International Journal of Peace Studies, Volume 8, Number 2, Autumn Winter 2003

THE LANGUAGE QUESTION IN AFRICA IN THE LIGHT OF GLOBALISATION, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY

Birgit Brock-Utne

Abstract

What social classes profit from the continued use of European languages in Africa? Who loses out? The focus here is not only on the language use in education but also on the language use in the courts and in the political domain. Examples are mostly taken from Tanzania and South Africa where the author conducts two research projects within the area of language and education. Two irreconcilable trends are discussed: the one moving in the direction of globalisation, a capitalist market economy and the strengthening of the former colonial languages; and the other being genuinely concerned with good governance, democracy, poverty alleviation and social justice, the ingredients of what we would call positive peace or the absence of structural violence.

Introduction

> Can there be genuine democracy in South Africa when prevailing post-apartheid institutions continue to foster forms of knowledge that continue to produce inequalities which continue to underprivilege the African majority (Alidou and Mazrui,1999:101)?

The forms of knowledge fostered is knowledge built on European culture and tradition and delivered in European languages. The forms of knowledge that could have empowered the underprivileged would have to be built on African culture and tradition and be delivered in African languages. A genuine concern for social justice and democracy would lead African political leaders to work for a strengthening of the African languages. Donor pressure, as well as the impact of the capital led market economy, often called globalisation, however work to retain the Euro languages.

In an effort to describe and analyze the current educational language policies in Tanzania and South Africa our in-process project explores the implementation of the policies, the forces working for and against change, and the manner in which teachers cope in the classrooms in the secondary schools in Tanzania and the last part of primary school in South Africa.[1] Complementing this project, another undertaking expanded this

analysis as well as added a second research component. This component involves an action element where an experiment shall let some secondary school classes in Tanzania and a primary school in South Africa be taught in their own language in some subjects for two more years (see Brock-Utne,2002a and Brock-Utne,2002b).[2] While presently in the implementation phase of this project in South Africa, we have encountered some unforeseen delays in Tanzania.

The use of a familiar language as the language of instruction is central for classroom learning. Those who have worked as teachers in classrooms are witnesses to the truth as stated by David Klaus (2001:1): "There appears to be general agreement that students learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying." In as widely different countries as Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Italy children have the advantage of starting their formal education in a language familiar to them--the language they normally speak with their parents and their friends and hear around them all day.

The strengthening of the African languages both in education and in the public domain, in courts, and in the media also has to do with social justice for the masses of Africans as well as with the exertion of democracy. In other publications I have focused especially on the question of language of instruction (Brock-Utne,2002c) and on the Tanzanian project. In this article, the language question is viewed more through the eyes of a political scientist--one of social class, of power. What social classes are profiting from the continued use of the Euro-languages in Africa? Who benefits? Who loses out? The focus will also be on the language use in the political domain and on South Africa.

Most of the Western donors to African countries are concerned with what they call good governance. In this concept they normally include transparency, a free press and multi-party democracy of a Western type. Little thought has, however, been given to the fact that the languages the donors use to communicate with the political leaders of the African countries is spoken by just about 5 % of the population.

Many of the African leaders have been concerned with social justice. Yet few of them have, at the time when they were in power, been concerned with the social injustice arising from the fact that the language used for instruction means a barrier to knowledge for the masses of African children. The use of a language of instruction and a culture most children are familiar with would signify on the part of governments a willingness to embark on the necessary redistribution of power between the elites and the masses. Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2000:ii), originally from Ghana and now the Director of the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) Cape Town, maintains that the developmental transformation needed to eradicate poverty in Africa is only possible if "we can take knowledge and modern science to the masses in their own languages". Kwesi Kwaa Prah is, however, also very concerned about the fact that the African languages need standardisation and harmonisation and that the construction of African languages in many cases reflected evangelical rivalry more than existing linguistic reality. Sinfree Makoni (1998 with further reference to Herbert 1992) mentions that the

emergence of a single standard for Zulu and Xhosa was prevented by the competing interests of different missionaries.

The "education for all" strategy formulated at the important educational conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 was meant to target the poor (Brock-Utne, 2000a; Brock-Utne,2002d). In an article on educational policy lessons from high-achieving countries, Santosh Mehrotra (1998:479) draws our attention to what he sees as the most important characteristic of those Developing countries that have the highest percentage of the population with a completed basic education:

> The experience of the high-achievers has been unequivocal: the mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction at the primary level in all cases...Students who have learned to read in their mother tongue learn to read in a second language more quickly than do those who are first taught to read in the second language.

In most African countries this insight is, however, not being acted upon. The recent spread of private primary schools using English medium as the language of instruction in Tanzania is a case in point (Rubagumya,2003). Parents who want their children in these schools argue that we live in the time of globalisation and that English is the language of the global village. The move away from "siasa" (political education) taught in Kiswahili in secondary school to "civics" taught in English is another indication that even one of the most progressive countries in Africa when it comes to language policy--Tanzania--is now facing problems. We shall return to this point.

In this article two irreconcilable trends will be discussed--the one moving in the direction of globalisation, a capitalist market economy and the strengthening of the former colonial languages and the other being genuinely concerned with good governance, democracy, poverty alleviation and social justice, the ingredients of what we would call positive peace or the absence of structural violence (Brock-Utne,1989; Brock-Utne,2000b). As I see it this last trend, should it be taken seriously, would have as its result the strengthening of the African languages. The same view-point has been advanced by Kamanga (2001) who warned against the deleterious effects globalisation could have on the linguistic rights of the masses of Africans. What do we mean by globalisation?

