Language and Development Research in Africa: Based on Kiswahili, Buli and Akan Traditions

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Amidu, A. Assibi. 2001. Language, Culture, Gender and Development Research in Africa: A View Based on Kiswahili, Buli and Akan Traditions. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal 9*(1). 45-71. Language is a vehicle of education, both formal and informal. Development researchers and workers are informal educators. They bring new ideas and assistance to recipient-consumers in such a way as to improve the quality of their lives. This paper argues that language carries and encodes important cultural features and practices which often work against the goals of the development researcher and worker. For example, in Kiswahili, a man marries *-oa* 'marry', but a woman is married *-olewa* 'be married'. The social roles of men and women in such a society are, therefore, also linguistically determined. It follows that work on gender equality, for example, needs to take into account this kind of knowledge and information. In addition, linguistically encoded information often carries implications of loyalty to a group and recipients of development aid and ideas need to be educated in a way that enables them to see the advantages of accepting new ways of doing things without feeling a sense of disloyalty to their culture and community. The interrelationship between language and culture is so strong as to require a special place in development research and field work planning and training. **(Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim)**

1. Language as a vehicle of experience and education

Language is useful in human society, especially because it is the most effective means of interaction, as a tool for understanding one another's intentions, needs, and ways of life. In this sense, language is both an expressive and impressive activity and a means for the

education of people. The effective communication of ideas through language leads, in my opinion, to a higher degree of understanding between speaker and hearer, and to the optimization of the acceptance rate of the results of development research and programmes among a recipient group or community.

Some of the common themes that development researchers try to grapple with are: poverty and wealth, child health and welfare, safe drinking water, sound and healthy environment, population control and management, literacy, education and development, economic growth and equity, food and shelter, malnutrition and development, culture and development, etc. We use language to internalize and externalize the information underlying talks, discussions, and debates on these subjects. In short, language makes it easier for each one of us to participate in the social, political, economic and cultural life of our society as a result of experiences gained through communicative activities. The general belief is that interaction between people will shape and change the lives and outlook on life of all participants.

In this study, I shall examine different linguistic ways of expressing cultural values principally amongst the Waswahili of East African and the Bulsa of Northern Ghana. The Waswahili speak Kiswahili (known as Swahili outside East Africa). Kiswahili belongs to the North-Eastern group of Bantu languages, specifically the Sabaki branch (Hinnebusch, 1999, pp. 179-189). The Bulsa people speak Buli. Buli is a language of Central Gur (Bodomo, 1993, p. 110, p. 115, p. 125). I also makes references, now and again, to Akan, a Kwa language of Ghana. The study is also deliberately skewed in favour of gender problems because I wish to highlight their codification in these languages as facets of culture, social life and education. The study, hopefully, represents the kind of knowledge which the development researcher needs, in addition to other types of knowledge, in order to become fully acceptable to and effective among recipient-consumers whom he or she wishes to assist.

2. Language and culture as reflections of the beliefs of their speakers

Why does the development researcher need to be multilingual? The multilingual development researcher is necessarily also a multicultural researcher. He or she can impart, effectively and directly, his/her new ideas downwards to those who need them, while the recipient-consumer may be quickly impressed by new techniques and ways of doing new things. The new knowledge will, hopefully, improve the way both parties do old things. It is clear, from the above, that if we belong to different language and linguistic groups or families, we may not always express our experiences, needs, thoughts and values in the same way. We may not always have the same linguistic symbols for expressing even the same thoughts, values and ideas, much less different ones. Let us consider the following cultural features found among the Waswahili of East Africa and the Bulsa of Northern Ghana.

In the area of marriage, evidence shows that among the Waswahili of East Africa and the Bulsa of Northern Ghana in West Africa, a woman is proposed to by a man or his family. The woman does not propose marriage to a man, it is taboo. In Kiswahili, the noun for proposal is *poso* or *uposaji* and it refers to a male activity. When referring to the woman or her family, or both, to whom the proposal is made, the noun used is *uposwaji* (Issak, 1999, p. 289). The noun is a 'passive noun', i.e. it is derived from a passive verb -*poswa* 'be proposed to'. Observe that there is no adequate noun word in English which expresses this meaning or activity which affects the PATIENT or THEME of the verbal action. In addition, observe that the verbal forms of the lexeme -POS- 'propose' are split along voice and social or natural gender lines. That is, the active verb form -*posa* 'propose' is used for the male sex, namely the man and his family asking for the hand of a woman or girl in marriage, while the passive verb form is used for the female sex, namely the woman and her family who are asked for the hand of their

daughter in marriage (by a man). Among the Bulsa of Northern Ghana, the word for proposal is *-puusika*, literally 'greeting', pl. *puusa* 'greetings'.[1] It is the man who proposes marriage and so no word exists which refers to the PATIENT or THEME of the proposal of marriage similar to the Kiswahili *-uposwaji* noted above. The noun *-puusika*, pl. *puusa* is derived from the verb *puusi* 'greet, pray for.'[2]

A proposal of marriage requires a go-between, or negotiator, or mediator, both among the Waswahili and the Bulsa. He is called the *mshenga*, pl. *washenga*, among the Waswahili. Among the Bulsa, there are two types of intermediaries or mediators. These are, (a) the matchmaker-go-between, (there is no special name for the person, and the person could be male or female), and (b) the marriage clincher, certifier and guarantor go-between called *sin-yigma*, pl. *sin-yigma*, (also *san-yigmoa* or *san-yigma*) among the Bulsa.

