Review

Situating African languages in the global village for sustainable development: Attractions and challenges for Zimbabwe

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While dissenting voices view ex-colonial languages as contributing to marginalisation, (Bentahila, 1988:338) argues that, in contrast to Arabic, French is consistently associated with modernity, education and sophistication as well as social advancement. This presents a dilemma in that although African governments are advocating for use of African languages, they have an inherent phobia of isolation from the global village. Meanwhile globalisation has not only reinforced the hegemony of ex-colonial languages but practically exacerbates the marginalisation of African languages, thereby presenting an amazing paradox of development. This article interrogates the relationship between African languages and sustainable development with a special focus on Zimbabwe. The contribution adopts a holistic approach whereby a proposition to integrate language planning and policy with socio-economic and political considerations is advanced. The paper argues that destabilisation of one sector consequently brings disequilibrium in another which facilitates discussion of language planning attractions and challenges for Zimbabwe.

Key words: African languages, linguistic inclusion, globalisation, sustainable development, education for sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Although dissenting voices view ex-colonial languages as contributing to marginalisation, Bentahila (1988:338) argues that, in contrast to Arabic, French is consistently associated with modernity, education and sophistication and is perceived as a means of social advancement. The argument is corroborated by Mavesera (2009:9) who presents non-African languages as vehicles of modernisation and technological advancement. This poses a dilemma in that while African governments are advocating for use of African languages, they have an inherent phobia of exclusion from the global village. Globalisation, an ideology that not onlyreinforces the hegemony of ex-colonial languages such as English but concomitantly contributes to further marginalisation of indigenous languages, consequently presents an amazing paradox of development. This article begins by unpacking key concepts which lead to understanding of the focus of the presentation. The discussion moves on to give a background as to why it focuses on African languages for sustainable development and how African

languages can be used for sustainability. The article then presents the paradox of development and winds up with a discussion on the attractions and challenges for Zimbabwe. The contribution adopts a holistic approach whereby a proposition to integrate language planning with socio-economic and politico-environmental consideration to bring sustainable development is moved.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Borrowed from the economic arena, globalisation is the system of interaction among countries of the world in an effort to develop the global economy. Globalisation is viewed by Roy-Campbell (2006:1) as 'the world getting smaller'… In this discussion globalisation refers to local languages expanding their sphere of influence to communicate important knowledge on the global marketplace. It entails the ability of all languages to express modern scientific and technological

information to different parts of the world with a view to ultimately eradicate inequalities and inequities among people of the world. Internet connectivity and technology have reduced the wider world into what this paper call global village. In a global village communication is fast and what happens in the Far East can reverberate its effects throughout the globe in a matter of hours or days as happened with the attack on the trade centre. Development is a multidimensional process involving positive changes in the social structure and an improvement in the quality of life resulting in the reduction of inequalities. In the context of this paper development includes the ability of indigenous languages to express higher knowledge and technology beyond their traditional socio-geographic boundaries.

Sustainable development is a globally endorsed positive change that encourages ecological and socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions but with context-bound implementation strategies .Sustainable development depends on a shared vision communicated in different languages ultimately leading to the creation of a livable environment for the present and future generations across the globe. Education for sustainable development is a holistic lifelong, long range process that creates an environment for improving life both locally and globally for the present and future generations. It uses education to achieve sustainability .Education for sustainable development continues to evolve as societies correspondingly change.

BACKGROUND

Globalisation and the information age have put weaker languages at the risk of being marginalised. Information is relayed through global languages like English. In a multi-lingual society the language that is given an official status is usually the language of those who have both economic and political power. It is saddening to observe that almost all African countries seem to enjoy doing business in foreign languages despite attainment of political power. Their present predicament however is not out of their own volition. Their status emanates from a long history of colonial subjugation. This history induced perpetual marginalisation of African languages such that African states view their languages as unfit to transmit business ideas and higher knowledge.

