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# LANGUAGE ENGINEERING

AND THE DESTINY OF MAN IN AFRICA

CHARLES OGBULOGO

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# LANGUAGE ENGINEERING

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## **Synopsis**

Perhaps, the greatest challenge of the modern world is at the instance of language. This view could explain the connection between language use and the tragedies of World War II as well as the many instances of genocide in Africa-c.f. Lederer, (1991) and Wariboko, (2008). This connection reflects the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis of Language and Cultural Relativity. The hypothesis feeds into the heritage of Intercultural Pedagogy, World Studies and Cultural Studies as allies of Global Education which has been enunciated by the UNESCO. The interventionist strategies of these interrelated fields of study address issues of identity, intergroup relations, as well as those of social and political consciousness for the purpose of promoting knowledge, attitude, competences and skills required for responsible living in the modern world. The demand for responsible living using the instrumentality of language relates to the process of Language Engineering. The aim of the broad field of language engineering is to recreate our world through imaginative thinking. This reinvention is an aspect of the destiny of a people.

Destiny, as pointed out by Fillmore, (1981), is that goal towards which man's conscious thoughts and efforts propel him. Hallen (2002), reflecting on the exegesis of the African hermeneutics, argues that destiny encapsulates the people's vision of the world---past, present and future. These expectations bear on the imaginative imperatives of Language Engineering.

Incidentally, the state of affairs in many parts of Africa tends to suggest that very little has been done to incorporate language engineering protocols in handling issues of development. We shall in this presentation, explore how language engineering could be incorporated into the study of language in Africa as a way of repositioning the continent for competitiveness.

## Introduction

There is no doubt that the topic of this lecture will excite curiosity because of the key concepts ***Language, engineering and destiny***. This curiosity is even accentuated because seated in this auditorium are experts in these dominant themes. Another major cause of curiosity is the apparent nature of language to even the non-professional. But, I am consoled by the assurance by Jacobs and Resentaum (1968) that “most puzzling scientific mysteries are often uncovered when scientists investigate natural phenomena that are taken for granted cf Adetugbo (1984), Ogbulogo (2005). As we progress, we shall see why the topic bears on our corporate existence. Let us begin with this narrative.

*In 1945, Winston Churchill, Harry Truman and Stalin, prominent members of the Allied Forces issued the Potsdam Declaration, to Japan to surrender unconditionally or face the consequences. Ready to consider settlement, the Japanese cabinet offered*

***MOKUSATSU***- which translates as

- *We are considering it, or*
- *We are ignoring it*

*But the English translator on the Donnei News Agency went for “**We are ignoring it**”*

*On August 6, 1945, **Harry Truman** ordered the use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. In just 3 days more than 150 Japanese in Hiroshima and Nagasaki lost their lives, just at the instance of one not Good word **MOKUSATSU**.*

Following the misconceived intransigence of Japan, Russia declared

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war and invaded Manchuria - Lederer (1991:83)

On August 14, 2008 AIT News network, Wariboko, a veteran war reporter pointed out that the recent Rwanda genocide was caused by a 5-minute media reportage of an internal crisis in the country. Elsewhere in the world, wars and events of mass destruction are formented at the instance of language. Even when there appears to be some quietitude, modern states live with undeclared wars captured only in bottled-up emotions which stifle progress. States like modern Israel, Zimbabwe and Sudan have hung on the brinks of undeclared wars or internecine conflicts since their independence There are more than huge pockets of grinding conflicts all over the world, and Africa has a greater chunk. The reality so far highlighted tends to place a great demand on the practice of language engineering. We shall attempt to weave this demand into our treatise.

Consider further the following expressions that have been manipulated:

- **Impaired combatant personnel** – a wounded soldier
- **Collateral damage** – civilian Casualties
- **Ethnic cleansing** – genocide.
- **Racial prejudice** – Nazi's extermination of Jews.
- **Enemy of the people** – identified targets of the ruling class.
- **Benign neglect** – racial segregation against African Americans.
- **Constructive engagement** – doing business as usual with the apartheid South Africa.
- **Discrimination with extreme prejudice** – used by the C.I.A. for the assassination of radical opponents in other countries.
- **Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)** – the possible annihilation of the entire world through the inter-continental ballistic missiles of Peter Wright – of the *Spycatcher* fame as reflected in Kukoyi (1997).

Perhaps the greatest challenges of the modern world are at the instance of language. This understanding may explain the great coincidence between the topic of this lecture and what that legendary novelist and essayist, Chinua Achebe (1975) had done in his *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. He has in that seminal book the title “Language and the Destiny of Man” where he discussed the creative force of language as well as its influence on mankind. What appears not to have been highlighted has been the place of language in handling the challenge of modern development in Africa. There was also no conscious attempt to explain destiny as a progressive effort to position man or the race for a desired future. This should be expected since Achebe's approach was literary. He also touched on the power of propaganda and the deceit of the unsuspecting. He captured the myth of the African society and attributed all things to the ancestors who still have a dominant hold on the present. But is that really the case today?

### **Africa in the World System**

A casual traveller across the world will be amazed by the quanta of information about even minor countries in other parts of the world, except Africa. To many people in Latin America and the archipelagoes around that region, Africa is the idealized source of their ancestors. To the big industrialists in the Northern hemisphere, and of late in Asia, Africa is a huge market for exploitation and even for dumping. To the average child in continental Europe or the U.S, Africa may just be a village or a dark spot on the globe. But to us, here gathered, where is Africa?

There are usually many stories of woes about Africa. But, in the beginning, it was not so! Or, how else can we explain the glory of the pristine Africa? Africa used to be described as the “Golden continent”, cf Andrews (2000). Africa is also rich in diamonds, bauxite, manganese, vanadium, lithium, platinum, uranium,



petroleum etc. There is absolutely no mineral that is not found in abundance in Africa. From the insights provided by Ashimolowo (2007), part of the facts about Africa are presented below:

- Africa, the richest continent but inhabited by the poorest of the world. Of the 25 poorest countries of the world, 22 are in Africa.
- More Blacks die from the bullets of fellow Blacks in New York, Johannesburg, Lagos or Nairobi.
- Blacks occupy slum cities, whether in the Caribbeans, Los Angeles, Australia, Haiti, Uganda or in Nigeria
- Africa imports almost everything from toothpicks, toilet rolls, computers, cars and power generating sets
- Africa, by 1999, owed international money lenders \$313billion, almost triple of the total exports of all African nations. The \$25billion debt relief earmarked for Africa could only service the debts for just one year.

Most of the troubled spots in the world in terms of wars are also in Africa. Africa is the second-largest and second most populous continent of the world. In 2009, the population of the continent was put at about one billion, accounting for about 15% of the world's population. There are 54 fully recognized sovereign counties and three *de facto* states which have limited recognition.

The geographical positioning of Africa, which stretches across the Northern and Southern temperate zones, crossing numerous climatic areas makes the continent conducive for every imaginable economic activity. This advantage has the potential for a huge industrial organization. The continent is also reputed to be the cradle of human life and civilization. From the earliest records of life on earth and the sophistication of the Egyptian civilization, both linked to the area around Lake Victoria in East Africa and the Nile in Egypt and Sudan, an advanced form of life has been established.

Beyond the dynamics of colonialism and the over-orchestrated

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counter development impulse, it should also be noted that Africa is the most multilingual continent of the world. According to the UNESCO (2008) estimates, Africa has well over 4,000 languages most of which are indigenous. The four dominant language families of Africa are:

**i.        *The Khoisan*** languages which constitute the smallest phylum are about fifty and are spoken by about 120,000 people in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The best surviving language in the group is *Nama*, also referred to as the *Hottentot language*.