Because of this division of labour, marriage has two stages among the Bulsa. The matchmaker takes care of the first stage. He or she is a facilator of the courtship and marriage.[3] The matchmaker-go-between,

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1) I am grateful to Caesar Rowland A. Apentiik, of the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary, for his assistance with and confirmation of the Buli data and for reading through the manuscript and offering me many useful comments. I also thank my mother, Mrs. Atisah Amidu, for enlightening and clarifying aspects of the Buli marriage rites. All shortcomings are mine.

2) Before the proposal can take place, there is a courtship period. The courtship is called *dueni* in Buli. According to Caesar R. A. Apentiik, it is at this time that,

"The man declares his intention of being interested in the girl. The *dueni* and *puusa* go together I think, i.e. *wa cheng ade dueni ain wa faari nipok*."

The Buli expression in the citation above translates as "He goes courting with a view to marrying a girl", lit. "he go eat dress up so that he marry woman". Note that, among the Bulsa, it is the man who pays court to a girl, but a girl or woman cannot court a man. She can only be in love with him. The same situation is found among the Waswahili of East Africa.

3) Caesar R. A. Apentiik says that, "If a potential wife to be is introduced to you by a friend or a woman from your village, this person can serve as a

or negotiator, or mediator accompanies the suitor during the courtship visits and meetings, and during visits to the family of the girl or woman to present the proposal of marriage, and works to secure the family's favourable consent. According to my mother, Mrs. Amidu, the event, from courtship to proposal, is what is called *de dueni*, i.e. 'go courting and to secure consent to marry a girl' (see footnotes 1-2 above). *Dueni* literally means 'dress up with a view to impress'. The courtship is a process where a suitor tries to impress a girl to marry him. It is a male activity. The Bulsa proposal is the culmination of the *dueni* process, when the charm of the suitor wins the day. The *sin-yigma* or *san-yigmoa* takes care of the second stage of the marriage process. His first role is to clinch, certify and guarantee that a proper marriage has taken place, and, thereafter, act as guardian and godfather to the couple, as I shall explain below.

Among the Bulsa, the go-between or negotiator, or mediator of both kinds is usually related in some way to the man. This is especially true of the *sin-yigma* or *san-yigmoa*. He has close affinity with the potenital bride, or according to Kröger (1992, p. 321), he has "kinship ties to the bride's lineage."[4] Note that Kröger is really referring to the 'potential bride's lineage', since until his work of clinching the marriage is complete, the man and woman are regarded as a couple of lovers. Among the Waswahili, on the other hand, the go-between need not be

go-between during the courtship, i.e. he or she leads or accompanies you to the girl's house." It follows that the matchmaker need not have kinship relations with the lovers.

4) According to Caesar R. A. Apentiik, the *san-yigmoa's* work technically begins when the woman has been brought to the man's home. Mrs. Amidu has confirmed this explanation. Mr. Apentiik adds, "At that point, the husband will have to perform all the necessary rites required to ensure that the woman is his wife and this is where the *san-yigmoa's* services come in. The *san-yigmoa* plays a lifelong role, and even continues to do so after the death of the parties. His role is not limited to *puusa* 'greetings', but he acts as the general liaison between the woman's people and her husband's village. Funerals from the woman's village or family are announced through the *san-yigmoa*. Infact, there are many other functions the *san-yigmoa* performs besides *puusa*."

related directly to the man or the bride, but must be a very respectable member of the community. Evidently, when the go-between is related in some way to the potential bride's family, this facilitates the acceptance and conclusion of the proposal of marriage. In both societies, it is males who are the principal go-betweens, or negotiators, or mediators of marriage, though in the both cases, both male and female members may play important roles during the courtship phase. The *mshenga* 'go-between' among the Waswahili is usually accompanied on this visits by carefully selected persons who understand the custom well. Among the Bulsa, however, we have seen that during the courstship phase, no entourage is required. But during the clincher and certification phase and after, married women form part of the entourage of the *san-yigmoa* 'go-between', since both the male and female members of the potential bride may raise objections which can delay or even scupper the consented marriage, because they have not been adequately consulted or satisfied.