Globalisation

Globalisation may be more than one thing. Some people feel that the term simply denotes a multiplicity of international relations, the personal meetings with foreign peoples and their food, clothes, languages, music and dances, or the experiences of satellite broadcasting and world-wide contacts via the Internet. A lot of this is of course to the good. My focus is, however, on that massive economic globalisation, with wide-ranging social

and cultural repercussions, which has taken place during the last two or three decades, and which still radically transforms our societies--on the terms of capitalist corporations. I am concerned with capital-led globalisation.

Economic domination and penetration have taken place during ages, varying in forms from mutually beneficial trade to violent robberies. The process took an especially sinister form during the times of European colonisation and transatlantic slave trade. The industrial revolution in Europe was followed by a dramatic increase in international trade; it is still accelerating and is still marked by the extraction of raw materials from the former colonies in return for finished products from the transnational corporations of the North. It is true that an increasing amount of this production today takes place in the South, but by under-paid workers under the dominating ownership and direction of the Northern corporations. During the last few decades the economic penetration and domination by transnational corporations (TNCs) have accelerated at such a pace and to such a degree that we are confronted with a global phenomenon which needs a specific name. It is this phenomenon that I refer to as GLOBALISATION. This is what more and more social scientists the world over have in mind when they use that word.

Today's globalisation is due to two particular changes, one technological and the other one political. First, electronic communications and data computers have made it possible for top executives to oversee and direct enormous transnational corporations and to move limitless amounts of financial capital the world over instantaneously. Second, through political decisions our governments have dismantled national controls with regard to capital movements, profits and foreign investments. By this willed or enforced political choice--the consequences of which have seldom been spelled out to the electorates--our political leaders have removed those legal and administrative tools, which might have protected local economic and social systems. Our national economies have been turned into an unregulated global market where private speculators and corporations have free play.

A number of international agreements and organisations have paved the way for this globalisation process. Arrangements like the Common European Market and the North American Free Trade Area have opened free movement of capital, goods, services and investments within specific regions. Directed by Western interests the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund used their creditor powers to pressure first the poor debtor countries of the South and then the collapsing members of the former Soviet Union to turn their own battered economies into the same kind of unrestricted markets. Last but not least, the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT), which has now been rearmed as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), has become a vehicle for assuring that practically the whole world is opened up for the unhindered operations of private capital. This explains why half the world's one hundred largest economies are today not countries, but transnational corporations.

The weakening of the state is a characteristic feature of the globalisation process. For the education sector this means a cut in government expenditures to education, the introduction of so-called cost sharing measures, the erection of private schools and the

liberalisation of the text-book market. I have in several publications analysed the effects of this policy on the education sector in Africa (see especially Brock-Utne,2000a and Brock-Utne,2002d). The policy leads to greater disparities between social groups and regions and between the elites and the masses as well as the building down of curriculum centres and the import of textbooks from countries overseas. There is reason to call this policy a recolonisation of the African mind (Brock-Utne, 2000a). The Danish educational researcher Kirsten Reisby (1999) showed what a locally situated, participating schooling practice with global perspectives might contribute.[3] An educational reform of that kind might render an important contribution--provided that it could act in tandem with a broad grassroot mobilisation carried out by environment organisations, women groups, religious societies, trade unions, concerned academics and other non-governmental forces.

Robert Phillipson (2001) shows how globalisation is carried out through a small number of dominating languages. Being himself an Englishman, Phillipson does not shrink away from denoting his own mother tongue as being at the heart of the contemporary globalisation processes. Robert Phillipson shows how the forces behind globalisation promote the diffusion of English, often to the detriment of the mother tongues of most people. He draws attention to the role of the World Bank in rhetorically supporting local languages, but channelling its resources to the strengthening of European languages in Africa; transnational corporations seem to be well served by the bank's policies.

He rightly points out that the colonial exercise was not merely about conquering territory and economies, but also about conquering minds. During the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial era the British government saw the advantage of promoting English to a world language. Likewise the globalisation exercise of today is also about conquering minds. Throughout the entire post-colonial world, English has been marketed as the language of "international communication and understanding", economic "development", "national unity" and similar positive ascription (Phillipson,2001). These soft-sell terms obscure the reality of North-South links and globalisation, which is that the majority of the world's population is being impoverished, that natural resources are being plundered in unsustainable ways, and that speakers of most languages do not have their linguistic human rights respected.

The SHELL corporation is currently funding a project to upgrade "education language specialists" in Bulgaria, which is doubtless good for both the oil company and British textbook business. English for business is business for English (Phillipson, 2001). The British Minister for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, stated in November 2000 that "It makes good economic sense to use English fluency as a platform to underpin our economic competitiveness and to promote our culture overseas" (quoted in Phillipson,2001: 191).

A recent development is the globalisation of distance education, which is big business for American, Australian and British universities. School-level exams in the full range of subjects are also business that consolidates the dominance of English. The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate is the second largest examination

organisation in the world, after Educational Testing Services of Princeton, New Jersey. It organised exams in 1996 in 154 countries (Phillipson,2001).

