economic growth and development where a whole people are denied access to the latest developments in science, technology, health, medicine, business, finance and other skills of survival because all these are stored in foreign languages' (Ngugi, 1998: 90). This statement leads us to another strategic proposition of the Asmara Declaration: That is, 'the effective and rapid development in science and technology in Africa depends on the use of African languages' and the attendant prescription for the development of a scientific and technological limb in African languages to meet the demands of the modern age, to do justice to the potentialities of the African person as an innovative being.

One of the disturbing fallacies in the African experience, in fact, has been the association of English and the Western cultural legacy at large with modernity. Many African policy-makers have a tendency to assume that being Westernized in language and culture improves the chances of 'development'. There is a naïve assumption that European languages are a necessary force for modernization and indispensable instruments of economic transformation. Not enough attention has been paid to experiences like Japan, Korea, Malaysia and so forth, where indigenous languages play a large role in economic transaction and educational policies.

Even if one accepts the IMF and World Bank terms of reference that define liberal capitalism as an economic aspect of 'modernity', it is possible to argue that the system has succeeded best where the language of the marketplace has not been too far removed from the language of the classroom. Capitalism has succeeded in those societies where the language of intellectual learning and the language of economic bargaining have not been too distant. In Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and even Singapore and Malaysia, the language of the marketplace is much closer to the language of the classroom. In Africa, on the other hand, the language of the marketplace (usually indigenous) and the language of the classroom (usually foreign) are indeed distant. The Asian elites use indigenous languages much more than do the African elites south of the Sahara. Africa may be the only continent in the world which is attempting a capitalist take-off while having such a massive dependence on foreign languages. The experience of Asia, with its greater dependence on indigenous languages, seems to suggest that the African experiment which seeks to predicate modernization on linguistic Westernization is destined to fail.

The use of indigenous languages in pursuit of change in the academic, scientific, economic, legal and other important spheres of society can, in fact, be seen as an attempt to make the process of modernization itself more organic to the African condition. Referring to this phenomenon as a case of 'indigenized modernization', one scholar has argued that,

> … no country has ascended to a first rank technological and economic power by excessive dependence on foreign languages. Japan rose to dazzling industrial heights by scientificating the Japanese language and making it the medium of its own industrialization … Can Africa ever take-off technologically if it remains so overwhelmingly dependent on European languages for discourse on advanced learning? Can Africa look to the future if it is not adequately sensitive to the cultural past? (Mazrui, 1999: 8)

This lingo-cultural gap, then, is seen as a serious impediment to Africa's full maturation of its own scientific genius.

The need to 'scientificate' African languages, therefore, cannot be over-emphasized. Lessons from other civilizations provide ample evidence of the soundness of the policy. Under medieval Islam, for example, science is said to have been 'practised on a scale unprecedented in earlier or contemporary human history'. Such considerable resources were devoted to its promotion that 'until the rise of modern science, no other civilization engaged as many scientists, produced as many scientific books, or provided as varied and sustained support for scientific activity' as did the Islamic civilization (Dallal, 1995: 155).

Underlying this phenomenal growth of science under the Islamic dispensation, however, was the power of language – the rise of Arabic as a trans-ethnic, trans-racial means of communication – especially under the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258). The scientific 'movement' itself inspired a good deal of linguistic engineering, whereby Arabic became scientificated, especially through adaptations of and borrowings from other already scientificated languages. On the other hand, the currency of a rapidly scientificating Arabic served as an important stimulus to the growth of a scientific culture within the Muslim world itself.

Many important works were produced directly in the Arabic language. But there also arose a conscientious effort to translate scientific works from languages like Persian, Hindi and Greek – fostering new levels of scientific exchange between cultures and civilizations (Dallal, 1995: 158). These translations contributed not only to the growth of scientific knowledge available in Arabic, but also to the formation of a scientific limb in the language – a terminological legacy which, of course, ultimately found its

way into the languages of the West in the form of words like algebra, alchemy, alcohol and zero. The language of poetic elegance and Qur'anic revelation had now become the medium of scientific discourse.