Language is an important factor in the workplace for instance in the distribution of information and in the productive utilization of workers' skills and knowledge and finally in effective delivery of services to the public. As such language is pivotal to sustainable development because it remains a constant in ecological, socio- cultural, political and economic dimensions of development. According to Webb (2002:218), language can facilitate or hinder economic activity. Webb further

argues that English is over-empowered whereas Bantu languages are marginalised such that language can be used for economic discrimination and even exploitation. The argument is corroborated by Mutasa (2004:36) who observed that South African Blacks use their language at work but not in domains associated with prestige. The paper argues that language is pertinent in the management of information, as a production factor and as a facilitator or hindrance to sustainable development. Zimbabwe's economic dependency is linked to her inability to utilise indigenous languages to tap the indigenous knowledge base of her people. A language that enables all people to engage in economic production to meet their basic needs promotes development. The colonial legacy has actually rendered African languages impotent in many African countries. Brock-Utne (2000) points to the invalidation of African languages by viewing them as handicaps rather than as resources. In pre-independent Zimbabwe, English was preserved for a selected few among Africans thereby furthering the African's economic marginalisation. By acquiring the local languages while denying Zimbabweans similar access to English, the colonialists were able to penetrate into the social worlds of the Africans without a corresponding access by the indigenous Zimbabweans into the world of the Europeans. In this regard bilingualism was beneficial to the white settlers while disempowering the Zimbabweans which, works against the principles of sustainable development. Respectability of African languages as conveyors of important high status knowledge was compromised.

In Zimbabwe, English continues to be the global language, the language of the Internet, wider communication and official documents. A global language is able to increase connectivity across geographical and linguistic boundaries. Realising that Zimbabwe requires a high level of manpower, technology and contact with the external world (Mutasa, 1995:5), it made sense to continue with colonial legacy for two reasons. Firstly, to keep track with global developments, maintain internal unity and contacts with friends of Zimbabwe. Secondly, there was a strong motivation to adopt incremental policies that capitalise on available resources and ride on existing structures.

Fishman (1974) as cited by Thondhlana (2000:7) also suggests two reasons why Zimbabwe has not moved from the language policy of the colonial days. The two reasons are referred to by Fishman (1974) as cited by Thondhlana (ibid) as 'nationalistic' and 'nationistic'. From a nationalistic point of view, English is retained as the official language because it is viewed as neutral, therefore has a unifying role among different indigenous language groups. Political leaders tend to prefer the use of English since it has no ethnic labels attached to it among the Zimbabweans. A major drawback is that the indigenous languages have not been quickly identified with standardized print languages particularly

the minority languages such as Tonga, Nambya, Venda and Shangaani to name but a few.. Thondhlana maintains that English has been used for continuity and efficiency; that is a nationistic function. Nationistic function refers to how a country handles its affairs in government, education, commerce and external affairs. It is the latter that influenced the role given to English in Zimbabwe after independence. Although colonial legacy reduced at stages by riding on existing structures and capitalising on available resources, policy may have overlooked other factors such as:

(1) Was such a policy all inclusive and complementary to democratic principles?
(2) What language would have included a majority of the new nation's population in socio-cultural and economic development especially in view of Education for All (EFA)?
(3) What language would strategically position Zimbabwe on the global map for sustainable development?

In Zimbabwe, colonial language policies distanced Shona elite from the masses and this frustrated moves to get local people involved in developmental projects. The emergence of a new type of Shona coupled with the insignificant role assigned to the Shona language in the education process particularly as a medium of educational instruction alienated the educated elite from the grassroots. The other indigenous language groups were even worse off as they were placed a strata below the two major indigenous languages Shona and Ndebele. Doke's 1931 report reduced Zimbabwe's ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous status to two main languages that is Ndebele in the western region and Shona in the rest of the country, (NLPAP, 1998). Any education that uproots its recipients from indigenous communities disempowers them. To a great extent colonial language policies disempowered and eroded confidence in many Zimbabweans. In view of this backdrop, the article observes an anomaly whereby a majority of the Zimbabwean people is sidelined from socio-economic and politico-environmental mainstream development of the country. With this background the article interrogates the positioning of African languages in the global village with a special focus on Zimbabwe.

AFRICAN LANGUAGES IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

Globalisation poses the temptation of maintaining global languages to keep pace with global developments. Africa still needs to gain a significant place in the global economy, politics and other development initiatives so the temptation to retain colonial languages is great. On the one hand, globalisation increases the visibility of African languages beyond the Africa continent yet on the other it exposes them to stiff competition against established global languages such as English, French and Portuguese to mention but a few. For African languages to claim significant space in the global village, the languages must be able to transmit high status knowledge and technological information that is in demand globally. Languages that are able to convey such information are languages of hegemony and power. In the Information Age, such languages are easily accessible on the information highway. Currently African languages are highly challenged as a majority of them are struggling to gain space in education not even as media of instruction but as subjects of study. Globalisation exposes African languages on the inter-national language market as 1) Subjects of study 2) Media of educational instruction 3) Communication tools in modern society.

