

# African Languages for Participatory Democracy and Sustainable Socioeconomic Development<sup>※</sup>

: The Case of Swahili in Tanzania

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## Abstract

Yang, Chul-Joon. 2020. "African Languages for Participatory Democracy and Sustainable Socioeconomic Development: The Case of Swahili in Tanzania". *The Sociolinguistic Journal of Korea* 28(2), 127~154. That language plays a pivotal and integral role in making political processes participatory and inclusive, and socioeconomic development sustainable has been commonsensically presumed to be a well-established fact. Language is not simply a means of mutual communication, but also a potent tool for social inclusion and exclusion, resulting in having both a positive and negative social impact. In this sense the use of African languages in all social domains for making sure of the concretization of inclusive political participation and representation as well as sustainable socioeconomic development. Despite being considered to be an exemplary country that has pursued an active endoglossic language policy, Tanzania has an uphill task in facilitating participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development by virtue of the ease of language understanding with which people can make them understood in everyday life. What is imperatively needed in making participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development possible and feasible is a strong political will and its implementation. In tandem with a strong political will and its implementation in the conduct of national affairs, a ceaseless and concerted effort needs to be made with a view to capacitating Swahili to make a meaningful contribution

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to participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development. Furthermore, corpus planning that refers to an institutional effort for creating standards for Swahili has to be done.

**Keywords:** Swahili, Tanzania, endoglossic language policy (vernacularization), participatory democracy, sustainable socioeconomic development, agency, voice, participation

## 1. Introduction

Discourses on participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development abound both in academia and sociopolitical institutions, while, on the contrary, the question of language that is of crucial importance in achieving these goals is rarely addressed or often ignored. The crucial role played by language in participatory democracy and sustainable socio-economic development has not been taken into serious consideration in postcolonial Africa (Djité 2008; Nyasulu Mkwinda 2013/2014). This article delves into the role played by African languages in promoting participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development with a specific focus on Swahili in Tanzania. Tanzania has pursued an active endoglossic language policy since the very inception of its independence (Yang 2014: 50~53).

Language, including non-verbal communication, is inseparably connected with basic and essential human activities that include political participation, civic engagement and socioeconomic activities. It is a well-established fact that language plays a pivotal and integral role and serves as a catalyst for participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development (Bamgbose 2000; Moshi & Osman 2008).

Lessons from some highly developed Asian economies have clearly demonstrated that language is crucial and implemental to attaining socioeconomic development, resulting in inclusive and equitable quality education and enabling political participation.

However, since the colonial era and even in post-colonial period, ex-colonial languages such as English, French, Portuguese and Spanish have held official status and been used in the conduct of many public or state affairs in many sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. More often than not, the official language chosen in virtually all states in Africa is an ex-colonial one that has been paradoxically perceived as a neutral medium of communication. Scotton notes:

... a nation often opts for its former colonial language as its main official language, making English, French, and Portuguese still official languages in most of Africa. The main virtue of the alien official language is *its relative ethnic neutrality* (emphasis mine 1993: 28).

As a result, children are educated in a language they cannot understand very well. In contradiction to this stark reality, the dominance of European languages in Africa remains unquestioned and has given many members of the African postcolonial élite a head start and social prestige.<sup>1)</sup> In contrast to the ample opportunities provided for the socially privileged of a wealthy and powerful upper social stratification by maintaining the languages of the former colonial masters, Africans educationally impoverished and functionally illiterate in the former colonial languages constitute marginalized groups in political and

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1) Scotton (1993: 28) defines it as 'élite closure'. Education provided and available in ex-colonial languages may have a greater chance of upward social mobility.

socio-economic processes.

This paper deals with the promotion of Swahili in Tanzania and its long term implications in participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development. This paper also explores the pros and cons of promoting Swahili in Tanzania in the context of ever-changing social situations and trends.

## 2. The inseparability of language and participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development

### 2.1. Language as a core component of participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development

Language has always been one of the most important components and tools for ensuring political participation as well as accelerating socioeconomic development to promote the advancement of society as a whole. I base my conception of participatory democracy and sustainable socio-economic development on principles of citizens as agentive stakeholders in decision or policy making and its implementation.