Against this backdrop, then, it is not at all surprising that efforts in science went side-by-side with developmental efforts in language. As Dallal reminds us,

> in addition to religious works, the earliest scholarly contributions among Muslims were of a linguistic nature. Of particular relevance to the later development of science was the extensive compilation efforts by Arabic philologists and lexicographers. The specialized lexicons that were produced in the 8th and 9th centuries represent a large-scale attempt at classifying Arabic knowledge'. (Dallal,1995: 158)

In other words, next to religious conversion to Islam, the Arabic linguistic revolution was perhaps the single most important cultural transformation to have occurred within the Muslim world. And this communicative device, especially because it was not limited to the elite, became an important instrument in the stimulation of a scientific culture within the Muslim world of the time. The value of the Declaration's call for the scientification of African languages, therefore, cannot be over-estimated.

I realize, of course, that there are major historical differences between the Islamic world of the Abbasids and the African realities of the 21st century. Nonetheless the basic idea is still defensible that linguistic engineering and scientific socialization can be mutually stimulating and mutually enriching phenomena.

On the whole, furthermore, the Declaration has been more concerned with issues of science and technology than with the imperative of aesthetics – in spite of the fact that many of those who attended the conference were themselves creative writers and oral artists. After all, even the Abbasid attempts to scientifcate Arabic built on the literary foundations of the language that had been established earlier by the Umayyad Caliph, Abd al'Malik (687–705). In as much as African languages need to be scientificated, therefore, poets in African languages need to be made more naturally productive and engaged.

> The two policies of scientfication of African languages and support for African poets and writers have to be jointly pursued as part of long-term national development. Culture as communication and culture as identity should find a meeting point in literature. Languages rich in metaphors of poetry are languages which can also stimulate the scientific mind. (Mazrui, 1999: 9)

The imagination which innovates in science, in other words, is related to the imagination which has vision in poetry. And it is not accidental that Kiswahili poets like Ahmad Sheikh Nabhany of Mombasa, Kenya, for example, have become very central in linguistic projects for the scientification of Kiswahili.

The question, however, arises as to whether we are giving adequate attention to poets and imaginative writers in African languages. In the conclusion to Chapter 1, I indicated that the list of 'Africa's 100 Best Books of the 20th Century' is disproportionately Europhonic. Are we confronted with the possibility that the all-African members of the Jury for the 100 best African books were themselves too Europhonic in their terms of reference? If not – if the results indicate relatively weaker African language submissions in quantity and quality – then the mission of marrying scientific creativity and artistic vision in the development of African languages clearly requires much greater effort in promoting African poets and writers in African languages than is currently the situation. Africa must not under-estimate the extent to which the scientific imagination may need poetic vision for its ultimate maturation in language.

An important concern of the Declaration (which I had occasion to mention earlier with regard to the development of Arabic) is that of translation. In its own words, 'Dialogue among African languages is essential: African languages must use the instrument of translation to advance communication among all people, including the disabled'. Africans across national, ethnic and social boundaries get to read each other's works in European languages as a matter of course. But they are yet to have adequate access to each other's ideas communicated originally in African languages.

This Africa-centredness of the Declaration is, of course, quite understandable in view of the lop-sided history of translation that has drawn so disproportionately from Western sources – from Shakespeare to the Bible. But to restrict translation efforts to intra-African dialogue is, in fact, to grossly under-utilize the power of translation and to deny African languages the potential enrichment that can come from more diverse stimulation. To Voltaire and Brecht, we must endeavour to add African translations not only of works in African languages, but also the poetry of Tagore of India, the philosophy of Confucius of China and so forth.