Today's workplace is characterized by a search for knowledge and information. This demands that workers should be able to communicate, handle information and adapt to new developments either orally, numerically or literally. Currently, a majority of African languages is more restricted to oral communication between co-workers in the workplace (Mutasa 2004; Webb 2002). It should be emphasized that where workers are limited by language proficiency certain information is omitted as workers struggle to get the correct vocabulary to express themselves. Information about organisations is usually scanty as a result of the language barrier. Some of the workplace hazards could be minimised or eliminated if African languages were used for information dissemination in the workplace. Sustainable development calls for a safe environment ascertained by clear communication, for the present and future generations. African governments need to consider a cost-benefit-analysis of the language used in the workplace. Related to this, Coulmas (1992:124-5) contends that: Language training for industry and commerce can be a considerable burden for a company, but those who hesitate to make the necessary financial outlays have to ask themselves which is more costly, language training or losses and foregone gains brought about by lack of language proficiency.

As an instrument in the socialization of people, language is important in establishing norms and values required for the development of work commitment and effectiveness. Webb (2002:218) asserts that language instills a sense of institutional loyalty and security, which are essential ingredients of good governance and good business. Once this is established the role of language then becomes that of creating an enabling social environment hinged on sustainable development.

Language has an important role in the development of vocational skills as an instrument of education and training (Webb, 2002:219). Work commitments, norms and values necessary for the workplace are only possible to be established in an environment where the

workers are able and capable of expressing themselves fluently. Uju (2008:25) remarks that, an individual with lots of potential should be able to speak out so that society could give him or her listening ears. Since a majority of the indigenous workers are not quite conversant with foreign languages, indigenous languages could help in fostering work commitments. The article maintains that use of African languages factors in the cultural component specific to Zimbabwe which promotes sustainable development.

Tanzania has achieved a considerably high degree of democratization through deliberate language choice and language policy. English was replaced with Kiswahili as the sole language of parliamentary business, both written and oral that enabled Tanzanian people to participate in political and legislative issues. This move opened floodgates to the "common people" who could now compete with members of the educated elite for parliamentary seats as they could use their Kiswahili oratorical skills effectively to influence legislative decisions.

Other than empowering its speakers the move had an effect of elaborating the language bringing in new technical terms for legislative register. The participation of more citizens in the Bunge has enriched and empowered Tanzanians to the effect that they realise that their language has capacity for abstract, intellectual and scientific thought, (Bamgbose, 1991). To date Kiswahili could be claimed to be the language of the African continent because it is the most widely used in the continent and accessible on the information highway. While Kiswahili strengthens its place among the world global languages, it is expected that other African languages like Shona of Zimbabwe should follow suit.

All things being equal it should be observed that indigenous languages are better suited for mass mobilisation and organisation of labour for economic development. Ujamaa in Tanzania enjoyed the little fortunes it did partly due to the role played by Kiswahili because government was able to communicate with its people, (Bamgbose, 1991). Whilst dictatorship is a loathed phenomenon, in Africa, it has served to demonstrate that African languages can be adopted and adapted for parliamentary and legal debates as witnessed in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. The African linguistic map can only be changed through aggression. Mutasa (2006:83) asserts that 'aggression is a paramount ingredient in development without which the development and promotion of African languages is tantamount to being lip service'. Sustainability depends on effective communication and policy implementation for efficient management of resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

Laitin (1992) argues that the economic misfortunes of Africa are a result of Africa's dependence on European languages. He contends that use of African languages is likely to make it difficult to seek western expertise and to reduce western penetration of Africa. By learning to modernize without westernization, Zimbabwe is likely to improve her chances of more organic economic and political development. In the same vein the paper argues that the use of African languages would assist Zimbabwe retain her most valued human resources which left their countries for better economic opportunities in the Diasporas. Linguistic dissociation with the West would help separate the technical from the western making it more probable to induce challenges whilst policies of linguistic association might induce "catch-up", (Laitin, 1983:38). Challenge might lead to innovativeness based on local resources and indigenous ideas. Innovations born of and nurtured through African languages are likely to be exported in African languages thereby situating African languages on the global map as languages capable of increasing connectivity and interdependence of the world's markets and businesses. Linguistic dissociation might induce challenge for indigenous speakers to come up with home grown ideas relevant to their environment as solutions to economic development as opposed to linguistic association that might induce "catch up". Linguistic dissociation is likely to leave the Zimbaweans more proactive in solving development issues hence it is more empowering. African languages can be elaborated to handle modern technological and scientific knowledge. Africa needs to urgently consider the gains of language planning in favour of the indigenous languages or risk to remain trailing behind global development.