The Finnish socio-linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) notes that if a state does not grant basic linguistic human rights (LHRs), including educational language rights (ELRs), to minorities and indigenous peoples, this lack of rights is what often leads to and/or can be used to mobilisation of sentiments which can then be labelled "ethnic conflicts". This Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) finds to be the case especially in situations where linguistic and ethnic borders or boundaries coincide with economic boundaries or other boundaries and where linguistically and ethnically defined groups differ in terms of relative political power. If legitimate demands for some kind of self-determination are not met, be it demands about cultural autonomy or about more regional economic or political autonomy, this may often lead to demands for secession. Thus granting education- and language-based rights to minorities can, and should often be, part of conflict prevention. When the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) in 1992 created the position of a High Commissioner on National Minorities, it was precisely as an instrument of conflict prevention in situations of ethnic tension (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001). The High Commissioner explained to the expert group preparing the Guidelines, that the minorities he was negotiating with had, in most cases, two main types of demands:

- first, self-determination (sometimes but not always including some control over natural resources), and
- second, mother tongue medium (MTM) education.

In Search of Social Justice – the Language Policy of South Africa

African languages seldom find any legally meaningful protection under national laws (Kamanga, 2001). In Tanzania, according to Kamanga (2001) "there is a need therefore for the Constitution of Tanzania to explicitly recognise language as one of the grounds for discrimination for instance in Art.13 (5)". Language is not any more mentioned in the Constitution of Tanzania (interview with Rugatiri D.K. Mekacha, former Head of Department of Kiswahili at the UDSM, 5 February 2001). According to the Constitution of 1962 Kiswahili and English should be the national languages. Since then there have been changes in the Constitution 13 times (last 1999/2000) and the issue of language has disappeared.

The South African constitution has a better protection for the African languages than the Tanzanian one. In an effort to eliminate the domination of one language group by another, the drafters of South Africa's Constitution decided to make all eleven of the country's major languages equal and official. Thus, according to section 6 (1), South Africa's Constitution states:

> 1. The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati,Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdeble, isiXhosa and isiZulu.

The Constitution further imposes a positive duty upon the state in subsection 2:

> Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.

To this end, there is provision in subsection 5 for the creation of a Pan South African Language Board to

> promote and create conditions for the development and use of
> i) all official languages;
> ii) the Khoi,Nama and san languages; and
> iii) sign language.

Neville Alexander, a former and very prominent member of the Pan South African Language Board, bemoaned the fact that the language Board is not helped to work the way it should according to its statutes: "There is a lack of political will on the part of the current government to have our progressive language policy work" (personal interview, 9 February 2002). In spite of the progressive language policy of South Africa, languages other than Afrikaans and English (i.e. the nine African languages) seem almost completely absent from practical planning. The spaces opened for them in the Constitution and in such important documents as the LANGTAG report remain largely vacant. [The brief of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG) set up in November 1995 by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, requires LANGTAG to advise the Minister on a National Language Plan for South Africa .]

Stanley Ridge (2000:62) describes the situation as requiring a move from rhetoric to practice in key strategic areas in the interests of democracy and justice:

> This has been dramatically evident in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where the voices which could not previously be heard in the apartheid era have spoken to South Africa overwhelmingly in languages other than English and Afrikaans.

The Language of the Courts

The actual achievement of justice is very often determined by the language conducted by the actors in the judicial theatre. There is still a near monopoly of English and Afrikaans in the law and legal system of South Africa leading to the alienation of the

legal system by the bulk of South African society. In South Africa two languages, English and Afrikaans, have dominated the legal field since the early colonial and apartheid days. This in contrast to Tanzania where Kiswahili is being used as the judicial language in the primary courts. The Bills come to Parliament in English, however, but they are discussed in Kiswahili whereupon the law is then written in English. In lower courts both English and Kiswahili are being used but the sentence is written in English. In 1980 Kiswahili was used in the courts for 78 per cent of the time; in the High Court only English is being used (Temu, 2000).

In South Africa, however, whilst the use of indigenous African languages was allowed in the black homelands, Africans who found themselves with legal matters to settle within the so-called white South Africa had to endure the conduct of their proceedings in either English or Afrikaans. If they were not conversant in either language, translation services were provided for them. [The Magistratee's Court Act, Act 32 of 1994, places a duty on a magistrate to call a competent interpreter if he is of the opinion that the accused is not sufficiently conversant in the language in which evidence is given (Ailola and Montsi, 1999).]

Two lawyers Ailola and Montsi (1999:135) note the following:

> there can be no doubt that the exclusive by-passing of indigenous languages in enacting laws and conducting legal proceedings create enormous obstacles for the native speakers of those languages.

In spite of the formal recognition of the eleven official languages in the Constitution, there is to date little evidence of actual court processes or proceedings taking place in all these official languages. Section 35 of the Constitution provides that "every accused has the right to a fair trial which includes the right to be tried in a language that the accused person understands or, if it is not practicable, to have the proceedings interpreted in that language."

Interpretations do not always work well, however. Through a concrete example Ailola and Montsi (1999) show that even when translation facilities are available fatal mistakes can occur because there are certain expressions which are, at best, incapable of an exact interpretation. Others simply cannot be translated. While most Bantu languages have a term for "killing", they have no equivalent for "murder". Thus, according to a story which was told them by a Zambian legal practitioner, a client of his nearly incriminated himself in a crime of murder on account of an improper translation of the term. In that case the accused had been asked in the Tonga vernacular whether he admitted to killing the deceased. He replied in the affirmative. Thereupon the translator turned to the bench and reported a confession of murder. Had it not been for the defence lawyer's alertness in spotting the difference between "murder" and "killing", the matter would have ended there and then a conviction would have ensued. The accused could possibly have been hanged for the offence. In reality what the accused meant to say was

that he killed the deceased, but there were extenuating reasons for his deed. Killing per se without the requisite unlawful intent or malice aforethought is not tantamount to "murder" (Ailola and Montsi, 1999). Sometimes it is not even unlawful. Thus "killing" in self-defence or in the defence of one's family or property is often lawful. Similarly no criminal offence attaches to a killing which is effected during war, civil strife, or lawful suppression of a crime.