Furthermore, the value of translation transcends the imperative of dialogue and communication. Translation can also be an instrument of enriching target languages and their literatures. Referring to the impact of biblical translations in Europe, for example, Lowry Nelson has argued that,

> … at every turn translators of the Bible had to make difficult choices reflecting accuracy, intelligibility and idiomatic grace. Those choices … helped to fashion not only medieval Latin as a living language, but also a vast array of vernaculars in Slavic, Germanic, Romance and other language groups. European literature was a continuous beneficiary of this enterprise. (Nelson, 1989: 19)

This role of translation was well-recognized by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere when he made the following remarks in the introduction of the first edition of his translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*': 'Kiswahili is a rich and beautiful language. But its beauty and richness can be augmented only if it put to novel uses' – like translating a work from a totally alien culture (1963: 6).

In short, a language cannot be developed merely by appointing a special commission with the task of coining new words. A language has to develop through facing new challenges, confronting new ideas which need to be expressed. And the wider the range of civilizations on which such translation efforts are based, the richer the potential stimulus to African linguistic and intellectual galvanization will be. That is why, short of establishing a specialized translation bureau, the task of translation must be treated as an integral part of linguistic development initiatives on the continent.

In the search for a new linguistic order, the Declaration has shown particular sensitivity to gender bias that is inherent in language, African languages included. It concludes, therefore, that 'the role of African languages in development must overcome this gender bias and achieve gender equality'. But the interplay between language and patriarchy certainly goes beyond linguistically inscribed gender bias: Like colonialism, patriarchy is a hegemonic order that exploits the full resources of language in virtually all domains of society to construct a world that seeks to legitimize its perpetuation. No wonder, some scholars have described language as a 'man-made' product of human interaction.

By treating it as a separate category and by relating it only to the imperative of development, however, the Declaration has made the question of sexism in language unduly peripheral to the broader mission of linguistic struggle for social justice. The gender question, in other words, ought to inform the entire agenda of the Declaration. The approach to the wider concerns of the Declaration must be androgynous and multicultural. Patricia Hill Collins captures the scope of this process of liberation in terms of the process of rearticulation – in spite of what one may think of Afrocentricity in its various schools of thought. Discussing the significance of rearticulation for Black women in the USA, Collins argues that:

> … rearticulation does not mean reconciling Afrocentric feminist ethics and values with opposing Eurocentric masculine ones. Instead … rearticulation confronts them in the tradition of 'naming as power' by revealing them very carefully. Naming daily life by putting language to everyday experience infuses it with the new meaning of an Afrocentric feminist consciousness and becomes a way of transcending the limitations of race, gender and class subordination. (Collins, 1991: 111)

In this sense, gender must become a core, integral part of the entire project of linguistic liberation in its multifarious forms. When we talk of African languages speaking for Africa, in other words, we must be equally mindful of whose voice is included in the act the speaking.

The 'envoicement' of Africa also requires that local struggles on the continent become linked to those of the emerging global civil society, from Manila to Washington to Rio de Janeiro. We have been in a period, for example, in the aftermath of 9-11, in which the language of rights was invoked by those in power in the USA precisely to violate the human rights and civil liberties of the citizens and residents of this country. Those who employ a counter-discourse to uphold the provisions of the constitution were now labelled unpatriotic under a new dispensation of the Patriot Act that equates patriotism with rabid nationalism. And all this locution was, of course, mediated through the English language.

For the same reason of September 11, the Manichaean logic of the Bush administration was played out in African spaces, from the East to the West. Kenya was on the verge of becoming Africa's Pakistan in relation to its neighbour, Somalia, devastated as the country may be. And the words of George Bush, expressed in English, now migrated to Moi's Kiswahili within the East African context, with all the attendant violation of rights, freedoms and justice that they implied. In the meantime, the American Patriot Act gave birth to Kenya's anti-terrorism legislation and similar deformed children in Tanzania, Uganda and elsewhere in Africa.

Obviously, then, even in their local articulations, hegemonic discourses sometime betray more global configurations of power. As a result, the construction of anti-hegemonic discourses would require international alliances in the struggle towards a new consciousness on a global scale. I have become increasingly persuaded that as long as African initiatives for linguistic liberation are limited to Africa and its internal relationships of power, their success will be marginal. And a truly revolutionary transformation may depend on the extent to which African peoples become a

conscious part of the anti-globalization movement that is growing in spite of the setback precipitated by the September 11 tragedy.