**ii.        *The Nilo-Saharan Phylum***

Languages within the *Nilo-Saharan* phylum are spoken in the interior of Africa, from Mali in the West to Egypt, the Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, on the East Coast. These languages, which number about 140, with a population of speakers of about 11million are surrounded by either Afro-Asiatic or Niger-Congo languages. There is a high potential for interference.

The best known languages in this phylum are *Kanuri*, Luo, Nubian, Maasai and Songhai. They are spoken in fifteen African countries - Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya Tanzania, Zaire, Uganda, Egypt, Chad, Central African Republic, Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and some spill overs in Algeria, Lybia and Cameroon cf Bendor Samuel (2000), in Heine and Nurse (2000).

**(iii)    *The Afro-Asiatic Phylum***

As the name implies, languages in *the Afro-Asiatic Phylum* are spoken both within and outside Africa. There are six major families within the Afro-Asiatic phylum, including the Chadic, Egyptian, Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic languages. These languages are located within the North of the continent. Tanzania represents the only country in the South of the Equator where these languages are spoken.

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Afro-Asiatic languages are spoken in Egypt (Ancient Egyptian) Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Senegal (Berber) Chad, Niger, *Nigeria*, Ghana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Togo, Benin, (Chadic) West Ethiopia, Northern Kenya (Omotic), Somalia, Ethiopia Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania (Cushitic) and North Africa. Hausa, a West Chadic language spoken by about 39 million people, is in this phylum. It is a *lingua franca* or a second language in a substantial part of West Africa. The most influential dialect is the Kano variety which has formed the basis for its official orthography. According to Blench (2002), other well-known Chadic languages are Ngas, Geomai, Mwaghavul, Bole, Ngizim, Bade and Bachama.

There are also, in the North East of Nigeria and the Cameroons, Central Chadic language such as Bura, Higi and Marghi. Many of these Chadic languages have been influenced by Arabic in both phonology and orthography. Within the Yobe region, the Hausa script has been modified in an Arabic form known as *ajami* which in the Romanized official orthography is known as *boko*, introduced for the first time by the British in the 1930's – cf Blench (1998).

With the wide varieties of diversities in African languages and across well established ethnic and sub-national lines, there is the need for creativity in leadership and in all spheres of development. Incidentally, that does not seem to be the case.

**(Iv) The Niger-Congo** family is predominant in most of the Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated to be the largest language family in the world in terms of diversity. It has a cluster of about 1,436 spoken by about 380 million people. Prominent in this family are Wolof (in Senegal), Fulfulde in (West and Central African regions). Others are Mandingo, Bambara, Akan, Yoruba, Igbo, Sango and a number of Bantu languages including Tiv (in Nigeria). This family comprises the sub-groups of Mande, Atlantic-Congo and the Kordofanian. The Atlantic-Congo languages include the Atlantic, Volta-Congo, the Ijoid,

the Kru, New Kwa, New Benue-Congo; the Dogon, Gur and the Adamawa Ubangi sub-groups. Many languages in this family are spoken in Nigeria. Mande is represented by Busa, spoken in the Kainji area. Fulfude represents the Atlantic. New Kwa is represented by the Egun cluster, spoken around Lagos and parts of Benin Republic. The Gur cluster is noted in the Bariba or Batonnun language of Kwara State. Within the Adamawa-Ubangi group, we have the Mumuye, Koma and Gbaya languages spoken around Yola.

Among the New Benue-Congo languages, we have Ogori, Akpes and Ukaan spoken around the Edo-Delta – Ondo, Kogi and Kwara intersections in Nigeria. Other sub-groups and the Edoid, Nupoid, Idomoid, Igboid, Platoid and the Bantoid. Others are the Yoruboid, Akokoid and the Cross-River sub-family. The Cross-River sub-group bifurcates into Bendi and Delta-Cross. From the Delta-Cross cluster we have the Central Delta, Ogoni, Lower Cross and Upper Cross sub-clusters.

It is within this area that the Akokoid languages are spoken. The closest relative of the Akokoid group are the Yoruboid languages which are represented by Yoruba, Igala and Itsekiri. The Edoid group is located in Edo State while the Nupoid group is found as Nupe in the Niger-Benue confluence. The Idomoid group consists of Idoma and its related languages on the sides of River Benue and a number of related languages spoken around the Benue zone.

It should be noted that the suffix *-oid* added to language groups as Edoid, Idomoid. Igboid and Yoruboid, is a conventional way to accommodate related languages. This practice which has been used in the entries in this work has been motivated by Williamson (1988), Ruhlen (1991), Igboid is made up of Igbo and other related languages close to Idomoid and Yoruboid.

The Bandi branch of the Cross River group includes such languages as Bekwara and Bokyi in Northern Cross River. Languages within the Delta Cross are Loke, Mbembe, Efik, Ibibio. Anaang as well as such

other languages as Obolo or Andoni. The Ogoni group accommodates, Kana, Gokana and Eleme while the Central Delta includes Abua, Odua, Ogbia, Kugbo, Bukuma, Obulo etc.

The Platoid complex extends across the northern boundary of Benue-Congo and has such branches as the Kainji, Tarokoid and Jukunoid. The Kainji group includes Kambari (spoken around Kainji Lake) and Central Platoid (containing many small languages around Jos and Southern kaduna State). Tarokoid comprises Tarok and a number of languages east of Jos. Jukunoid is spoken on both sides of the Benue. Included in the Niger-Congo phylum is the Bantoid group which has its major Nigerian representative as the Tivoid with Tiv as the major language.

This state of affairs calls for social engineering with language engineering as a major component. This will be even more profitable when we know who Africans are.

### **The Expanded African family**

Though humanity has been categorized according to physical structure relating to skin, hair, nose and cheek configurations, a great deal of emphasis is placed on language typology in determining cultural relatedness. The major peoples of the world are categorized into Caucasians (White), Mongolians (Yellow), Amerinds (Red) and Negroids (Black). Among the Negro peoples, we have the Sudanic, the Bantu, the Hamitic, the Melanesians, the Bushmen and Hottentots as well as the Pygmies and the Negroids. If we must go beyond the catographer's imagination in a map shaped like a gun, our analysis of Africa must reflect all Black peoples of the World.

**(I) *Sudanic Negroes***, These were originally perceived to be the inhabitants of the “country of the Blacks”. According to the Arabic “Bilad-el-Sudan” and as reported by Thompson (1995), these are considered to be the prototype of the modern version of the Negro race.

Without being embroiled in the controversy of filial-genetic association, and especially in the light of the plastic nature of the European partitioning of Africa, we shall be guided in the presentation of the Sudanic peoples by the insight provided by Thompson (1995). Following this model, the Sudanic Negroes are located around the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator. They are found in the present day Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Sudan and Togo.