In cases where the rest of the court does not understand the language of the accused the interpreter plays a semi-autonomous role. Aiola and Montsi (1999) claim that the interpreters often play a subservient role in relation to the administrators of the courts and frequently internalise the values and attitudes of their court superiors. They refer to a study by Nico Steytler (1993) from what was then Zululand showing the unsatisfactory nature of the quality of interpretation exacerbated by the fact that the rest of the court members were not conversant in Zulu. There was no effective means for checking the veracity of the actual interpretation, given that only the English and Afrikaans languages are recorded. There is a great need in South Africa today of lawyers and judges who speak the languages of the majority population of the country.

Redistribution of Power Between Social Classes

Though the legal system might work somewhat better for Tanzania since most of the court cases in the lower courts are dealt with in Kiswahili, the current education policies in Tanzania lead to social injustice for the masses and reinstate the inequality of pre-independence times. I am referring to the so-called cost-sharing and privatization policies as well as the reduced emphasis on Kiswahili in secondary school.

The language question is all about power. The choice of a language of instruction in Africa is a political choice, a choice that may redistribute power in a global context as well as within an African country, between the elites and the masses. African political writers concerned with reaching the masses and not only the elites will often write in African languages. The Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) found that when he started writing plays in Gikuyu, they really reached the masses. But then he also became a threat to the government and was imprisoned for a year. His radical writings in English did not lead to repercussions from the government. Choosing as the language of instruction an indigenous language--a language people speak, are familiar with, and which belongs to their cultural heritage--would redistribute power from the privileged few to the masses. Two voices from two different continents illustrate this.

Ranaweera (1976:423), Sri Lankan researcher and former director of education at the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka, writes about the great advantages to the population of Sri Lanka of the introduction of Sinhala and Tamil instead of English as the languages of instruction--*especially* for the teaching of science and technology:

> The transition from English to the national languages as the medium of instruction in science helped to destroy the great barrier that existed between the privileged English educated classes and the ordinary people; between the science educated elite and the non-science educated masses; between science itself and the people. It gave confidence to the common man that science is within his reach and to the teachers and pupils that a knowledge of English need not necessarily be a prerequisite for learning science.

Ranaweera (1976) notes that the change of medium of instruction in science and mathematics always lagged behind the other subjects because of special difficulties, like the absence of scientific and technical terms, textbooks, and proficient teachers. Yet he found the greatest need to switch over to the national languages in the science subjects. He gives two reasons for this claim:

- First, science education was considered the main instrument through which national development goals and improvements in the quality of life of the masses could be achieved. Thus, there was a need to expand science education. He tells that the English medium was a great constraint, which hindered the expansion of science education.
- Second, in order to achieve the wider objectives of science education, such as inculcation of the methods and attitudes of science, the didactic teaching approach had to be replaced by an activity- and inquiry-based approach. Such an approach requires greater dialogue, discussion, and interaction between the pupil and the teacher and among the pupils themselves. As Ranaweera (1976: 417) notes, "Such an approach makes a heavy demand on the language ability of the pupils and will be more successful if the medium of instruction is also the first language of the pupils".

Fafunwa (1990) likewise holds that one of the most important factors militating against the dissemination of knowledge and skills, and therefore of rapid social and economic well-being of the majority of people in Africa, is the imposed medium of communication. He (1990:103) claims that there seems to be a correlation between underdevelopment and the use of a foreign language as the official language of a given country in Africa (e.g. English, French or Portuguese):

> We impart knowledge and skills almost exclusively in these foreign languages, while the majority of our people, farmers, and craftsmen perform their daily tasks in Yoruba, Hausa, Wolof, Ga, Igbo, Bambara, Kiswahili, etc...The question is: Why not help them to improve their social, economic, and political activities via their mother tongue? Why insist on their learning English or French first before modern technology could be introduced to them?

Prah (2000:71) similarly points out the following:

> No society in the world has developed in a sustained and democratic fashion on the basis of a borrowed or colonial language...Underdeveloped countries in

> Africa remain under-developed partly on account of the cultural alienation which is structured in the context of the use of colonial languages.

Ali Mazrui (1996:3) asks the following questions:

> Can any country approximate first-rank economic development if it relies overwhelmingly on foreign languages for its discourse on development and transformation? Will Africa ever effectively 'take off' when it is so tightly held hostage to the languages of the former imperial masters?

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson (1996) make a point of the striking fact that in much educational policy work, even in policies on education for all, the role of language is seldom considered. This shows myopia on the part of the donors and the researchers who guide them. They urge targets for universal literacy to be set, but little thought is given as to the language in which literacy should be achieved.