It is difficult to draw a hard-and-fast distinction or find the nexus between participatory democracy and socioeconomic development largely due to the fact that language as the causative agent in participatory democracy and socio-economic development has not been exemplarily and quantitatively demonstrated in the *longue durée*. One simply tends to perceive that language is inseparably interconnected with democracy in its entirety and socioeconomic development, both individual and societal, in one way or another.

The question of language is, however, often ignored in many approaches to participatory democracy and in the discourse of sustainable socioeconomic development despite the fact that sustainability has become a dominant discourse since the 1990s. The question of language is also left behind as a necessary and indispensable discourse on participatory democracy and socioeconomic development in a comprehensive and inclusive way. It seems that this tendency is triggered or motivated by the commonly shared belief that language is not a decisive determinant and vibrant factor in realizing participatory democracy and socioeconomic development.

In concordance with this tendency, even those who are concerned with sustainable socio-economic development and participant democracy have a predisposition towards disregarding or even discarding the question of language as a trivial matter devoid of any urgency and significance.

However, language as a matter irrelevant to participatory democracy and socio-economic development needs to be taken into a serious reconsideration. Being knowingly or unknowingly sidelined as a mere matter of insensitivity and negligibility, there is a paucity of research and resultant literature dealing with this essential question of language.

This is particularly true of Africa where multilingualism prevails at both the individual and community or societal level. It will be a repeated tautology to claim that language plays a vital role in substantiating participatory democracy and socio-economic development.

To make participatory democracy and socioeconomic development feasible and realizable, participation in the socioeconomic and political processes is a prerequisite. Participation, be it socioeconomic or political, can be possible only when unhindered horizontal communication among various stakeholders is

regarded as an essentiality. Individuals from various ladder rungs of society, not to mention those who are not highly educated or with very little formal education, need to be given an opportunity to participate in the aforementioned processes in a language they are familiar with. Moreover, creating an environment in which anybody can freely make him or her understood in a language at his or her disposal has something to do with voice, agency and participation. Participation of citizens in various social domains leads to capacitated activities that could have positive consequences in social advancement in general.

## 2.2. The divide between the language used by those in the upper echelons of the society and the socially underprivileged

It would be not exaggeration to say that the lack of required proficiency in high-level ex-colonial language (as official language) results in depriving people at grass-roots level of their participation in political processes and socioeconomic activities (Batibo 2005).

### 2.2.1. Political participation

Whoever goes to or resides in Tanzania may be impressed with the way people from every walk of life are keen to watch parliament debates online. Although some members of parliament who are mainly trilinguals tend to switch from one code to another for sociopragmatic functions, ordinary citizens have equal access to information and knowledge that enable them to be active participants and have political awareness. The parliamentary debates conducted in Swahili are conducive to raising political awareness that leads, in turn, to political participation. It, however, needs to be mentioned that the parliamentary bills

are drafted in English (Yang 2008). The belief that written communication has to be done in English does not reflect social reality.

In an interview entitled ‘Mtazamo Mtandaoni’ (Opinion on SNS), a woman named Grace Tango expressed her opinion on the launching ceremony for the book ‘My Life, My Purpose’ written by Mr. Benjamin Mkapa who was the third President of Tanzania and in office from 1995 to 2005 as follows.

Nadhani kitabu hiki kimeandikwa kwa lugha ya kigeni (English). Sijui kama Watanzania wote wana uwezo wa kusoma na kukielewa hiyo lugha (Kiingereza), lakini pia gharama ziwe nafuu ili kila mwananchi anayehitaji kukisoma akipate kwa urahisi.

I think that this book has been written in a *foreign language* (English). I don’t know whether all Tanzanians have the ability to read and understand it, but the expenses (cost) of buying it should be also affordable, so that every citizen in need of reading it could obtain it with ease (my translation and emphasis).

(Source: HABARI-AZAM TV, 12/11/2019)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c7uA8YyJ7o>

As clearly articulated in this interview, a majority Tanzanians consider English as a foreign language and want political activities to be conducted in Swahili they are familiar with. A judge in the High Court of Tanzania speaks mainly English, while a defendant is a non-English speaking person (Feingold 2018).

### 2.2.2. Sustainable socioeconomic development

Sustainable socioeconomic development has become a buzzword in both academia and public discourse. Agriculture is still the backbone of Tanzania's economy. Tanzania needs to make a growth spurt in agriculture for stimulating its economic growth and creating employment opportunities for the youth.