As the only super-power, the USA tries to be the memory of the entire world, seeking to dictate what we should remember and what we must forget in the history that we share. Thus in 'Today', NBC's morning news programme of March 11, 2002, for example, Katie Currie described September 11 as 'the worst terrorist act in history' – not in American history, not in recent history, but in history. Yet, as Chomsky (2001: 45–49) observes, the US terrorist bombing of Sudan's Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in August 1998 may have been more devastating to the Sudan – in both actual and silent death toll and on the socio-economic well-being of the society at large – than September 11 has been to the USA. At issue here, then, is not only the imperative of Africa speaking in its own voice, but also the question of what gets articulated in that act of speaking. And part of the linguistic struggle over meanings is ultimately also a struggle to reclaim Africa's history and its appropriate inscription in the global tapestry of human diversity.

Appendix

The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures

At this historic conference we writers and scholars from all regions of Africa gathered in Asmara, Eritrea from January 11 to 17, 2000 in a conference titled 'Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century'. This is the first conference on African languages and literatures ever to be held on African soil, with participants from East, West, North, Southern Africa and from the Diaspora and by writers and scholars from around the world. We examined the state of African languages in literature, scholarship, publishing, education and administration in Africa and throughout the world. We celebrated the vitality of African languages and literatures and affirmed their potential. We noted with pride that despite all the odds against them, African languages as vehicles of communication and knowledge survive and have a written continuity of thousands of years. Colonialism created some of the most serious obstacles against African languages and literatures. We noted with concern the fact that these colonial obstacles still haunt independent Africa and continue to block the mind of the continent. We identified a profound incongruity in colonial languages speaking for the continent. At the start of a new century and millennium, Africa must firmly reject this incongruity and affirm a new beginning by returning to its languages and heritage.

At this historic conference, we writers and scholars from all regions of Africa gathered in Asmara, Eritrea declare that:

(1) African languages must take on the duty, the responsibility and the challenge of speaking for the continent.
(2) The vitality and equality of African languages must be recognized as a basis for the future empowerment of African peoples.
(3) The diversity of African languages reflects the rich cultural heritage of Africa and must be used as an instrument of African unity.
(4) Dialogue among African languages is essential: African languages must use the instrument of translation to advance communication among all people, including the disabled.

(5) All African children have the inalienable right to attend school and learn in their mother tongues. Every effort should be made to develop African languages at all levels of education.
(6) Promoting research on African languages is vital for their development, while the advancement of African research and documentation will be best served by the use of African languages.
(7) The effective and rapid development in science and technology in Africa depends on the use of African languages and modern technology must be used for the development of African languages.
(8) Democracy is essential for the equal development of African languages and African languages are vital for the development of democracy based on equality and social justice.
(9) African languages like all languages contain gender bias. The role of African languages in development must overcome this gender bias and achieve gender equality.
(10) African languages are essential for decolonization of African minds and the African Renaissance.

The initiative which has materialized in the 'Against All Odds' conference must be continued through biennial conferences in different parts of Africa. In order to organize future conferences in different parts of Africa, create a forum of dialogue and cooperation and advance the principles of this declaration, a permanent Secretariat will be established, which will be initially based in Asmara, Eritrea.

Translated into as many languages as possible and based on these principles, the Asmara Declaration is affirmed by all participants in 'Against All Odds'. We call upon African states, the OAU, the UN and all international organizations that serve Africa to join this effort of recognition and support for African languages, with this declaration as a basis for new policies.

While we acknowledge with pride the retention of African languages in some parts of Africa and the Diaspora and the role of African languages in the formation of new languages, we urge all people in Africa and the Diaspora to join the spirit of this declaration and become part of the efforts to realize its goals.

Asmara, 17 January 2000.

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