When it comes to bilateral donors both the British and the French seem to use development aid to strengthen the use of their own languages as languages of instruction. The British Council has played no unimportant role when it comes to deciding on the language policies in Tanzania and Namibia (Phillipson, 1992; Brock-Utne, 1993; 1997; 2000a; 2001a; 2002d). Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1996) tell about a succession of British conferences held to "assist" colonies in organising their education systems when they became independent states in the 1960s. In these conferences language was given very little attention, and if the issue was raised, the focus was only on the learning of English. A British Council annual report admits that although the British government no longer has the economic and military power to impose its will in other parts of the world, British influence endures through "the insatiable demand for the English language"; the report maintains that the English language is Britain's greatest asset, "greater than the North Sea Oil" and characterises English as an "invisible, God-given asset" (British Council Annual Report, 1983:9).

If the African child's major learning problem is linguistic, and I tend to agree with Obanya (1980) that it is, then all the attention of African policy-makers and aid from Western donors should be devoted to strengthening the African languages as languages of instruction, especially in basic education. The concept "education for all" becomes a completely empty concept if the linguistic environment of the basic learners is not taken into account.

Kathleen Heugh (1999) shows that the South African language-in education policy changes which came into force in 1997 are flawed both in their conceptualization and implementation strategy. The role of African languages in South Africa is not adequately addressed, despite policy statements to the contrary. Also, Webb (1999) in her analysis of the language in education situation in South Africa shows a similar picture. She finds that in spite of the country's institutional documents which proclaim linguistic pluralism to be

the national objective, the country seems to be regressing to its pre-apartheid situation of monolingual practice--a situation of "English" only.

She shows how this is to the detriment of the black population (Webb, 1999). In the years of Bantu education, South Africa (1953-1976) actually had a better language in education policy for the majority population, but for the wrong reasons. During the time that the mother tongue was phased in and maintained for 8 years as the primary language of learning, the matriculation results of black students steadily improved, reaching their zenith in 1976. It was an inflexible implementation of Afrikaans as a medium for 50% of the subjects in secondary school in 1975 that led to the student uprising in Soweto the following year. The Government was forced to back down and in 1979, the Education and Training Act was passed, reducing mother tongue to 4 years of primary school followed by a choice of medium between Afrikaans and English. Most schools opted for English medium. The reduction of the use of the mother tongue has, however, coincided with decreasing pass rates which dropped to as low as 48.3% by 1982, and 44% by 1992 (Heugh,1999:304). There can be little doubt about who loses from the change from mother tongue to a foreign language as the language of instruction as early as in the fifth or even fourth grade of South African primary schools.

Democracy and Multi-Partyism

Alidou and Mazrui (1999) focus on the ex-colonial (termed the "imperial") languages as promoters of intellectual dependency to the detriment of democratic development in South Africa specifically, and in North-South relations generally. Writing from the so-called francophone Africa, Paulin Djité (1990:98) argues:

> It is hard to believe that there can be, or that one can possibly argue for, a true and lasting development under such policy when so many people do not know their constitutional and legal rights, cannot understand the developmental goals of their governments and therefore cannot actively exercise their basic democratic rights simply because they are written in foreign languages.

Djité (1990) notes that there is considerable research which clearly demonstrates that less than 15% of the African population of the "Francophone" countries barely function in French, while 90% of the same population function very well in the widespread African lingua franca such as Hausa, Djula/Bamanankan, Fulfulde, Kiswahili and Wolof.

The donors to Africa are currently very concerned about democracy and "good governance" in Africa. It seems paradoxial in such a situation that most of them are not more concerned about the fact that some 90% of the people of Africa have no knowledge of the official language of their country, even though it is presumed to be the vehicle of

communication between the government and its citizens. When it comes to democracy it is extremely important to communicate with people in a language which they understand.

Missionaries and religious institutes like the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) are bent on reaching the minds and hearts of the masses of people, also the very poor people. Delivering a message in the language people speak and use is crucial. For instance, the Catholic church when it first established itself in Tanzania had used Latin; yet, Kiswahili is the instrument of national unity (Joseph Butiku, Director of Nyerere Foundation, personal interview, 6 February, 2001). They soon realised that people did not understand the sermons, psalms and liturgy. The Catholic Church in Tanzania therefore changed the language used in church to Kiswahili. Tanzanians are now attending it in much greater numbers.

In a consultancy report on the use of the African languages in Namibia after independence, many of the Northern Namibians complained that their own politicians, also coming from the North and having Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga as their first language, would address them in English (Brock-Utne,1995). They had great difficulties understanding what their own politicians were saying.

Many African countries are now in the process of establishing multi-party systems. This has come about partly through a domino--effect originating in the eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union and partly through pressure on the African countries by the so-called donor community. There were also democratic forces within the African countries, especially among intellectuals working for a change in the direction of multi-party democracy. While it was internal debates more than any donor pressure that led to the introduction of multi-party democracy in Tanzania as well as in Zambia and Madagascar, the reforms in this direction were results of donor pressure in Kenya and Malawi (Garbo,1993).

An important question for further study is whether the rapid and partly externally forced introduction of multi-party systems in poor African countries may lead to a strengthening of the old colonial languages to the detriment of the African languages. While examples can easily be found of parties that further the colonial languages one may probably also find that parties that have their main basis in a certain district may further the local language of that district more than the more common lingua franca. The Inkatha Freedom Party in South Africa with its "extreme Zulu chauvinism" is a case in point (Zegeye,2001:9).