**(ii) *Bantu Negroes***

“Bantu” as a lexical item was first used by the German philologist, Wilhelm Bleek (1851) when he described the common resemblance among the languages spoken by Africans between Latitude 4<sup>0</sup>N and the Cape of Good Hope in Southern Africa. According to him, *BA* means *Man* while *NTU* means a *thing* or *person*. A number of prefixes can be added to *NTU* as the root to yield a variety of structures – as in *KaNTU* – a little thing; *tUNTU*-little things. Bantu, as a word means *MEN*. The Bantu are found in Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**(iii) *Hamitic Negroes***

The reality of Hamitic Negroes establishes the connection between contemporary research and Biblical facts. Following the very incisive works by Powell (1930) and Constance (1995), Hamitic Negroes are linked to the descendants of the Biblical Ham, one of the three sons of Noah. Indeed, Ham has been reported to be the father of Cush (Ethiopia). The other children were Phut (Libya) and Mizram (Egypt) and of course Canan, who begat the Jews. Jewish traditions hold Ham as the relics of the lost tribes of Israel. Hamitic Negroes

inhabit the present locations in East Africa where they are referred to as Nilotic Negroes (reflective of the Nile River basin dwellings). In specific terms, Hamitic Negroes are found in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia. This group comprises such sub-groups as the Nilotic Negroes, Amharics, Semitic Negroes as well as the Arabialized Negroes as the Danakils and the Fulani (Fullahs).

**(iv) *Melanesians***

The origin of the term ***Melanesian*** is the Greek word *melanin* which means “black”. The term is used to describe the ***epidermis*** of the group of people in South Pacific Ocean Islands of New Hebrides, Fiji, Santa Cruz, New Guinea, New Caledonia, the Louisiades, the Solomons, the Loyalty Islands, and the Bismark Arhipelago. The languages of these islands have been found to relate to many African languages. Many more are creoles. It should be pointed out that Creoles and Pidgin languages are common in some African countries, including Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principé, Cape Verde Islands, etc.

**(v) *Bushmen and Hottentots***

Bushmen live mainly in the bush instead of the towns. They are found in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. They are usually noted for their diminutive height of about 1.56m (5ft) and their slanting eyes just like the Mongolian. They are also described as the *Damara* (in Namibia) *Ngami* (in Zambia), and *Ovambo* (in Angola). The term, *Bushmen*, derived from the Dutch *Basjeman*, as the Boer description of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Cape District – cf Smith (2000).

The name, Hottentots reflect a linguistic reality. Following the insights provided by Powell (1930) and Thompspon (1995), the Dutch settlers in South Africa described their hosts as Hottentots because of the clicks and the stammering elements in their languages. It has also been found that Hottentots are a cross breed of Hamitic, Bantu and Bushmen races of Africa.

**(vi) Pygmies**

Pygmies have been described as the survivors of the aboriginal black inhabitants of Africa, India, Australia and the submerged Indo-African continents in pre-historical times. African pygmies are referred to as *Negrillos* while Oceanic pygmies are referred to as *Negritos*. The term *pygmy* derived from the Greek, *pygmai*, a word for the “length of the bone of an average man from the elbow to the knuckles” – see Thomson (1995:23).

From this observation one can explain the average height of the Negrillo – 1.25m (4ft 6 inches). African pygmies are found among the Niam-Niam and

the peoples of the upper Nile, the Bambutes of the Ituri Forest (Zaire), the Baturas of the Congo area, and in many other locations as the Afifio, Obongo, Wochua, Akua, Achango and Bayoyo groups.

**(vii) Negroids**

Negroids appear to be the products of hybridization between White and Black races. The colour pigmentation is not purely negro, Negroids are found in Southern India, Srilanka, Ceylon, Australia, Madagascar (the Malayo Melanesians), Micronesia and Polynesia (i.e the Melano-Polynesians).

Tamils are the negroids found in Sri Lanka. Micronesians (from the Greek words Mikros-*small* and Nesoi-*islands*) is a term for the group of islands around the pacific Ocean. They are Gilbert and Ellice Islands (comprising 37 islands). Others include

|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| Pelew Islands    | (26 islands)  |
| Mariana Islands  | (15 islands)  |
| Marshall Islands | (33 islands)  |
| Caroline Islands | (500 islands) |

It is curious to note that many of the aboriginal peoples are dying off with their languages. The last aboriginal inhabitants of Tasmania died in 1876 – cf Darwin (1890).



Other Negro Groups are found in Anguilla, Antigua, Amba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Bonaire, Brazil, Canada, Cayman Islands, chile, Colombo, Common Wealth of Puerto Rico, costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, French Guyana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatumela, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Monsterrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Peraguay, Saba, St. Eustatius, St. Kitt's Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Martin, St. Vincent, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, the United States of America, Venezuela and Virgin Islands.

The Negro populations outlined above do not include the different degrees of hybridization and miscegenation that have occurred along the line. In Nicaragua, Panama, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname, Uruguay, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica as well as Trinidad and Tobago, there are great numbers of people of mixed blood between Negroes and Whites. Unfortunately, the political arrangements of these countries tend to disadvantage the full blooded Negro. In Jamaica, for instance, the slave masters created the consciousness that the less dark the pigmentation, the higher the social status. To enforce this additional scheme of segregation, the Jamaican authorities, following Taylor (2000) identified the following classification. It is also reflected in Ashimolowo (2007 p.163-164).

| S/N | Category and Description                     | Black          | White           |
|-----|--|----------------|-----------------|
| 1   | Negro – child of a Negro and a Negro         | 1              | 0               |
| 2   | Mulato – child of a White and a Negro        | $\frac{1}{2}$  | $\frac{1}{2}$   |
| 3   | Samb – child of a Mulato and a Negro         | $\frac{3}{4}$  | $\frac{1}{4}$   |
| 4   | Quadroon – child of a White and a Mulato     | $\frac{3}{4}$  | $\frac{1}{4}$   |
| 5   | Mustee – child of White and a Quadroon       | $\frac{1}{8}$  | $\frac{7}{8}$   |
| 6   | Mustifino – child of a White and a Mustee    | $\frac{1}{16}$ | $\frac{15}{16}$ |
| 7   | Quintroon – child of a White and a Mustifino | $\frac{1}{32}$ | $\frac{31}{32}$ |
| 8   | Octoroon – child of a White and a Quintroon  | $\frac{1}{64}$ | $\frac{63}{64}$ |

Source Ashimolowo, (2007: 163-164)

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The African has been on the receiving end of world history. The African has accepted the reclassification into the *Third World*, which, according to Munroe (2002), is a function of the use of knowledge. This knowledge bears centrally to the issues of language.

The situation in Africa fits into the description of *anomy*, a term coined by the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim. Anomy refers further to the absence of all the conditions necessary for man to achieve his full potential and contribute to the joy of his society. The necessary conditions will naturally be governed by norms which form an integrated and non-conflicting processes, the aim of which is to set the limits of comfort attainable in life. There is the loss of the moral bearing, moral roots and moral checks at both the individual and corporate levels. A state of anomy manifests conflicts between value systems such that there will be “stress, anxieties, the deterioration of values and standards and the disintegration of values at large” cf Nnolim (2002 P:82.)

This situation has been aptly captured by Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* – where Aiyero is presented as exploited and denigrated by the profiteering elite. Indeed, Mazrui (2007), in characterizing African leaders along historical lines has identified charismatic, mobilization, reconciliation, housekeeping, patriarchal, personalistic, monarchical strands in their operations. Only very few have been categorized as technocratic and these mainly serve at the level of vice-president and cabinet members.