The present state of development is a result of an historical situation hence to change the situation requires some kind of social transformation of structures including the language situation. It is argued that for as long as African languages are not used in formal economic activity global sustainable development will remain a dream. Paradoxically, Africans need to possess a reasonable amount of wealth for their languages to be valued economically. African governments often do not optimize African languages as resources because they are often unconsciously caught in a colonial mentality. African languages are often undervalued by society since society is not fully appreciative of the real cost of exclusion of African languages. In as much as governments might have political commitments to the language issue, the biggest hurdle that remains is changing people's attitudes. Triandis (1971) cited in Okombo (1999:591) declares that: 'We have the technical knowledge to change the world, but we do not have the attitude to bring the change.' The view complements the position of this article which, further observes that there is bound to be resistance to the empowerment of indigenous languages. The worst enemy of development is resistance to change and yet change is a ubiquitous phenomenon. To both industry and government, the use of indigenous languages might have financial implications.

As far as the modern employment based domains of power are concerned, English is seen by many as the key to power and access to information. Crystal (1997) in Mutasa (2006) contends that English is fast becoming a global language because of its competence. Groddal (1997) in Gill (2002) as cited by Mutasa (2006) maintains that 'the strength of English lies in the complex mix of the economics, technological, political and cultural factors…' To claim space in the global village, African languages should be propelled to levels of transmitting complex knowledge and technology so that people from across the world would envy to gain knowledge and skills through them. In the absence of economic power for the indigenous people, the salvation of African languages is vested in the education sector. Education as a process is capable of unlocking and instilling positive attitudes towards accepting African languages as global languages. However this change of attitude is easier achieved where policies are supported by financial injection from indigenous Zimbabweans themselves. Currently Zimbabwe is incapacitated but it might be wiser to consider the gains that accrue from linguistic inclusion.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

While language is a communication tool with which to express ideas, acquire knowledge and empower people, education has also been identified as a tool for equipping people with knowledge, skills and values (Kamwendo, 2009:1) hence education offered in indigenous languages is likely to incorporate indigenous values to the values of sustainable development. Prah (2001b) in Brock-Utne and Hopson (2005:25) postulates that the language of education is the language of hegemony and power. He asserts that knowledge is accumulated and deposited in the language of instruction and where language of instruction is the same as mother tongue it gives confidence to a people with respect to their historical and cultural baggage. Where a people lack confidence and respect of their cultural heritage there is bound to be frustration, alienation, cultural dominance and under-development. Mateene (1980) maintains that African languages are underdeveloped in scientific and technical expression because they have not been used to express thought in these fields. African languages are poor because Africans do not want to use them in important areas such as education, administration, medicine and the law. Related to this, the Harare Declaration declared that scientific and technological discourse should be conducted in the national languages as part of Africa's cognitive preparation for the challenges of the 21st century (Chimhundu, 1997). However, a decade into the 21st century, Africa still clings to ex-colonial languages as the languages of scientific and technological discourse.

Be that as it may, scholars like Rubanza insisted that African development is impossible without the use of African languages, (Prah, 2002:44). Rubanza maintains that ethnic languages enable those who interact to make relevant connections with their lives beyond the school. Rubanza (1996) argues that for some; English = Education, English = School uniform because you take it off when you go home.

In the view of the article, a language that helps the learner grasp new knowledge, apply it to real life situation beyond the classroom and share the new knowledge with immediate community, is more empowering. The language encourages development and transfer of knowledge in a way that does not leave learners alienated from their immediate environment while it contributes to development of the community ultimately leading to global development. Education for sustainable development uses education as a conduit for promoting environmental consciousness and responsibility so it should not be taken off when school is over. Education offered in the language of the majority is likely to be sustainable. Pertinent to the use of language in education is not only the population of speakers but whether the language is also available in print media for resource materials. Bamgbose (1991:72) claims that, 'No matter how large the population of speakers of a language is, it is only when the language has been reduced to writing and materials made available in it that it can be used in education.' The use or non-use of African languages in education is largely a function of the colonial heritage. As a result of colonization African countries were divided into two groups.