In the Seychelles the language of instruction in elementary school is Creole. In secondary school it is English. French is taught as a foreign language. The ruling party has been a promoter of Creole. Officials in the Ministry of Education claimed that all their studies showed that the switch to Creole had been of benefit to the great masses of children (personal interviews, February 1992). Members of the elite preferred English and French as official languages, and regarded the introduction of Creole, a language they looked down upon, as an imposition by the leftist government with which they were

in disagreement (personal interviews, February 1992). They wanted their children to be educated in English or French.

Some of the new upcoming parties write their party programs in English. Ferrari, at that time the leader of the new Institute for Democracy in the Seychelles which was formed to distribute information on democratic methods of governance, asked for some financial help from a development agency in France to further the work of the institute (personal interviews, February 1992). He was promised aid on the condition that the institute would use French as the medium of communication and would work for the strengthening of the French language in the Seychelles and distribute their brochures written in French! He declined the offer. One of the new parties in the Seychelles, led by Jacques Houdoul, states explicitly in their party program that they want to minimize the use of Creole, especially as a language of instruction. They argue that the use of Creole prevents the Seychellois from participating in world culture.

In Tanzania the ruling party, and for many years the only party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), conducts all its meetings, writes its party program, and distributes leaflets in the national language, Kiswahili. However, there is a tendency among the newer parties, which are currently coming into existence, to use English in order to attract sponsorship from foreign donors. Most of the new parties have also been started by "schooled" people, who have been trained abroad and many of whom have little respect for Kiswahili. Che Mbonda, leader of one of the opposition parties in Tanzania, said in 1992/93 that if he became the president he would see to it that children started learning in English from day one in grade one in primary school.

Before the introduction of the multiparty system in Tanzania the former president of Tanzania, Ali Hassan Mwinyi appointed Chief Justice Francis Nyalali to head a Constitutional Commission in order to collect the opinions of people on this matter. The Nyalali commission went all over the country to discuss with people whether they wanted a multi-party system or not. The work of this commission gave renewed energy to the political life in Tanzania. The work was in many ways revolutionary since it was the first time since the one-party state had been established that Tanzanians were encouraged and felt free to openly voice their criticism against the ruling party. The Norwegian Embassy in Dar es Salaam followed the work of the Constitutional Commission closely. In a report from 22 April 1992 the Embassy writes the following:

> The Constitutional Commission maintains that in the many hearings it arranged with people around the country 80% of the people preferred to continue with the one party-state. This gives us an indication of the attitudes among regular people. It is necessary to add that the majority of the participants had criticism against CCM – the present ruling party (Skriv, 1992:1 – author's translation).

People wanted changes in the way CCM (Chama Cha Mapinduzi)--the party of the revolution--was functioning. They did not want a multi-party system. The government still decided to introduce a multi-party system. It was said that it was Julius Nyerere

himself, with no formal power but with a lot of informal power (he was entitled baba ya taifa--the Father of the nation), who felt that one should not deny a minority their right to organise themselves. He made a political decision supposedly for the good of the nation. He saw respect for the rights of minorities as an important part of democracy.

The Nyalali commission recommended that hand in hand with a timetable for registration of new political parties a nation-wide program of education for democracy be put in place. The commission recommended that changes be made in the subject "siasa" (political education) taught in secondary school. The commission did, however, not recommend that the name of the subject be changed to "civics" (Mkwizu,2002). Neither did it recommend that the subject be taught in English. A closer look at the change of the subject siasa to "civics" is warranted. The example has to do with globalisation, with democracy, social justice and language policy.

The Subject "Elimu ya Siasa" in the Secondary Schools of Tanzania – Change from Civics to Siasa

After independence in Tanzania, President Nyerere started to work on the educational policy of an independent Tanzania. He was proud of his earlier training and work as a teacher and was often called "mwalimu" (meaning "teacher" in Kiswahili). His policy document " Education for Self Reliance"--ESR--(Nyerere, 1968) is counted as one of the most important texts for all students of education in Africa. The declaration spelt out the values of the *Ujamaa* society. ["Ujamaa" means familyhood in Kiswahili.] The idea was to extend traditional African values of kinship to Tanzania as a whole. The word is often heard in connection with the ujamaa villages, settlements that were built in order to ease the access of people to water, electricity and schools. The spirit in these villages was to be of a cooperative, "ujamaa" kind. The ujamaa villages were to be governed by those living in them.

In 1968 there was a change of name from "Civics" to "*Elimu ya Siasa*" through the ministerial circular, which spelt out the aims of the new subject. The aims were to correspond to those of Education for Self Reliance. The circular was issued in English to last temporarily between May to December 1968. In 1969 another circular was issued with the aim of stressing the importance of understanding the ruling party's objectives and what the Arusha Declaration had put forward. In July 1970 a circular (No. EDG G2/6/11/3 of 14/7/1970) was issued to secondary school teachers instructing them to use the term "Elimu ya Siasa" instead of "civics" and to use Kiswahili language in teaching instead of English. The aim of teaching "Elimu ya Siasa" was said to be to foster among pupils a sense of commitment to their country. The circular mentioned that apart from the necessary commitment to the country on the part of teachers, the subject could be best taught by teachers who had a knowledge of history, economics and political science.

In secondary school classrooms the teaching of *siasa* was a subject that both students and teachers enjoyed (personal observations between 1987 and 1992). It was a subject where they were active, where they discussed and argued. The subject was taught in Kiswahili. I sometimes observed the same class in the following lesson where they might have geography, history or mathematics. In these lessons they were passive, hardly said a word. The teachers were struggling with the English language, their vivacity and their enthusiasm were gone. Some teachers, when asked about the changes observed, admitted that the use of English as the medium of instruction was a great barrier to them (personal interviews between 1987 and 1992). They also mentioned that the syllabus for the *siasa* subject was not as detailed as for the other subjects. This called on the creativity of teachers.