The descriptions tend to emphasize styles, rather than goals of leadership. Whereas, early African leaders qualify as liberation leaders, not many have progressed into the rank of leaders of development and transformation. Thus, they have affected the destiny of Africa in more ways than one. Other causes of the challenge of Africa, according to Ashimolowo (2007), include “demonic disunity, civil wars, witchcraft, perversion, oppression, defeat, low self-esteem, male irresponsibility, brainwashing, distorted family values, slavery, colonialism, apartheid, racism, sexploitation, dependency syndrome, uncontrolled migration, faulty educational system”, etc. All these derive from a more tragic consequence of idolatry, when Nimrod, the initiator of the construction of the Tower of Babel, began to construct “the gate of the gods” – see Rowlinson as in Fauset (1984).

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The world has been affected in history by the contributions of Africans – including Nimrod (that initiated the Tower of Babel), Pharaoh Ahmose (the Black Egyptian ruler who overthrew the Semitic dynasty and thus introduced the dynasty of the pharaoh who did not know Joseph), Ramases II (the Pharaoh under whom Israel left Egypt), Zipporah , (the Ethiopian wife of Moses), Simon of Cyrene (who bore the cross of Jesus), Simon the Niger (who took part in the ordination of Paul). *Niger* derived from the Ethiopian word for black –deriving from *negric*, *negrillo*, *negrito*, *negros*, *negro*, *nigger*).

Africans in history have recorded remarkable achievements in inventions, architecture and agriculture. The contributions of Africa to writing and counting systems have also been recorded, cf Constance (1975), Ashimolowo (2007). But whatever progress has been recorded has not been sustained. One major reason is the absence of a corpus-based approach and the reliance on human memory.

### **The Path of Recovery – Destiny re-defined**

Thompson (1995), has graphically described the condition of Africa as that of a people who have missed the road to their destination and who have also forgotten their point of origin. This situation could explain why Africa is at the mercy of those who are sure of their source as well as their destination.

The defining location for the glory of Africa, according to historians, has been fixed around the Nile Valley such that most of the continent would seem to have remained as a historical void. Whatever speculations there are, have been received as oral tradition, lores and artifacts. The case of Africa has been compounded by the stories of the two lost continents of *Atlantis* and *Lemuria*, which would have given more credible bits of evidence.

The continent of Atlantis was said to have subsided in a series of violent volcanic eruptions that lasted many years. The last was speculated to have taken place in 9,564BC. The Lemuria continent was also speculated to have submerged in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Lemuria was speculated to have contained a much larger expanse of land that naturally would have belonged to Africa. The remaining chunk was described as Indo-Africa, cf Powell (1930) and

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Thompson (1975). I shall leave the rest of this geographical excavation to experts in the field. For now, let us explore issues related to language and the destiny of man.

African development has often been alleged to depend on the mirage of the wholesale importation of technology. Indeed, as Wande Abimbola, quoted in Nnolim (2002) would argue, appropriate technology should be a direct outcome of the values and norms of the society. These values and norms are nurtured in the humanities. In a scientific metaphor, Abimbola argues that “like the female, the humanities conceive and give birth to the male child, called technology. It is the mother's duty to nurture the child to maturity. Science and technology must be seen as children of the humanities.

Abimbola's submissions are intended to reinforce the belief shared by Eruvbetine (2002) that poetry would save the society. Poetry as meant here is literature in general, which is a by-product of language, an engineered component of communication. The point appears to have been canvassed by Magwa and Mubasa (2007) that our technological advancement may continually be a pipe dream except we indigenize our technological language. That to me is at the core of Language Engineering.

“Destiny”, derives from Latin and French words – *destinere* and *destine* respectively, both of which mean “to appoint” Therefore, following Fillmore (1981), destiny is that goal towards which a man's own conscious thoughts and efforts are propelling him. Similarly, Hallen (2002), explains destiny from the vantage point of African hermeneutics as the constellation of the people's vision of the world – which represents their past, their present and their future. It is also an angle through which the people re-create their identity and interpret or reinvent traditions over the passage of time – p. 64. Oyedepo (2006), describes destiny as that plan which God has made for man, including the African. The plan is usually glorious and must be discovered and pursued.

Perhaps, a specific reference point in African history is the period of colonialism where the average African scholar looked at the continent as oppressed and underdeveloped with the citizens struggling for more justice and equality-Okolo (1991:208). The use of the word

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“struggling” is conscious because the reinterpretation of African Destiny must be focused. Therefore, in agreement with Hallen's (2002) charge, Africans must begin to regain the sense of being in control of their societies and must be prepared to understand these societies on their own terms – appropriating the benefits of the world heritage through the mechanisms of African culture. This must be the culture communicated to the greatest majority of the people. Herein lies the critical role of language in shaping the destiny of man. It is possible to argue that the vast majority of developmental agenda for Africa have not succeeded because of the failure to link them up with issues of language. Though we shall be dwelling on Africa, we shall also incorporate insights from other parts of the world. We shall be guided in this study by the long established Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of language and cultural relativity. We shall link it to the more recent theories of Word Studies and Cultural Studies. The conscious use of language to shape destiny, as we shall soon see, is related to language engineering.

### **Towards a re-interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and the heritage of intercultural pedagogy**

It might be curious that reference is still being made to that profound statement made by Edward Sapir (1916) and Lee Whorf (1956) even now. It was a statement to the effect that language and cultural reality are greatly intertwined. This nexus may not be any truer than it is in the African context. Indeed, following Neubeck and Glasherg (2005), it is within culture that the prevailing knowledge or “facts” of a given society are established. It is also within the culture that the beliefs and assumptions about a given world and how things work or ought to work in the world are established. It is also within the culture that values which define important customs and rituals as well as symbols are explained. These elements consist of the material culture of the society – and which find expression in the physical artifacts, - such as the flag, dressing, housing, transportation, technology and the general ways of living.

There are also elements of the non-material culture – the history, values, aspirations and other forms of behaviour. It also includes the individual vision of social reality. Berger and Luckmann

(1999) argue that it is *language* that holds the key to the abstractions of these elements of non-material culture. It is also through language that members of the society have access to experience and history beyond their own immediate time and place. Thus, language is known to fulfill three main functions:

- describing the world;
- creating or constructing individuals' vision of the social reality; and
- providing the vehicle for the challenges and changes of the social reality.

Central to these three functions is the challenge of creating positive imagination. Indeed, it is that imagination that connects with destiny to launch a people unto another platform. Therefore, the whole essence of the Sapir-Whorf-hypothesis in our current thinking is to explain how language shapes imagination. Even more fundamental, and in accordance with the ideas canvassed earlier by Herskovits (1972), and as quoted by Ashimolowo (2007), is the understanding that the life of a group including their imagination and aspiration will be relevant to their background. Every evaluation of behaviour has to be along the lines of the culture. It is from the evaluation that liberation can start. Indeed, “no people can be free so long as they look to others for deliverance” – cf Lurie quoted in Ashimolowo (2007:10). Let us probe a little deeper into the dynamics of language as a process of self discovery.

### **The Heritage of Intercultural Pedagogy**

It is no longer enough to terminate language studies just at the mastery of linguistic structures and concepts. There is the additional challenge of intercultural communicative competence. Two new interrelated disciplines – *Cultural Studies* and *World Studies* have been found to be useful in this regard. – cf Byram (1989) and Opara (2000). Cultural Studies according to Byram (1989) would normally provide an intersection between language and culture with the aim of highlighting issues of social identity, intergroup relations, social and political institutions etc.

World Studies, an aspect of the Global Education initiative

taken by the UNESCO is intended to enlighten the student on such issues as globalization, starvation, suppression, environmental degradation, terrorism and thus promote knowledge, attitude, competences and skills required for responsible living in the modern world. Language skills will easily be integrated into these requirements. To achieve these and more, we have recourse to *Language Engineering*. The purpose is to re-create our world through imaginative thinking.