Agricultural education at the tertiary level is given in English, and agricultural expertise is disseminated to farmers in Swahili. Agricultural experts are trained to strengthen capabilities for innovation and technology to be applied in the field. In this process, agricultural experts face double challenges. They learn and accumulate agricultural knowledge, skills and information in English, but sharing their knowledge, skills and information with farmers in Swahili is another challenge to cope with.

The same is true for medical doctors who are trained in English and their medical service is provided mainly in Swahili. Higher degrees of linguistic disparity between experts in various social domains and a majority of Tanzanians who are in dire need of practical knowledge and essential services.

### 2.3. Agency, voice and participation

Three key concepts are conducive to and relevant for the understanding and in dealing with participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development in any given society. For any democracy to be meaningful and inclusive participation in full swing and bloom, and for socio-economic development to be steady and sustainable, it is of fundamental importance to create the social environment that empowers people to make decisions about the well-being of each individual and the community more participatory in a language one is familiar

with. This commonsensical major premise has been brushed aside. This is particularly true in a multilingual country in consideration of the fact that communication in a mutually intelligible language is considered to be crucial.

### 2.3.1. Agency

Firstly, agency is one of the key concepts that constitute the building blocks for participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development. Defined as “the human capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001: 1), *agency* in human activities is related to direct action, Ahearn notes:

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, sociologist Anthony Giddens first popularized the term *agency* and, along with anthropologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Marshall Sahlins, focused on the ways in which human actions are dialectically related to social structure in a mutually constitutive manner. (Ahearn 2001: 7, emphasis in original)

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Any social change in an either positive or negative sense of meaning can be made by the interest of various stakeholders. Agency may be freely expressed to the utmost extent or structurally constrained by a range of social factors such as gender, social stratification, religion, ethnicity, etc.

### 2.3.2. Voice

Secondly, although voice that is tightly interwoven with identity and its social representation can be defined in numerous ways, it is also an important concept in discussing participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development. People's voice can be understood as an explicit externalization of their collective aspirations conducive to supporting people to improve their lives and bring about affirmative social changes in addition to having a desirable result. Being voiced or being given no voice in any given society may have a resounding effect on the overall social progress. As rightly pointed out by Thorpe *et al* (2019: 1):

...inequality is not only experienced in economic terms. Rather, it is also about inequality of voice, as recognized in the commitment of Goal 16 to 'inclusive societies and institutions', and particularly target 16.7' to ensure responsive, inductive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.'

### 2.3.3. Participation

Participation, no matter how vague and ambivalent it may be, constitutes individual and collective mindfulness, involvement and socially meaningful activities. Participation in social activities refers to all the ways that people engage in social world with their contemporaries. Particularly, civic participation which can be roughly defined as any individual or collective activity addressing crucial issues of public interest and concern cannot be guaranteed without having a shared medium of communication.

When these three concepts are firmly concretized in reality and into action, one can establish the building blocks that enable individuals and communities as well to enhance the quality of their lives.

Capacitated and empowered participation is made possible by various social factors that need to be considered. Language is the indispensable means of creating capacitated and empowered participation. The use of language commonly understood and spoken by the ordinary people constitutes an integral part of agency, voice and participation per se. Bringing agency, voice and participation to participatory democratic processes and sustainable socioeconomic development can be one step forward towards the realization of an equitable and inclusive society.

### 3. Language situations in Africa since its decolonization

Beginning in the late-1950s and continuing into the mid-1960s, a majority of African countries got independence. The inevitable and irreversible process of decolonization that began at the end of World War II has brought about many changes, be they positive or negative, and many African states faced pressing challenges and uphill tasks which included the shortage or lack of well trained and highly skilled labor, economic dependence, the challenges of forging a cohesive sense of national identity, cold war proxy wars and so on. Furthermore, the lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, highways, railways and so on which is essentially required for the development of a new nation led to the retardation of socio-economic development practically in all aspects of life.

In addition to these challenges and problems, the quintessential question of language that plays an indispensable and pivotal role as the basis of human progress has not been adequately addressed in the discourse on sustainable socioeconomic development, participatory democracy, equitable quality

education and public health care service and so on.