Analysing the syllabi of *siasa* from 1968 to 1991 Komba (1996) points out that the aims of *siasa* assumed that there was consensus about the *Ujamaa* ideology itself. This was not always so. Teachers had to grapple with this false assumption as they attempted to abide by the overall requirements of the ESR philosophy. Komba notes that the aim of *siasa* was said to be to create critical awareness of political phenomena by open, balanced discussion and analysis making use of a range of evidence and opinions. If this aim should be fulfilled, then ambiguities, inconsistencies and contradictions within the *Ujamaa* ideology itself, according to Komba (1996:10), should have constituted an important part of the syllabus rather than being simply glossed over.

Change from "Elimu ya Siasa" Back to "Civics" in 1992

Changes from "Elimu ya Siasa" back to "civics" can be traced back to the political changes in the country from the once dominated single party CCM (Chama cha Mapinduzi) system to the introduction in 1992 of a multiparty system. The Nyalali commission called upon the education system to plan strategies in order to make people the subject of political reform rather than passive consumers. As mentioned the commission recommended changes in the subject they continued to call "*siasa*". It wanted the subject to create critical awareness of political phenomena by open, balanced discussion and insisted that the subject be detached from any particular party.

The Ministry of Education and Culture issued a circular No. ED/OKE/S.4/25 in May 1993 to introduce changes in the subject "*siasa*". The circular can be seen as an attempt on the part of the Ministry to cope with the newly introduced multiparty system:

> Topics of the subject that was called Elimu ya Siasa have been changed in order to cope with the system of multiparty democracy in the country. From now on the subject will be called Civics in secondary schools and *it will be taught in English* (emphasis added and author's translation).

The change in the content of a subject that had been so closely related to the philosophy of the one party system is understandable. The change of language of instruction in this subject is, however, less understandable. Teachers who use to teach *Elimu ya Siasa* complained that they were not consulted regarding the change of language of instruction (Mkwizu,2002). Several of the teachers told that they had enjoyed teaching *Elimu ya Siasa* but could not teach civics since their command of English was not good enough for that. Others told about the lively discussions they could have when they were teaching *siasa*, and the passivity of the pupils when they now had to teach the new subject in English. They felt that this had more to do with the change in medium of instruction than with change in content. Additionally, several of the teachers also mentioned the problem of undemocratic participation in the classroom since those who are proficient in the English language (though very few and coming from the better equipped homes) become dominant in discussions when they are supposed to be held in English (Mkwizu,2002).

Conclusion

In this article I have looked at the language question in Africa as a question of social class and of power. We have looked at these questions: What social classes are profiting from the continued use of the Euro-languages in Africa? Who benefits? Who loses out? My focus has been on the language use in the political domain and in the judiciary theatre, especially in South Africa.

Most of the Western donors to African countries are concerned with what they call good governance. In this concept they normally include transparency, a free press and a multi-party democracy of a Western type. Little thought has, however, been given to the fact that the languages the donors use to communicate with the political leaders of the African countries is spoken by just about 5 percent of the population. Many of the African leaders have been concerned with social justice. Yet few of them have, at the time when they were in power, been concerned with the social injustice arising from the fact that the language used for instruction means a barrier to knowledge for the masses of African children. The use of a language of instruction and a culture most children are familiar with would signify on the part of governments a willingness to embark on the necessary redistribution of power between the elites and the masses. It looks like the structural adjustment policies meted out for Africa as well as capital led globalisation has led to a strengthening of the former colonial languages to the detriment of the African languages--the languages most Africans speak. The effects of the current language policies in Africa need to be further studied in the light of the distribution of material and immaterial resources, in the light of social justice and democracy.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. 2001b. "Editorial Introduction to a Special Issue on Globalisation, Language and Education." *International Review of Education,* Vol.47, No.3-4, pp.163-184.

Brock-Utne, Birgit, ed. 2001c. Special Issue on Globalisation, Language and Education. *International Review of Education*, Vol.47, No.3-4.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. 2000a. *Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind.* New York/London: Falmer Press.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. 2000b. "Educacion para la Paz en un mundo globalizado." In Pedro Ortega, ed., *Educacion para la Paz,* pp.39-58. Murcia: Ediciones Myrtia.

Brock-Utne, Birgit and Gunnar Garbo, eds. 1999. *Globalization – On Whose Terms?,* Report No.5. University of Oslo: Institute for Educational Research.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. 1997. "Language of Instruction in Namibian Schools." *International Review of Education.* Vol.43, No.2/3, pp.241-260.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. 1995. "The Teaching of Namibian Languages in the Formal Education System of Namibia." A study requested by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in Namibia through the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) and with the support of the Namibia Association of Norway (NAMAS).

Brock-Utne, Birgit. 1993. "Language of Instruction in African Schools - A Socio-Cultural Perspective." *Nordisk Pedagogik,* No.4, pp.225-247.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. 1989. *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education.* New York: Pergamon Press.

Djité, Paulin. 1990. "The Place of African Languages in the Revival of the Francophonie Movement." *International Journal of Sociology of Language,* No. 86, pp.87-102.