### **Language and the Challenge of Imagination**

At the centre of the nexus of knowledge in philosophy, psychology, politics, and linguistics, among other endeavours, is language. To the philosopher, the link between knowledge and language is provided by epistemology. The psychologist is concerned with the nature of the connection holding between cognitive development and language. This can be expressed by the critical role language plays in the acquisition of knowledge. The linguist on the other hand concentrates on the structure of human language and how this structure impacts on our interpretation of the mechanism of thought in the world. This need has been expressed by Wunderlich (1979:24) when he argued that

*Language is a precondition for consciousness.*

*Language is the form in which consciousness develops during social life and in which discursive concepts and the thought processes that develop them (i.e cognitive activities) emerge.*

This connectivity has been elaborated upon by Halliday (1978). According to him, when a child learns a language, he learns other things about the world around him. These other things are the issues of life that will aid survival. Therefore, the child is building up a picture of the reality around him. Thus, language becomes the embodiment of his knowledge base from which *wisdom* and the realization of destiny derives. It has been aptly observed by Oyedepo (2006) that

imagination, as a vital key to success helps us to form the mental picture we desire. The African needs very fertile imagination to maximize destiny.

The central position of politics for instance has been summarized in the often quoted expression:

*“Man is a political animal”*

This has been modified by Ranciere (2004),

*“Man is a political animal because he is a literary animal who lets himself be directed from his natural purpose by the power of words”*

As interpreted by Akere (1998), language as acquired knowledge in the context of a culture opens the way to social reality. Language from this perspective goes beyond a collection of sentences or utterances. It incorporates texts and bits of discourses with the potential for shared meaning for the purpose of understanding. We can elaborate on the imaginative role of language by making reference to its cognitive dimension. George (1962) defines cognition as the way people perceive, reason, think and learn. It also includes how they imagine and remember. It encompasses how the mind works in everyday life.

The argument can be extended to philosophers. Magee (1978:184), following in the steps of Wittgenstein reasons that:

*in investigating language, we are  
investigating the structure of  
experience. Indeed we are  
investigating alternative ways of  
organizing a world and therefore  
alternative ways of living.*

This submission accords with the perception of language as knowledge. This expresses the hidden structure of the brain that predisposes people to understand one another and operate within their social milieu. Wittgenstein (1953) argues further that language should be taken as that tool that penetrates our lives and our activities every time. To him, words are like tools and gears that mesh with the rest of our behaviour. Interestingly, Popper (1973:106) has identified the following three functions of language in enhancing our view of life:



Language shows:

- i. the world of the physical objects or state,
- ii. the world of the state of consciousness or the mental state,
- iii. the world of objective contexts of thought, especially scientific and imaginative thoughts, including works of art.

The four critical functions of language are embedded in these words-*expressive*, *signaling* *descriptive* and *argumentative*. It is the descriptive and argumentative functions that separate man from other beasts. It is this power of description that has made understanding possible. It is also this quality that has made possible the distinction between truth and falsehood as well as the development of reason. Following Popper, the evolution of theoretical formulation is possible through the argumentative functions of language.

A new insight into the relationship between language and development has been presented by Adnan (2007). In a blog message that carries a very well researched document, Adnan made an emphatic declaration that language has “played a significant role in the rise and fall of civilizations”, because of the connection between thinking and the power of language. Adnan (2007) further argues that the emphasis a nation places on specific language tools and paradigms derives from the thought processes the nation desires to promote. Following from this submission are two types of language skills – Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

BICS, according to Adnan (2007) ensure that we interact well in the society, deploying appropriate emotional and social underpinnings. CALP is central to the development of the scientific culture. Investments in BICS ensure the basic survival of the society by building cohesion, harmony and fruitful exchange. CALP is required for scientific breakthroughs without which no society can compete in the comity of nations. The need for progression and the integration of both BICS and CALP has consistently featured in the educational blueprints of many developing nations, including Nigeria. The critical challenge has remained implementation.

Obanya (2000), thinking in retrospect about the false starts of

the promise of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria, highlights the need for this level of education to form “the roots for literacy and numeracy as well as the inculcation of life skills, moral and civic values-“ cf Ogbulogo (2012b). Basic Education should also form the basis for lifelong learning – a prelude to the development of CALP. This point has been made more emphatic by the reference to the experience of Thailand in advocating among other things, that Basic Education should equip learners with the ability for analytical and synthentic thinking to be able to make sound judgment in creative ways. This demands that our students should be trained to develop a sense of vision, with the power to predict future outcomes and engage in problem solving.

### **Engaging the Dynamics of Language Engineering**

What may be vestigially regarded as aspects of Language Engineering (LE) appeared as early as the 1960's, especially with the development of applications software utilizing Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques-as in *Systran* the first major commercial Machine Translation (MT) system. Incidentally, that has remained the real practice of LE began in the 1990's. The term, originally coined by Mitkov (1995), at the instance of the Eponymous Funding Programme of the European Commission (EC), has been described by the EC as having successfully promoted a shift in linguistic practice.

Indeed, LE which has encouraged a shift from long-term research projects to more urgent, feasible and industrially relevant research activities. Such research projects must target market opportunities in the short term.

Among the numerous reasons for instituting programmes of LE are:

- Advances in computer hardware which have increased processor speeds and memory capacity at affordable prices.
- A wide range of large-scale language-related on-line resources in the form of designer corpora, dictionaries and thesauri.
- The expanding demand for electronic text processes-thus emphasizing the essence of multi-lingual communication
- Higher levels of accuracy with more reliable Natural Language

processing technology – cf Cunnigham (1999).

As a result of the wide range of potential for LE, it can be described as ubiquitous. In a restricted sense, it denotes any of the wide range of computer procedures applied to human languages. From this angle, LE will appear to relate to Computational Linguistics (CL) and Natural Language Processing (NLP).

Natural Language processing is that branch of computer science the aim of which is to study computer systems for the purpose of processing natural languages across major domains. Major components of NLP include the development of algorithms for parsing, generation and acquisition of linguistic knowledge; the investigation of the time and space complexity of the algorithm so developed as well as the design of computationally useful formal language etc. It should be pointed out that NLP does not necessarily explore the nature of the human mind, and may not necessarily tie in with the pursuit of destiny.

Computational Linguistics, on the other hand is the science of the human language using computer facilities. The objective is to enhance the observation of or the experiment with language, using computer skills. To that extent, the greater domain of CL concentrates on the theoretical explication of linguistic data just as would traditional linguistics.

To appreciate the essence of LE, we shall explore the nature of the two components of the phrase – ***Language*** and ***Engineering***. Language is generally understood as a communicative system, operating with text and speech, to express thoughts, ideas, feelings, attitudes and cultural reality, - cf Ogbulogo (2004). Engineering, according to Shaw and Garlan (1996), relates to the creation of cost-effective solutions to practical problems. This, it does by employing scientific knowledge – involving a rigorous set of development methods – cf Brown (1989). Science, on its own, is concerned with identifying how the world works such that new knowledge is created. In creating this new knowledge, science relies on observation, experimentation, measurement and the formulation of laws. It is with these laws that science describes the observed facts in general terms. The engineer, using the laws provided by science, creates systems with which to achieve desired goals.