Colonial languages have been used as predominant languages throughout the post-colonial era and even preferred as national and official languages in most of postcolonial African nations. Such European languages as English, French, Portuguese and Spanish have held official status in many African countries and are widely spoken. These former colonial languages have been used as the preferred means of communication, particularly among those who are highly educated in the upper echelons of society.

The continued use of colonial languages has inevitably caused a number of corollaries such as unequal educational opportunities that result in the decline of upward social mobility. Even some African quasi-monolingual countries in indigenous languages such as Burundi, Lesotho, Rwanda, Swaziland, Cape Verde and Seychelles (Batibo 2005: 4; Scotton 1993: 27) use ex-colonial languages as the co-official languages. In the same vein, Wolff notes:

Homogeneity is a fiction in the linguistic field more than in any other. Taking an arbitrary threshold of 90 percent as the defining landmark of a monolingual country, only handful of countries meets this criterion in Africa. The ones generally cited are Botswana (language: Setswana), Burundi (Kirundi), Lesotho (Sotho), Madagascar (Malagasy), Mauritius (Créole), Rwanda (Kinyarwanda), Seychelles (Créole), Somalia (Somali), Swaziland (now umbuso weSwatini, Seswati). (my emphasis 2000: 315)

Ex-colonial languages are still used as medium of instruction in addition to being written forms of communication in most postcolonial African nations, while African languages have not been given any priority and are used as a popular medium of communication mainly in informal settings. Scotton (1993:

[www.kci.go.kr](http://www.kci.go.kr)

28) correctly points out that the main virtue of the alien official language its relative ethnic neutrality that, in common parlance, gives people the same starting point regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or social identifiers.

## 4. Tanzania as an exemplary nation of endoglossic language policy

### 4.1. Tanzania's endoglossic language policy

Tanzania is commonly regarded to have a triglossic language situation with English being the high variety (H), ethnic languages the low variety (L) and Swahili inbetween (Abdulaziz Mkilifi 1972). In this situation Tanzania, among a number of African nations, stands out in the incessant pursuit of endoglossic language policy which is also dubbed as vernacularization.

Cobarrubias makes a rather clear-cut distinction of language policies, namely endoglossic, exoglossic and mixed policies (Cobarrubias 1983: 74~75; Wolff 2000: 342). Notwithstanding these nomenclatures, this clear-cut distinction has its own weakness since some countries do not have a legally binding language policy or their policies are ambiguously stipulated. Although the simple typology of language policies can be considered as lack of sophistication and individual specificity, this typology has been used mainly for the sake of convenience. In fact, many countries have not explicitly formalized or proclaimed language policy.

Tanzania, unlike its neighboring country of Kenya to the northeast, has persistently pursued an active endoglossic language policy that has given primacy and greater importance to Swahili. Abdulaziz notes (1971: 16):

The political decision to adopt Swahili as the national and official language of Tanzania has created linguistic and social trends with few parallels in the rest of Africa.

Needless to add, it is very important to understand the institutional support for the promotion of Swahili in the context of Tanzania's political and social history (Blommaert 2005).

The language situation in Tanzania, with about 126 languages with the varying number of speakers, makes Tanzania one of the most linguistically diverse nations, as well as the most ethnically diversified countries in Africa. Of the 55 million people (as of 2016) in Tanzania, approximately 4 million Tanzanians are estimated to speak English with a varying degree of fluency. 90% of the people speak Swahili. In terms of demographic characteristics Swahili people are a minority ethnic group, and paradoxically this demographic composition devoid of any socioeconomic hegemony has led to making Swahili as a willingly acceptable language (Scotton 1993: 29).

There can be no doubt at all that the Late Mwalimu ('teacher' in Swahili) Julius Kambarage Nyerere (1922~1999), who was the first prime minister of the then Tanganyika (1961) and later became the first president of the United Republic of Tanzania (1964) was an ardent supporter of Swahili both in words and deeds. Indeed, he vehemently encouraged all Tanzanians to communicate in Swahili.

Here it needs to be pointed out that he also emphasized the importance of English by saying that "Kiingereza ni Kiswahili cha dunia", which means "English is Swahili of the world". It appears that his utterance was intended to mean that English is an important means of communication with the outside world.