(1) A group of users – those countries which used African languages as a medium of instruction in early primary education and taught as a subject at secondary.
(2) Non-users – where formal education was conducted in the colonial language (Bamgbose, 2000).

The effect was the marginalisation of African languages and the myth that complex knowledge and skills are viewed as only communicated effectively through foreign languages. Resolutions have been made to correct the situation yet it has taken Africa almost a century to effectively implement the pronouncements.

The medium of instruction is viewed to have a strong bearing on how the learner will adjust to school life as it either provides a smooth handover-takeover from the home to the school system or a rough grab that might result in frustrating the learner. The 1951 UNESCO report actually recommended on 'psychological, social and educational grounds that children be taught in a language they know effectively, which will normally be the mother tongue of the children', (Webb, 2002:192).

Decades after attaining independence, African countries remain prisoners of the past with constraint reinforced by the argument that English is going to be

needed for higher education, technology, science and industry (Bamgbose, 1991:72). The question is what and where is the problem? African languages have not been associated with access to modern education and technology, so non-African languages considered to equip the learner with access to rapid economic development and social mobility are preferred. Secondly speakers of African languages are not economically and technologically empowered to determine their destiny.

The other obstacle is what the paper would term donor syndrome. Donor syndrome is a state whereby most indigenous Africans have not risen beyond identifying their problems and resorting to waiting for donors to inject financial and other resources to solve the problem. The condition emanates from a situation whereby even able- bodied people are accustomed to receiving subsidies from international donor agencies such as CARE International. This condition thwarts ingenuity among most Zimbabweans such that any problem "needs" a donor to solve it. Paradoxically, with linguistic empowerment, the donors may not be forthcoming as it threatens their comfort zone and their hegemony so to speak. The article proposes that linguistic empowerment could precede economic empowerment. Zimbabwe could legislate language policies that empower indigenous languages. African languages could be made a prerequisite to foreigners who want permanent residence in Zimbabwe, for example. By so doing the domains of operation for African languages would be expanded to the business and tourist sectors. There might be motivation for non-African language speakers to learn African languages in order for them to access certain privileges and do business in Zimbabwe.

While it might be attractive to enforce use of African languages as media of educational instruction there are factors that militate against it. African nations are thus confronted with a puzzle of saving the language or serving the child's interests. The new world is a world of decrees on rights hence certain actions targeted at maintaining indigenous languages may be viewed as interfering with individuals' rights to choose a language of their preference. The offence is magnified if it is further interpreted as infringing on children's rights. Instituting African languages in education in Zimbabwe is further hindered by absence of policy advocacy for a buy in, lack of clear policy implementation strategies, assessment and evaluation even where policy has been pushed on paper as in the case of teaching of Shona and Ndebele in predominantly Ndebele or Shona areas respectively. The policies are viewed with a lot of suspicion making it difficult to combat inherent negative attitudes of viewing African languages as languages incapable of communicating high status knowledge and technological information. Coupled with this, the discussion observes O-Saki (2005:47) as quoted by Ogutu and Nthiga in Mutasa and Ogutu (2008:126) that

the lack of resources theory is a deception originating from history. O-Saki states: There is always the deception that the language of the colonized [sic] people is inferior and has not got sufficient words to explain scientific phenomenon, coupled with tricks of imperialists, there may never be funding to print material in vernaculars or train teachers to teach science in Kiswahili, Kigogo, Kisukemg etc.

These views are affirmed by Ogutu in Mutasa and Ogutu (2008) who advances that while African languages should be repositories of values that drive linguistic decolonisation, lack of teaching and learning resources militate against that. It is argued that this lack of resources is reinforced by resistance to change and fear of losing protected socio-linguistic and economic space by the educated elite and political gurus. Declarations have been made to use African languages as media of instruction but with no clear implementation strategy. A challenge that remains is that the declarations are not supported by resource funding even of teaching materials. Furthermore while policy might encourage indigenous languages as media of instruction, examinations in all subjects other than Shona and Ndebele are still done in English so any reasonable teacher would teach for examination purposes since the schools are ultimately rated according to examination performance at the end of the year.