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If we extend this argument, we can link science to the nature of theoretical linguistics – emphasizing detailed analyses of language components. These components are studied at different levels – sounds (phonetics and phonology), words (morphology and lexis) phrases, clauses and sentences, (syntax), and meaning in general (semantics). Language Engineering will naturally fit into the applied domain of linguistics with a very wide range of connectivities.

It may be safe at this juncture to characterize LE as the application of scientific principles to the “design, construction and maintenance” of the tools to handle information expressed in natural languages. These tools range from computer systems, dictionaries, thesauri, style sheets to language teaching modules, etc. Indeed, anything involving the application of the science of language to the solution of issues of practical essence qualifies as language engineering. From the perspectives of professional linguists, including Ansre (1974), Haugen (1983) and Emenanjo (1988), Language Engineering, also referred to as Language Modernization is concerned with the over-all development of a language so as to position it for use in more functional ways for the economy, science and technology. It is useful in language development, language treatment, language maintenance and language loyalty. cf– Emenanjo (1988:19).

The sole purpose of Language-Engineering is to discover the real essence of the WORD, as is meant at creation. The original word, even among the Greeks, is LOGOS which is another name for *God*. The word principle combining the attributes of “Sophia” illuminates that critical unity encompassing the rich spectrum of the entire human experience. Even quite recently, Marguis Saint-Yves d'Alveydne harps on the “Omnific word”, the Divine, all-creating principle which gives rise to “Sophia” – as in philosophy, (the love of wisdom). These insights will tend to situate our present treatise within the dominant assignment of the re-engineering of language in Africa. This will incorporate aspects of Transformational Thinking and the task of the African Linguist.

We shall ultimately harp on paradigm shifts in Language curricula

Indeed, philosophy synthesizes all branches of the sciences,

the humanities and even technology. Though I shall not step onto theology, it will suffice to harp on the essence of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where at the 7<sup>th</sup> canto, reference is made to the expression “the begotten Son through whom all things spoken were performed”

It is the word-which is expanded as language that separates man from beasts. It is language that springs forth that creative force. No wonder Lord Tennyson had to poeticize it by saying that “man's word is God in man”. Kukoyi (1997), drawing from the synthesis of ideas, has reasoned that the human will which naturally should reflect Divine Presence can turn ugly if it is not constantly watched by the source of expression. Herein lies the need to cultivate the African mind for purposeful declaration.

### **Towards the re-engineering of Language in Africa**

Africa, like Nigeria, fits into what Emenanjo (1990) describes as a classical multilingual mosaic, with major and minority languages existing side-by-side. Just as we have observed earlier in this presentation, the multiplicity of languages in Africa are represented in four main phyla. From a purely sociolinguistic perspective, and drawing from Prah (2001) and Ogbulogo (2001), experts have linked African languages with the following myths:

- The unwieldy nature of African languages precludes them from any meaningful development
- Political instability and ethnic rivalry will always prevent the emergence of mega languages in Africa.
- African languages lack the sophistication and finesse to express modern thoughts in logic, science and technology.
- There are no established literary standards in African languages
- It will be very expensive to develop African languages
- Africans are not interested in working in their languages.

It is not difficult to identify the illogicality of each of these myths. Indeed, there is no language that cannot carry the weight of any discipline. This fact is substantiated by the felicity of the translation

of the *Bible* and other amplications of the scripture. After all, the *Bible* captures every aspect of human existence. We have also attempted to do this in the medical field with my modest contribution in a Dictionary of Medicine. – cf Ogbulogo (2005). Language development is at the instance of people. What is required is the investment of the necessary social, economic and political inputs. These will be reinforced by the relevant philosophical and ideological commitment, – cf Prah (2001).

The myth of the multiplicity of African languages is greatly weakened by the discovery of multiple names for some of these languages. For instance, different authorities, including Crozier and Blench (1992), and the Bible Society of Nigeria have put Nigeria languages between 505 and 520 with quite a number of them occurring as dialects.

Apart from the challenge of name duplicity in African languages, there is evidence from the use index of these languages to suggest a deliberate re-engineering. Following Ojo (2000), Prah (2001), and Ogbulogo (2001), in addition to English and the three major Nigerian languages –Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, there are other “middle sized or network languages which are studied in our educational institutions. They are Ebira, Edo, Efik, Fulfulde, Ibibio, Idoma, Igala, Kanuri, Nupe, Tiv and Urhobo. It has been argued that more than 90% of the Nigerian population can communicate in these fifteen languages.

At a pan-African level, Prah has discovered that over 70% of Africans speak just about twelve languages as primary, secondary or tertiary languages. The critical parameter is mutual intelligibility. The experiment of the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS), in Cape Town, South Africa in harmonizing the New Ewe/Gbe orthography for all Gbe dialects (Aja, Gun, Mina, Fon of Ghana has yielded exciting results. Other commendable initiatives include the United Akan orthography for Ghana and Ivory Coast, the co-ordinated Gur languages project in Burkina Faso, Togo, Mali, Niger and Ivory Coast, as well as the harmonization f the orthography of Nigerian and Benin Yoruba.

There have also been the clustering of Nigerian languages, just as Berber and Tamashek speech forms as well as the languages of Zambia and Malawi have been harmonized. Further success can be achieved in this direction if the African linguist is motivated to record and transcribe local languages with the aim of identifying common ties in the tradition of Franz Boas who carried out a rescue operation of American languages. With proper and dependable transcripts, it may be discovered that the majority of what we celebrate as languages are dialects of a manageable cluster. For instance, Izzi, Ezza, Mgbo and Ikwo which are being taunted as independent languages in some quarters are actually dialects of Igbo. It is also possible to make definite comments about the status of Efik and Ibibio which are mutually intelligible. The same may be extended to Ibibio and Anaang in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The results, deriving from actual analyses of contrasts will form the basis for dependable language surveys in Africa, with the promise of a blueprint.

A major component of engineering for African languages is to modernize them to be suitable for wider use in education, economy, government, science and technology. This proposal is in the light of the low level of literacy among African countries in international languages. In Nigeria, for instance, following the reports of the Federal Office of statistics (now Federal Bureau for Statistics), (1996) and quoted by Akere (1998) literacy rate in English is about 49%. That means that the critical mass of the people will still be reached in their local languages. Major issues relating to the constitution, electoral processes, healthcare delivery, economic imperatives and inter-group relations will be better appreciated if delivered in African languages. To carry this burden, these languages must be written, standardized and popularized. They must also carry a system of numeration. With these, the languages should have dependable dictionaries based on unified orthographies.

Another dimension of language engineering regarding African languages is the need to collect, collate and transcribe the oral literatures of these languages with the aim of distilling the wisdom therein. Indeed, a great deal of leadership and management principles are embedded in African folklore, myths, legends, proverbs,



aphorisms and wellerisms. Noonan (2005) has presented highly intricate management principles in *Aesop and the CEO*.

Interestingly, following the provisions of language planning policies in many African states, Banjo (2001), Ogbulogo (2001) have argued that the modern African child will need to be polyglottal in the modern world. This will require a vigorous programme of instruction in African languages as well as a deep connection with languages of the international metropolis in line with the demands of globalization. This polyglottal approach will have radical implications for our perception of development.

I cannot agree any less with Magwa and Mutasa (2007) that development in Africa has been grossly misunderstood as a result of the overreliance on such economic parameters as the Gross National Product (GNP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and *per capital income*, whereas for the African, development is best expressed in cultured terms. This culture is not limited to physical artefacts but also to the entire mindset and philosophy. That way, and in view of Magwa and Mutasa (2007) national development would emphasize the full realization of the human potential and at the same time maximize resources.