Tanzania, from the very beginning of its independence, has used Swahili to

forge a cohesive national identity (Blommaert 2005). Based on the classic Herderian language ideologies of the nation state and on the belief that language is inseparably tied to identity, Swahili has been promoted to be a language that can unite all Tanzanians regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

Many efforts have been exerted to promote Swahili to be an essential tool for de-ethnizing diverse ethnic groups and shoring up a robust sense of national identity.

#### 4.2. The position of English in Tanzania

It has been commonsensically and understandably presumed that English language skills in Tanzania are lagging far behind compared with its neighboring country of Kenya. Needless to add, this kind of explanation has to be proved on the basis of test-takers' proficiency in English and given a score on a scale. Ogechi (2003: 279) notes:

It has also been claimed that proficiency in English is declining in Tanzania. Contrary to Tanzania, Kenya has pursued a mixed language policy with *implicit emphasis on English*. (my emphasis):

English is the exoglossic official language used in government, international business, diplomacy etc., while Swahili is the endoglossic national language that is also used for government administration and casual inter-ethnic communications.

This explicit policy in favor of English since its independence from Britain has resulted in internationalization, making Kenya a country with high proficiency

in English according to Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index 2019. Kenya is ranked 18th in a survey of 100 countries in the world.

Although English in Tanzania as a high variety is the mother tongue of a meager number of population, English has been regarded as a prestigious symbol of social status, authority and higher education.

Many Tanzanians tend to regard the proficiency in English as access to knowledge and a prerequisite for upward social mobility. Proficiency in English in Tanzania, which is measured and defined by a combination of four language skills, namely reading, writing, listening and speaking, has been proved to be insufficient for quality education (Roy–Campbell & Qorro 1997; Brock–Utne 2000). Even some scholars insist that English is a barrier rather than being instrumental to knowledge acquisition and production (Roy–Campbell & Qorro 1997).

At present, Swahili is the medium of instruction at public primary schools and English is taught as a subject. From secondary level and onwards, English is the medium of instruction and Swahili is taught as a subject (Neke 2005). An abrupt change in the medium of instruction from Swahili to English has, however, caused a number of problems in the education system as a whole and aroused a lot of controversial debate over the years (Brock–Utne 2000; Neke 2005). English as the medium of instruction disables many students to get quality education instead of furthering the improvement of education quality. In spite of this reality, education in Swahili is regarded as a disadvantage for students. On the contrary, English language skills, which are a major area of concern for many Tanzanians, are tantamount to the factors furthering the improvement of secondary and tertiary education. In line with these language perceptions and attitudes, many Tanzanian parents want their children to be educated at English medium primary schools that have mushroomed into an

interesting social phenomenon (Yang 2009).

## 5. Some polemical issues surrounding Swahili

### 5.1. Swahili from an Islamized language to a de-Islamized one

Swahili, popularly believed to be imbued with a long tradition of Islam (Mugane 2015), was undoubtedly regarded as a language with an inflexible philosophical worldview deeply rooted in the Islamic vision of life and reality. These popular language attitudes, beliefs and perceptions appear to arise from the fact that Swahili has been greatly influenced by Arabic and that being a Swahili native speaker is mostly equated with or inseparably connected to being a Muslim. Mazrui and Shariff point out:

Because of the predominantly Islamic composition of the Swahili community, the view developed that to be a Swahili was to be a Muslim. From this counter-irrationality developed, that, *for an east African to be a Muslim was to be a Swahili*. A trend was thus set whereby many east Africans who adopted the Islamic religion took upon themselves the Swahili ethnic level. (1994: 34, my emphasis)

As emphasized above, one tends to translate being identified as a Swahili into being a Muslim. The equation of being a Swahili with being a Muslim is largely attributable to the fact that Swahili has a significant number of loanwords from Arabic (Baldi 2012). For this reason, Swahili has long been regarded a language spoken mainly by Muslims or those who are engaged in trade.

However, what has been proved concerning its origin is that Swahili is undeniably of Bantu origin, belonging to the Sabaki group of the Northeast Coastal Bantu (NECB) spoken along the coast of Kenya and Tanzania (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993).

Some missionaries at the initial stages of Christian evangelization were well aware of the widespread expansion of this African lingua franca. Although some missionaries were skeptical of the use of Swahili as a realistic language adequate for facilitating their missionary works, they had no alternative but to use it as an implemental tool for Christian evangelization. In spite of these differing viewpoints on the very nature of Swahili as a language inseparably associated with the Islamic worldview, many missionaries acknowledged the implemental value held by and the pivotal role played by Swahili. This realistic recognition contributed to the widespread expansion of Swahili even to the innermost part of the then Tanganyika under German colonial rule (Whiteley 1969: 52~55).