Zimbabwe should vigorously pursue the issue of mother tongue instruction guided by the observation that any language is capable of rising to a dominant position. Had the English not valued their language, Latin would still be the "world" language. By the same token if Africans do not value their languages, English and other non-African languages will remain "the world languages". The successes scored by Tanzania in the swahilisation process are a result of heavy financial and human resource investment to meet the different linguistic needs of the state and society. It is vital to invest in both human and financial resources if positive results are to be realised in language planning. It is only when African languages have become languages of instruction that they can occupy a significant place for sustainable development in the global village.

A close relationship exists between language, thought and intelligence, (ADEA, 1996b:45-6). Language is the vehicle of thought and intelligence. It is through language that ideas are conceptualised, thoughts organised and memory systematised. Batibo (2005:36) maintains that indigenous languages should not be seen as stumbling blocks to national unity, national identity and national development but should be regarded as resources for people's aspirations and full participation in national development. In view of this the language of education should be that which offers potential for full participation by the masses. However the question that remains is: Are African languages in a position to be effectively and efficiently used as media of instruction in education?

ATTRACTIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR ZIMBABWE: THE PARADOX OF DEVELOPMENT

Democratic principles advocate for the participation of every citizen or at least the majority of them. For people to participate in development initiatives they have to be linguistically empowered so that they can effectively engage in the production processes. Linguistic inclusion is directly linked to mother tongue language, however a dilemma that arises is that in a modern urbanised society mother tongue may not be a Zimbabwean indigenous language. It is difficult to define mother tongue language in a multi-lingual industrialised society so this creates a puzzle of what language to opt for particularly in the global world awash with bills and decrees on individual and children's rights.

Some of the fears in Zimbabwe, for example, are that Zimbabwe might be isolated yet the current trend is globalisation. However, it should be pointed out that the use of indigenous languages does not translate into abolition of English. It is argued that it is more empowering to institutionalise indigenous languages and harness the knowledge and skills of the majority of Zimbabwean people who are currently marginalised by language deficiency. Sustainability implies resolving the conflict between the various competing goals and involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity. As a principle, social equity entails that all languages should be given equal treatment. The crucial step towards sustainable development is to ensure participation by all people for the benefit of all and participation is encouraged by all inclusive language policies that unlock the stronghold of ideas and wisdom imbedded in every language group.

It might be wise to observe that a candle does not lose its light by lighting another. Rather, the intensity of light increases, so, in the same vein, empowering African languages to be socio-economically viable is no declaration of annihilating non-African languages. Short-changing African languages is not only a matter of linguistic exclusion; it is bad socio-economic practice and therefore unsustainable. Definitely use of African languages would restore confidence; however the stumbling block remains the economic status of the indigenous African people.

As communication tools African languages enhance the speaker's confidence, a virtue necessary for development. Confidence ensures self-esteem, a necessary ingredient for one to effectively interact with one's environment to foster sustainable development. The views are corroborated by Ngugi (1994) and Uju (2008). Uju reasons that there is correlation between language and poverty eradication. Inability to express oneself closes all avenues of individual and collective effective language use as a requirement in the global economy. Madhubuti (1984:123) takes the argument further by positing that '…without language, one cannot express

the indigenous self and therefore there is nothing to express other than the selves of others in their languages.' The Director of Education's policy Circular Number 26 of 2007 confirms this by articulating that languages that people are able to communicate in are critical for personal as well as national development and global sustainable development. The idea of globalization is supported not only by the internet but more seriously by the languages used as media of instruction.

As outlined above, use of African languages is likely to make it more difficult to seek western expertise and it will reduce western penetration as well as curb brain drain in Zimbabwe. By learning to modernize without westernization, Zimbabwe may improve its chances of economic and political development. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) acknowledge that policies that favour use of indigenous languages as official media may help retain human resource. Their point is correct but it ignores the fact that countries also earn foreign currency through exporting human resources to other countries. Their argument also overlooks the fact that use of indigenous languages may lead to exportation of indigenous knowledge through products and publications marketed and published in indigenous languages thereby situating African languages on the global language market via economic initiatives. Ngara (1982) and Nziramasanga et al. (1999) agree that indigenous languages are pivotal to transmission of the Zimbabwean culture, values, norms and creation of a national identity. Nziramasanga et al. (1999) further argue that the use of indigenous languages in education is part of the struggle towards reform of African education systems for sustainable development.