A major demand of the re-engineering of African languages must be along the line of the Meiji Restoration as reported by Huffman (2008). This Restoration or Revolution that lasted between 1868 and 1889 set the stage for Japan's nationalism, military might and modernity. The critical ingredient was the deliberate move by the Japanese authorities to seek knowledge around the world by "studying, emulating, adapting and surpassing" the achievements of other peoples of the world. A major strategy was the backward translating and the background engineering of all technologies learnt.

According to Huffman. Japan, in the Meiji era sponsored her youths to study in European and American institutions with the understanding that whatever projects the youths undertook had to be translated into Japanese for closer scrutiny. The underlying assumption was that a conscious mixture of the old and the new would guarantee rapid and sustained progress. The view has been well canvassed that managing national issues in a minority official



language will at best produce very few wealthy individuals – cf Ansre (1974).

The critical issue appears to have been the roles assigned to our local languages, especially from a philosophical perspective. If destiny is that desired path of progress, as we have seen, there is the need to explore what the past had been. A great deal of African philosophy has been expressed in the people's names and proverbs using the mother tongue. It is this mother tongue that expresses our intimacy. However, transformational thinking would require that we interrogate aspects of the primordial culture that have held the African hostage.

In pursuing the polyglottal agenda of the African educational system, it is necessary to note that of the dominant official languages in Africa, only *Swahili*, used in Tanzania and Kenya, is vestigially indigenous. The same could be said of *Afrikaans* – spoken in South Africa and Namibia. These languages have been described as vestigially indigenous because they have emerged as combinations of foreign and African languages. In Ethiopia, the official language is Amharic, even as English is a major foreign language taught in schools. It is only in Somalia that Somali, an indigenous language is used, along with English Arabic and Italian. The full official language picture is presented below:

| Official Languages | African Countries   |
|--------------------|---|
| Arabic             | Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Western Sahara  |
| Afrikaans          | Namibia, South Africa   |
| English            | Botswana, Cameroon, Eritrea, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, St. Helena, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe   |
| French             | Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, DR Congo, Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Reunion, Senegal, Tunisia |
| Portuguese         | Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe  |
| Spanish            | Equatorial Guinea   |
| Italian            | Somalia   |
| German             | Namibia   |

Source: African Academy of Languages, (2012) *Ethnologue: languages of the World* (2012).

There are very interesting scenarios associated with the official language situations in Africa. In Guinea, only about 20% of the population speak French, the official language. For Mozambique, 27% of the population speaks Portuguese. English as the official language of Namibia is spoken by just 7% of the population. These realities have grave implications for developmental discourse and participation. In spite of the wide use of African languages on the continent, only Swahili and Afrikaans are featured on the parallel translation software on the web – i.e the *Google Translate*. Incidentally, these languages have been exhaustively analyzed by non-African linguists – cf Ogbulogo (2012a)

For Africa to be competitive, and from the lessons of the Meiji Reformation in Japan, there is no need to insist on being insular. There is the need to be strategic in language learning. This means that our approach to issues of foreign languages will be pragmatic. There has been a commendable experiment in Australia in appropriating aspects of Chinese as the language of an emerging world power. The syllabus has been prepared by the Curriculum Council of the Chinese Second Language (2008) for the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). The emphasis of the intensive programme is to enhance listening and responding, spoken interaction, viewing, reading and responding and writing adapted to contexts. Contexts and text types are selected from the professions, and related conventions. There are also resources on the features of language vocabulary, orthography, grammar, intercultural understanding, vocational training, social media and cyber-friendship, as well as the exploring of the world of work.

With regard to the African situation, it will be profitable to approach the learning and teaching of foreign languages with a globalization mindset. This is the mindset that a language like

English is no longer a parochial language of the British – but a heritage that has gradually broken into the spectrum of the commonwealth of all nations. Following Crystal (1996-2003), this reality derives from the cosmopolitan vocabulary of English as is evident from the word stock:

|                    |   |     |
|--------------------|---|-----|
| French             | - | 28% |
| Latin              | - | 28% |
| Germanic Languages | - | 25% |
| Other languages    | - | 1%  |

cf Ogbulogo (2011)

According to Kachru (1985, 2001), and amplified by Crystal (1996, 2003), English as a global language, has developed three layers based on the user profiles. The first level (ie the inner core) compares about 380 million native speakers. The outer circle – about 300 million second language speakers and the expanding circle over one billion speakers of English as a foreign language. This schemata which is normative has been criticized such that preference is given to Modiano's (1999) model which emphasizes competence over geography.

It would stand to reason that English as an international language and as an aspect of the commonwealth heritage of man would be liberated from the pedantic hold of the classroom or the ivory tower. This possibility has been hinted by Widdowson (1997), who advocates “language spread” -in the place of “language distribution”. According to him, language distribution involves “adoption” and conformity, almost in a prescriptive tradition. Language spread entails the “adaptation” and “actualization” of the language to serve the purpose of new environments. The spread option is indeed more pragmatic.

Another possibility is the rising of other tongues in the place of English. This possibility has been alluded to by Crystal (2001), when he observes that the internet started with 100% entry in English. He argues further that since the 1980's the status has changed drastically such that by 1995, there was 80% entry in English and by 2001, entries have been around 60%. There are huge potentials for drastic reduction in English-based entries, in favour of other languages. He has identified well over 1,500 languages available on the internet.

These realities reveal that English is up for stiff competition in the years ahead. These realities suggest that the African must prepare for this new turn of events. This preparation is at the heart of language engineering. It must begin with a new kind of thinking. This is what Maxwell (2009) has described as “changed thinking.”

### **Language Engineering in foreign languages spoken in Africa**

In pursuance of the incorporation of language engineering into language pedagogy and practice in Nigeria and in Africa, Ogbulogo (2010, 2011, 2012a) advocates strategic language learning for the purpose of competitive intelligence. Strategic language learning will naturally link to the core of linguistic theories – in the tradition of Decamp (1970) and Adeniran (1987). Linguistic theories from this perspective, link the structure of language to social realities and sociolinguistic variables which form part of the speaker's language intuition.

With regard to English, Ogbulogo (2011) links strategic language learning to the lessons from the guilds globalization and the emergence of International English. Guilds, either in Vienna (1288), Paris (1321), London (1878) or in the United States or even in the Third World have made the prescriptions which have formed the core

curriculum of a number of educational institutions. Indeed, the London Livery Guild metamorphosed into the City and Guilds Institute of London, and then the forerunner of the Engineering School of the Imperial College. It is gratifying to note that many computer certification programmes are product-specific; they encourage the development of a core vocabulary.

Globalization which appears to have economics as the main driving force has impacted on the language teaching and learning strategies. For instance, because of the reality of migration at the instance of globalization, the English language curriculum in England has had to be modified to accommodate the needs of children from minority groups. This modification has been at the centre of the SWAN Report of 1976 and 2002. Both China and Japan have also incorporated language teaching and learning considerations in the main stream of globalization – cf Ogbulogo (2011). These new arrangements have taken into consideration the need to resist linguistic imperialism and at the same time preserve local languages.

According to Ogbulogo (2011), Japan has instituted the *Kokusaika* (Internationalization) programme to expose their young ones to the peoples and cultures of the international community through a variety of language, social and cultural education events. These strategies are connected to the broader framework of Cultural Studies. There would be the need to widen the scope of the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages beyond the access to the civilization and literature of the target language. Emphasis should be on the preparation of students for learning and living. These observations have implications for emerging functional varieties of English, including:

- Basic English -for international business use and manufacturing. It has a vocabulary of about 850 words –

Richards (1942).