At a certain historical point of time, re-Bantuization was a symbolically significant to be adequately dealt with. The re-Bantuization of Swahili was believed to be a way forward towards the de-Islamization of Swahili (Broomfield 1931).

Swahili made inroads into many parts of Tanganyika in a deliberate process of Christianization. As a result, Christian evangelization buttressed up by use of Swahili lessened the popular image of Swahili as a language heavily influenced by Arabic and closely associated with Islam. In addition, Swahili was adopted by the Germans as a language of administration. As Whiteley (1969: 59) has noted:

... a school was established in Tanga in 1893 to train Africans to occupy places as junior officials, and by 1903 there were eight government schools, twelve local authority schools, and fifteen mission schools. As Swahili was to be the language of the administration, great efforts were made to document it, and scholars like Velten, Seidel, Büttner, and others provided the materials on which Courses at the Oriental Seminar in Berlin were based.

German civil servants were trained in Swahili at the Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin (Das Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen (SOS) an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin) before being assigned to the then Tanganyika.

## 5.2. Learning in Swahili as Social Deprivation and Exclusion

With globalization in its full swing, English is perceived to be a lingua franca of the world. Tanzania is not out of touch with this reality in action and progress. Like many excolonial languages spoken in many parts of Africa, English is undoubtedly perceived to be an indispensable linguistic tool for upward social mobility.

Swahili as the medium of instruction at the educational system is, however, understood as a social deprivation. Therefore, many well-to-do Tanzanians enroll their children in English medium private primary schools.

## 5.3. Swahili as a killer language of other African languages?

As Swahili spreads across Africa as a practical means of communication, some scholars argue that Swahili can threaten the existence of many ethnic languages, specifically minority languages, in Tanzania. It has been already proved that

some minority languages are close to disappearing as a result of rapid urbanization, inter-ethnic marriages (Yang 2013), social mobility (Whiteley 1969: 15) and other influentially relevant factors.

Swahili as a killer language has been a very polemical issue. There are many pros and cons concerning this issue. Even though the mother tongue speakers of Swahili are numerically insignificant in Tanzania, as for a majority of Tanzanians, Swahili is the most widely spoken language as a primary or preferred language in addition to their ethnic languages. Here it is worthy to note that many Tanzanians of young generation, especially in urban centers, speak Swahili with native proficiency. In case of inter-ethnic interactions, Swahili is a preferred means of communication because it has nothing to do with ethnic chauvinism or inclination. The African languages spoken in Tanzania, which are mainly of Bantu origin, can be one of the important sources for lexical expansion. Mwalimu Nyerere and other political leaders have introduced some words into Swahili. Three prominent words are *bunge* for 'parliament', *ikulu* for 'State House' or 'an official residence and workplace of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania (Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania)' and *-ng'atuka* (*-ondoka kwa hiari*) for 'retire voluntarily'.

What needs to be borne in mind is the fact that Swahilization is in progress at a rapid rate to the detriment of ethnic languages, while English serves as a source language in lexical expansion. In a way, English is viewed as a dueling language with Swahili, but at the same time it constitutes a relationship of complementarity.

## 6. Challenges ahead and ways forward

### 6.1. Lexical expansion, elaboration and sophistication

One of the most common clichés or platitudes that have been erroneously overused concerning the use of African languages in the public domain is that African languages have the problems and challenges of modern scientific, technical, political, economic and philosophical terminology that need to be solved.

There have been various word formation processes to meet the needs in many social domains such as politics, economy, science, technology, etc. There have been various mechanisms of coining new words, which include borrowing, loan translation, verbal derivation or extension, compounding, metonymy, acronym, semantic broadening and, above all, metaphorical conceptualization.

Julius Nyerere emphasized that Bantu languages spoken in Tanzania should be given priority over foreign languages in coining and disseminating new terms. Much emphasis was placed on Bantu languages in borrowing (Legère 2001: 172).

However, whether ethnic languages can be prolific sources for expanding the Swahili vocabulary has not been proved yet in an empirically verifiable way.