The status of indigenous languages should be imbedded in the national constitution. The use of indigenous languages in industry and commerce would give feedback into the education system and motivate students to learn and master these languages. This usage would also motivate industry and commerce to invest in and support the development of indigenous languages. In that way the languages are likely to be developed and their speakers equipped with concepts of sustainable development as well as contribute to global sustainability. In Zimbabwe the current economic challenges are such that although industry and commerce may want to assist, they are frustrated by uncertainties and are struggling to make meaningful business. It becomes very difficult to expect industry and commerce or even government to focus on issues of language policy yet it should be pointed out that this lack of urgency in addressing language issues might be too costly to the nation. Uju (2008:26) argues that lack of language power leads to 'retardation of social development and economic marginalization' [sic]. It is a fact that individuals who cannot communicate properly cannot handle opportunities that come their way hence the more reasons Zimbabwe should adopt language policies

that enhance economic participation by all. The views are supported by Obama (2006:191) who concludes, '…how well we respond to globalization,' [sic] has '…to do with a change in spirit, a willingness to put our common interest and the interests of future generations ahead of short term expediency.'

In Zimbabwe, development initiatives have been rolled out to communities with plans and strategies for implementation written in English as highlighted by one of the interviewees who works for DDF, (Mavesera, 2009). As such African languages have not been linked to modern development, yet Mavesera (2009) observes that development/change agents have to translate their plans into African languages in order for the ordinary people to understand, appreciate and participate in the development initiatives. It is therefore argued that African languages can facilitate or communicate development ideas. After all, what is needed is for their speakers to be confident and assertively express themselves in languages of their best comfort.

Although many Zimbabweans could be carrying out their business transactions in African languages when it comes to sealing the deals, English is the language for drawing up contracts. As for accessing information on the information highway through African languages, it is still a pipe dream that many consider may never be accomplished. There is definitely need for decolonising the African mind from the belief that African languages cannot be developed to articulate development issues. Since this is emanating from a long history of colonial rule, there is need for institutional intervention to change the status quo. Ngugi (1997) observes that cultural imperialism is a powerful instrument of oppression, which distorts a people's vision of their place in history – cultural imperialism disempowers people's creative potential. As a result anything that represents the Zimbabwean indigenous languages may suffer rejection from the very people who must uphold it. Zimbabwe can meaningfully contribute towards global sustainable development only if its indigenous languages are properly positioned to transmit high quality information bringing with it the languages' cultural milieu. The biggest challenge remains the drive to keep pace with global trends in every sphere of life. The exposure to modern technology such as the Internet has devastating effects on the younger generation. Unless African languages are empowered to be technologically compliant and user friendly on the Internet, the younger generation would be persuaded to follow cultures that they are exposed to on a daily basis.

Furthermore use of English as a medium of instruction attracts Zimbabwean Internet users to English version websites.

Bearing in mind that in the global village, the cultures of those with global economic and political power have tended to overshadow those whose influence is local, Zimbabwe should properly situate its indigenous languages initially, by clearly allocating them significant roles in national discourse. The starting point would be to recognise the languages as languages of educational instruction at higher levels of learning and use them in science and technology. Though this is quite attractive, the challenge is absence of role models from the African continent. Tanzania which had since 1969 been a shining example of using Kiswahili as the medium of instruction throughout primary has already faltered in this domain. Be that as it may, none use of African languages as media of educational instruction ultimately positions Zimbabwe as a receiver rather than a contributor of knowledge. Above all, none use of African languages culminates into "collective amnesia," (Prah, 2003). Zimbabwe can contribute to sustainable development only when African realities informed by African history, languages and culture are mainstreamed in state business. This calls for recognition of African languages as transmitters of modern knowledge and technology.

A holistic approach in solving the language problem can be achieved through enacting a clear language policy which defines the roles and functions of each language with clear implementation strategies. A language policy can liberate the country from the yoke of neo-colonialism and simultaneously unleash the forces of indigenous creativity, productivity and development in a holistic manner. The national and/or official status of Shona and Ndebele is largely theoretical. Little is being done to develop and promote them in order to diversify their functions. The language policy should guide and provide a framework for stakeholders to enforce national recommendations on the roles assigned to both indigenous and exotic languages. Inclusion of African languages would enhance inclusion of their speakers in socio-cultural and economic development which leads to sustainable development. Zimbabweans should take a leaf from the English who developed their language to what it is today against the backdrop of Latin and French languages. Indigenous people should adjust, appreciate and assimilate development within their cultural and environmental settings. Such development would be all-inclusive, rewarding and owned by all and finally permeates to the global village.