- Special English - simplified from the Voice of American English with a restricted vocabulary of about 1,500 words.
- English Reform – based on universally improved English.
- Seaspeak, Airspeak and Policespeak – designed by Edward Johnson in the 1980's for international co-operation in specific domains.
- Euro-English - an on-going standardizing variety meant to be a second language in continental Europe in the spirit of the European Union.
- Global English - intended for use for international communication across cultures. “Catchphrases” and “trite idioms” are stripped of this variety. It is also referred to as International English
- Controlled English - a simplified variety of English noted for “a restricted core vocabulary and a restricted range of simple sentence structures meant for international communication. It is mainly for commercial and technical information, but not meant for theoretical and literary communication. There are profound implications of these varieties for Africa, and for Nigeria where literacy levels in English are low. Following a recent survey by Euromonitor International Report (2011), about 53%, 20% and 18% of the population in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya respectively speak English. Different authorities have decried the poor performance in English at all levels. It will be possible to explore the possibility of presenting a modified scheme for the teaching of English based on need.

There are worthwhile examples to draw from in Malaysia and Singapore both of which had English as a colonial heritage. English has continued to be used in these countries in the educational system – see Foo and Richards (2004).

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It appears to be a paradox that while nations are firming up programmes for self-discovery for the younger generations, African nations are still held back by colonial considerations. Part of this process of self-discovery is to seek common ties and at the same time reduce the complexity of language diversities with dispatch. This probably formed the basis for EuroEnglish as reported by the English Teachers Network International (1997). The aim has been to reduce the challenge of communication in the over 24 languages of the three main language families in Europe. These are the Indo-European, Finno-Ugric and the Basque-families.

In the Arab World which stretches from Mauritania on the Atlantic Ocean to Bahrain in the Arab Persian Gulf, with a population of a little over 260 million there seems to be a sense of homogeneity. Yet, within this zone are heterogeneous groups in Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Bahrain and Yemen. There are many other groups all over the world that have links with Arabic. To accommodate the diverse interests, there has been the Modern Standard Arabic. There are also many varieties of “Colloquial Arabic” which are used as first language in different parts of the Arab World. This reality presents the phenomena of *diglossia* in the language. Interestingly, the emergence of many functional varieties of English tends to support diglossia in the language.

### **Some Concluding Remarks**

Language practices in Africa have not appropriated the reality of engineering. We appear to have followed the paradoxical rigidity of colonial languages even across territories that should be fluid. Between Nigeria and Ghana, and between Ghana and Sierra Leone are French speaking regions. Between Guinea and Senegal is a Portuguese speaking nation. It would be feasible to evolve a Pan-

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African English variety- AfriEnglish with a moderate vocabulary, simplified sentence structures and modified spelling convention to ease Communications and integration. The VOCABULARY could be based on the Special English that draws bearing from the Voice of America in terms of vocabulary and spelling conventions. African teachers could be trained on a modified pronunciation. This option will mean that those who desire a deeper level of sophistication will move on with more exposures. There will also be the need for research just as Richards (1942) has done for Basic English. The choice of Special English as the basis for AfriEnglish is as a result of the force of the computer revolution with the default language as the American English. American English is not necessarily marked by the *Wanna* construction.

This specialized variety of English could form the medium for wider communication as against Pidgin English which is negatively marked. Nigeria, and perhaps other African countries are on the reverse gear. The recent developments in the curricula provisions of our school system are a case in point. Whatever is left of Nigerian languages are almost swept off by the decision to make these languages very optional in the school system. Incidentally, some states are advocating the study of foreign languages, including Chinese in the place of Nigerian languages. There are also provisions to deny a segment of the Nigerian school system access to basic sciences in their subject combinations for the Senior Secondary School Certificate examination. While retaining English as the language of instruction for most of the education in our school system in English – speaking Africa, there must be conscious efforts to encourage mother-tongue classes all through primary and secondary school levels.

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At the tertiary levels of education, the General African



Studies and Nigerian Peoples and Cultures programmes should be strengthened to incorporate modules in indigenous languages. Our language departments should encourage the introduction of Translation Studies in their curriculum, not only between foreign languages, but also with African languages. That way, we shall have a robust descriptive corpora for inclusion into digital databases.

Apart from the need to stress excellence in all aspects of communication in English, our higher institutions should begin to mount courses in very specialized aspects of English, bearing in mind developments in Global and International English. The existing curricula in Business, Communication and English for Specific Purposes should be enlarged to incorporate English for Life, English for Professional Advancement, English for Leadership, English for the Ministry, etc. Each of these courses should be developed for certification.

Another innovation would be to encourage the study of the inclusive world literary tradition, bearing in mind the contributions of literature to the emergence of the poetic personality – as advocated by Eruvbetine (1999). Language teaching should be based on the practice of Contrastive Analysis so as to maximize the benefits of inter-language reinforcements. Indeed, one of the promises of Universal Grammar is to identify parameters that will reinforce knowledge of Language – cf Ogbulogo (1994).

In addition to incorporating aspects of the literary traditions into our language training modules across educational levels, there is the need to devise strategies to enhance reading. Drawing from the reviews of the English Language syllabus in Singapore, (2010) reading provides an opportunity for the next generation to tackle the challenges of the future. The African has not fared well in this domain. African youths appear to have been entrapped by the fantasy of the digital age and especially the social media even at the detriment

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of the life-enriching skill of reading. There are pace-setting reading records in other parts of the World, except Africa. Howard Stephen Berg was reported in the 1990 *Guinness Book of World Records* to have read 25,000 words per minute. This was a validation of Paul Scheel's Photo Reading Strategy.

Our discussion so far tends to support the view canvased by Williamson (1987) that part of the needed transformation in Africa must begin with the reconstruction of who we are. This is a major task of language engineering. There has been the reference to the close relationship among the “diverse” languages of Africa. Incidentally, the task of language reconstruction in Africa has been championed by foreigners, even outside of the circles of the colonial powers. For instance, the first Ph.D in linguistics at the University of Ibadan was on Comparative Jukunoid, a Nigerian language cluster, and was undertaken by a Japanese, Kiyoshi Shimizu in 1971. This has been reported in Shimizu (1975, 1980) and Williamson (1987). Insights from a sustained research tradition in this reconstructive science has revealed that the orchestrated instance of the multiplicity of African languages could have developed from a manageable stock, pointing to a common origin. This search has been the focus of my enlistment into the academy these 26 years.

I have pursued parameters of Universal Grammar in the typical Chomskian tradition, with English Syntax as my fulcrum. I am persuaded, just as Williamson, that even with languages that appear wide apart, a deeper investigation of their operations would reveal a common core, especially within a psychological reality. Our sustained interactions over the years as Africans favour a valid sense of accommodation. Thus, the fray on the atomization of Africa is at the instance of the cartographers' mythology oiled by huge interests

even for a time of corporate colonialism. Language engineering has favoured serious reconstruction efforts even for the exoglossic languages on the continent. After all, and for the sake of emphasis, Euro-English has had to emerge in continental Europe to bolster closer collaboration. It is not charitable to sustain the strongholds of the colonial times by holding tenaciously to parochial forms of colonial languages. The time has come for full liberation. It is the time to indigenize the dominant colonial language of Africa. It is the time for Afri-English.

The Chancellor, Sir, this is my inaugural.

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