Fafunwa, Babs A. 1990. " Using National Languages in Education: A Challenge to African Educators." In Unesco-Unicef, ed., *African Thoughts on the Prospects of Education for All,* pp.97-110. [Selections from papers commissioned for the Regional Consultation on Education for All, Dakar 27-30 November 1989.] Dakar: Breda.

Garbo, Gunnar. 1993. *Makt og bistand* [Power and Aid]. Oslo: Spartacus Forlag.

Herbert, R.K. 1992. *Language and Society in Africa: Theory and Practice.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Heugh, Kathleen, 1999. "Languages, Development and Reconstructing Education in South Africa." *International Journal of Educational Development,* 4-5, pp.301-313.

Kamanga. 2001. "Globalization and Its Legal Implications on Higher Education in Africa." Paper presented on November 12 at the African University Day at the University of Dar es Salaam.

Klaus, David. 2001. "The Use of Indigenous Languages in Early Basic Education in Papua New Guinea: A Model for Elsewhere?" Paper presented at the Annual

Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, 17 March, Washington DC.

Komba, W. 1996. "Changing Politics and Political Culture in Tanzania: The Impact of Political Education and Civics Curricula 1967-1994." Ph.D. thesis. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

Makoni, Sinfree. 1998. "African Languages as European Scripts: The Shaping of Communal Memory." In Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, eds., *Negotiating the Past. The Making of Memory in South Africa*, pp.242-249. Oxford:Oxford University Press.

Mazrui, Ali. 1996. "Perspective: The Muse of Modernity and the Quest for Development." In Philip Altbach and Salah Hassan, eds., *The Muse of Modernity: Essays on Culture as Development in Africa*. Trenton: Africa World Press.

Mehrotra, Santosh. 1998. "Education for All: Policy Lessons from High-Achieving Countries." *International Review of Education*, No.5/6, pp.461-484.

Mkwizu, Mary. 2002. "The Pedagogical Implications of Using English in Teaching Civics in Tanzanian Secondary Schools." Master thesis. Oslo: Institute for Educational Research.

Nyerere, Julius. 1968. "Education for Self-Reliance." In: *Ujamaa, Essays on Socialism*, pp.44-76 [first issued in March 1967]. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.

Obanya, Pai. 1980. "Research on Alternative Teaching in Africa." In E.A. Yoloye and Flechsig, eds., *Educational Research for Development*, pp.67-112. Bonn: Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung.

Phillipson, Robert. 2001. "English for Globalisation or for the World's People?" *International Review of Education*, Vol.47, No.3-4, pp.185-200.

Phillipson, Robert. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prah, Kwesi Kwaa.2000. *African Languages for the Mass Education of Africans*, Book Series No.7. Cape Town: CASAS (The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society).

Ranaweera, A. Mahinda. 1976. "Sri Lanka: Science Teaching in the National Languages." *Prospects*, 3, pp.416-423.

Reisby, Kirsten. 1999. "The Child and Her Learning Processes." In Birgit Brock-Utne and Gunnar Garbo, eds., *Globalization On Whose Terms?*, Report No.5, pp.325-335. University of Oslo: Institute for Educational Research.

Ridge, Stanley G.M. 2000. "Language Policy and Democratic Practice." In Sinfree B. Makoni, and Nkonko Kamwangamalu, eds., *Languages and Institutions in Africa*, pp.45-65, CASA BOOK SERIES, No.5. Cape Town: CASAS (The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society).

Rubagumya, Casmir. 2003. "English Medium Primary Schools in Tanzania: A New Linguistic Market in Education?" In Birgit Brock-Utne, Zubeida Desai, and Martha Qorro eds., *The Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South African Children (LOITASA)*. Dar es Salaam: E and D Limited.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 2001. "Globalisation of (Educational) Language Rights." *International Review of Education*, Vol.47, No.3-4, pp.201-233.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove and Robert Phillipson. 1996. "The Possible Role of Donors in a Language Policy for All." In Birgit Brock-Utne and Tove Nagel, eds., *The Role of Aid in the Development of Education for All*, Report No.8, pp.161-202. Oslo: Institute for Educational Research.

Skriv. 1992. "Politikk og Økonomi i Tanzania." *Skriv*, No.58 from the Royal Norwegian Embassy to the Royal Foreign Ministry, Dar es Salaam, 22 April.

Steytler, Nico. 1993. "The Role of the Court Interpreter." *South African Journal of Human Rights*, Vol.9, No.I, pp.205-216.

Temu, Arnold. 2000. "The Development of National Language: A Survey of Kiswahili in Tanzania." In Kwesi Kwaa Prah, ed., *Between Distinction and Extinction. The Harmonisation and Standardisation of African Languages*, pp.143-157, BOOK SERIES, No.1. Cape Town: CASAS (The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society).

Thiong'o, Ngugi wa. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind. The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi: Heinemann.

UNESCO. 1985. *African Community Languages and Their Use in Literacy and Education*. Dakar: Breda.

Webb, Vic. 1999. "Multilingualism in Democratic South Africa: The Overestimation of Language Policy." *International Journal of Educational Development*, 4-5, pp.351-366.

Zegeye, Abebe. 2001. "Imposed Ethnicity." In Abebe Zegeye, ed., *Social Identities in the New South Africa. After Apartheid – Volume One*, Social Identities South Africa Series, pp.1-24. Cape Town: Kwela Books and SA History Online (www.sahistory.org.za).