Although a majority of Zimbabweans is changing attitudes in favour of the use of indigenous languages, many have inhibited feelings of fear of change. It is appreciated that any change brings about discomforts but sustainability is hinged on change as a constant. Time is now for unlocking language forts so that African languages can convey high status knowledge and technology. The Global Political Agreement for political inclusion in Zimbabwe should serve as a beacon to illuminate linguistic inclusion. Linguistic inclusiveness would create opportunity to tap on the indigenous knowledge base of the Zimbabwean people. Roy-Campbell (2006:5) maintains, 'It is the interface between local knowledge and global scientific knowledge, each

drawing on the other, which can effect sustainable adaptation to changing natural and socio-economic environments.' Local indigenous knowledge is pivotal to empowering communities to combat marginalisation, poverty and impoverishment. In the global village, valuable knowledge must be recorded , shared and or improved upon without the original ratifiers' presence hence the need to reduce all Zimbabwean indigenous languages into writing so as to tap from all socio-linguistic and   cultural environments for the posterity of Zimbabwean linguistic treasure and sustenance of the nation in toto.

Industries and companies, promotional programmes could promote the use of indigenous languages and even play a significant role in exporting these languages through their products of trade. If competitions culminate into scientific publications in African languages, there is definitely going to be an increased chance of valuing Zimbabwean indigenous languages even on the global language market and economic arena. At this juncture, most Zimbabwean companies are struggling to meet basic requirements like paying workers' wages and salaries so; promotional programmes though attractive, may not receive financial backing. Experts from different fields would need to work in liaison with linguists so that proper rules are followed in engineering and elaborating the languages for formal domains of communication. Linguists, economists and politicians are challenged to work in synergy so that national development plans are synchronised with language issues for the total empower-ment of Zimbabweans. If symposia on developments in technology could also be held and communicated in indigenous languages and held in community halls they could be crowd pullers and highly effective in global mobilisation for acceptance of African languages in sustainable development.

Zimbabwe should take advantage of the tourist resources which attract foreigners and use African languages in international tourism and market the indi-genous languages as relay languages. If tourist guides use mostly the indigenous languages, tourists would learn indigenous languages for their communicative effect. Indigenous languages would then compete as global languages however; guides prefer to use English even to speakers of the same indigenous languages because indigenous languages are seen as unfit for the workplace. A multi-lingual language policy, which lifts the status of indigenous languages to cover scientific and technological discourse without abolishing English, is recommended. English should be retained for its current advantages of being a language of wider communication, which fosters global contacts.

A situation should be avoided whereby indigenous languages empower Zimbabweans to communicate at the local level while excluding them from the global village. African languages should be propelled to compete in transmitting knowledge and important information on the global market . The article proposes a situation whereby there is unity in diversity acknowledging the Marxist view of viewing languages as economic resources with attributes comparable to minerals, water and land. It is the recommendation of this discussion that empowerment of the indigenous languages should not translate into exclusion of English or other non-African languages. Such a scenario would bring about reverse discrimination, which is a bad practice and against the principles of sustainable development.

The level of development of the English language should actually serve to illuminate and challenge the heights to which Zimbabwean African languages can be developed. Multilingualism is seen, as enhancing linguistic inclusiveness which promotes and upholds the principles of sustainable development. Linguistic inclusiveness would complement political inclusion and facilitate socio-economic empowerment favourable for the eradication of poverty, racial, ethnic and gender inequalities and inequities culminating in sustainable development. If "chimurenga " is the catchy word for bringingabout transformation in Zimbabwe, then Zimbabweans should gear themselves up for a Forth Chimurenga targeted at linguistic inclusion for global sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

It has been established in the above discussion that language is pivotal to sustainable development. Acknowledging that education plays a significant role in changing people's attitudes and in training them for the workplace, it has been maintained that sustainable development is possible when the masses are included through education for sustainable development. Mothertongue instruction quickly translates into educa-tion for sustainable development.Proper positioning of African languages should enable the Zimbabwean government to combat disease, eradicate poverty, illiteracy and marginalisation by unlocking key positions and windows of opportunity currently blocking a majority from the global information grid. The paper has also presented challenges that may confront Zimbabwe. However, it maintains that sustainable development can only be possible when all the languages of the country play their roles in all sectors of development.

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