In the meanwhile, Swahili has already developed a sufficient number of new technical terms in a wide range of social domains (Ohly 1987; BAKITA 2005). They are in wide use and become more and more sophisticated and elaborated to modern needs.

#### 6.1.1. Metaphorical conceptualization

Metaphorical conceptualization is omnipresent in human cognitive processes that include concept formation, pattern recognition, reasoning, mental imagery,

perception, memory and so on.

Many words, without mentioning scientific terminology and nomenclatures, we use in day-to-day communications with our contemporaries are coined and adapted on the principles of coining them. Coining terminology in various social domains by virtue of metaphorical conceptualization, particularly ontological metaphors, has the potential of being productively utilized.

Once news words are coined, their meanings are socially and collectively constituted, circulated and segmented. Uchumi and maendeleo, which mean 'economy' and 'development' respectively, are such examples that have significant implications for lexical expansion. Uchumi means 'an agentive action of plucking (fruits)' (Whiteley 1969: 120~121), while maendeleo simply means 'an act/a result of going forward'. In this way, metaphorical conceptualization has a great potential of coining new words to modern needs.

### 6.1.2. Lexical borrowing

For those who adhere to linguistic purism, lexical borrowing cannot be a recommendable solution to lexical expansion. However, what can be asserted with available evidence is that lexical borrowing is a natural consequence of the social and linguistic phenomenon, and that speakers of different languages or varieties interact with one another in dynamic socio-cultural and historical environments and contexts. As many languages of the world have served as sources for enriching the vocabulary of modern English, other languages can be prolific sources for lexical expansion of Swahili.

English itself has been lexically enriched by borrowings from other languages of the world. Loan words from other languages to Swahili go through phonological and semantic nativization in the process of borrowing and adaptation. In this

respect, borrowing enhances potentialities for the promotion of Kiswahili.

As can be expected, semantic change may occur in the process of lexical borrowing and include amelioration, pejoration, broadening, narrowing, bleaching, etc. The Swahili word gereza (ma-) is such a typical example that became more negative in its meaning. In Portuguese, igreja means a church, but when it was borrowed into Swahili it came to mean a 'prison'.

### 6.1.3. Semantic broadening

Also known as semantic expansion, extension and generalization, semantic broadening makes the meaning of a word become broader and more inclusive than its original meaning. As the society evolves, semantic broadening is a commonplace of public life.

On the contrary, some words exhibit semantic narrowing. Many words borrowed into Swahili, principally from Arabic, have undergone both semantic broadening and narrowing. Some examples of semantic broadening include urutubishaji wa urani (uranium enrichment), msamaha wa deni (debt relief/cancellation (personification)), etc.

### 6.1.4. Loan translation

Also known as calque, loan translation refers to mainly a phrase borrowed into a language by means of a word-by/for-word translation. Loan translation usually conforms to the morphological possibilities of the recipient language. As languages come into contact with other languages at a global scale, loan translation is, in most cases, a verbatim translation of a particular word or phrase from a donor language to a recipient or target language. In Swahili, uharamia wa kitaaluma (intellectual piracy), waziri wa kivuli (shadow minister),

serikali ya mpito (transitional/provisional/interim government), vita baridi (cold war) and so on are some examples that have been created by means of loan translation.

## 6.2. Intellectualization of Swahili

Knowledge production is a prerequisite for any language to flourish and be recognized as a language of international communication. In line with this recognition, the use of a language used by a majority of population needs to be encouraged and institutionally supported.

A language given a special legal status does not automatically guarantee its status, prestige and recognition on the international scene. This means that the promotion of African languages, in the very real sense, needs to go hand in hand with enormous efforts to make African languages intellectually profound. Without having a strong impact on the intellectual world by use of African languages, one cannot expect the promotion of African languages.

Some remarkable works have been made for the promotion and development of Swahili. So many things have been visibly changed, but there are still so many things that need to be done. Scholars, researchers and specialists have to participate in developing new and indispensable terminology.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper an attempt was made to give a summary of the rise and promotion of Swahili as a national language in Tanzania with special reference to its pivotal

role played for participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development. A concerted effort is a major step towards the promotion of Swahili, but what is really needed is strong political will that enables people to play an agentive role for participatory democracy and sustainable socioeconomic development. Furthermore, what needs to be taken into serious consideration is the fact that linguistic exclusion is synonymous with social exclusion and discrimination.

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