When the proposal of marriage is accepted, the potential groom and bride become engaged. Among the Waswahili, the nouns for engagement show no gender discrimination, but the verbs show discrimination. The terms *mchumba* 'engaged person, fiancé/e', pl. *wachumba* 'engaged persons, fiancés/fiancées' refer to the engaged parties equally. The verb *-chumbia* 'engage in marriage, propose marriage to' is a synonym for *-posa* which is done by the potential groom's family, while the passive verb *-chumbiwa* 'be engaged' is a synonym for *-poswa* which refers to the PATIENT or THEME or BENEFACTIVE of the act of engagement or proposal in marriage, hence it refers to the future bride. *Uchumba* in Kiswahili means 'betrothal'. According to Middleton (1992, p. 142), it is "followed by visits between the families, which include discussion of and agreement on the marriage contract (*ahadi*)." In Harries (1965, p. 23), we are told that the happy groom-to-be sends gifts of various kinds and fruits to his betrothed, while the go-between returns to give an obligatory gift, called the *kilemba* 'turban', which cements the engagement, and to negotiate the bride price. The gifts could be both

monetary and non-monetary. The future bride's father receives a cloth for his turban and the future bride's mother receives gifts of a string of beads (*kondawi*, 'beads worn around the waist') and a cloth (*ubeleko, uweleko, mbeleko*, 'cloth for baby carriage'). Part of the monetary gift belongs to the father of the bride, and various amounts are given to the mother. Part of the monetary gifts is also shared among aunts and other relations of the betrothed. The exchange of gifts ensures that no other person can ask for the girl's hand until she is formally married to her future husband.

Among the Waswahili, when the engagement becomes public, people may write or call to congratulate the future groom, but the woman cannot be congratulated for being engaged to the man! She can only be wished well! Mzirai (1971, p. 30) puts it this way:

> "Katika barua mbili hizo zilizotangulia twapata somo dogo jipya kuwa mvulana ndiye apongezwaye tu; msichana yeye hapongezwi bali hutakiwa heri na mema yote. Kupongeza msichana ni kama kuonyesha kuwa ndiye aliyefanya bidii kumpata mvulana, jambo ambalo si mila yetu."
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> "In the two preceding letters, we learn a small lesson, namely the young man is the only one who is congratulated; the young girl is not congratulated, rather she is wished every happiness and good fortune. To congratulate the young girl would suggest that it was she who made the effort to get the young man's hand, something which is not part of our custom."[5]

After the engagement, the marriage ceremony takes place. The groom (*Bwana Harusi*) and, of course, the bride (*Bi. Harusi*) may elect to get married some days before the formal wedding takes place, or they may marry in the morning of the formal wedding day itself (Harries, 1965, p. 27, p. 174). The bride is given away at the mosque by her father or guardian. Details of the marriage system are described in Farsy (1967), Harries (1965, pp. 23-28, pp. 65-66, pp. 171-175, pp. 209-211), Middleton

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5) My own gloss and translation (Amidu, 1999, ch. 3)

(1992, pp. 120-156). After the honeymoon (*fungate*), which lasts seven days, the bride is taken to her husband's house.

Among the Bulsa also, the courtship phrase is filled with the giving of various kinds of gifts by the potential groom to the family of the potential bride. The future couple can be congratulated, the one for being engaged by a worthy young man and the other for succeeding in gaining the hand of a worthy young woman. The acceptance of the proposal is followed by the girl being taken to the man's house or family house by the husband and his entourage. The event occurs usually when it is dark. They could agree to meet at the market place, or at some important festival, or funeral, and the girl is taken to the groom's home from there. If they are going from the bride's family home, then the 'elopement' occurs in the dead of night. This is because, in theory, the parents, though in favour of the marriage, cannot and must not be seen to give their daughter away willingly. When the girl arrives at the groom's home, it is said that he has married a wife, i.e *wa dueni nipok* "he has married a woman", lit. "he keep-past woman" i.e. he has kept or taken a wife/woman'), hence consensual marriage.[6] It is when this event has taken place that the second phase of the marriage begins. The family of the girl will claim not know the whereabouts of their daughter, and, sometimes, the reluctant one among the parents is taken by surprise. The groom's family finds a marriage clincher, the *sin-yigma* or *san-yigmoa*, to mediate in the matter, and certify the marriage as well as serve as its guarantor. He goes with his entourage to beg for forgiveness for the misdemeanour of the groom, and offically inform the bride's family of the marriage of their daughter

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6) Note that *dueni* is polysemic, meaning 'put, keep, dress up, etc.'. At night, when all are asleep, the groom, who has visited his 'wife-to-be' leaves by the front gate. The woman leaves by the back gate. In the past, she climbed (jumped) over the wall at the back of the house, and is then led by the groom and his friends to the groom's house. This action ensures that dissenting members of the family do not block their departure. It is only when the girl arrives at the groom's house that the marriage is nominally recognized as a consensual marriage, but it remains unofficial and is treated as an 'elopement'.

to the groom. The process is called *nag nisa*, lit. 'strike hand-PL' i.e 'clap hands, in supplication or applause'. When the bride's family finally accepts that their daughter is nominally married to the groom, the *sin-yigma* or *san-yingmoa* performs the rite of *akayaali ale o boro* 'do not search for her for she is safe with us', lit. 'NEG-search for CONJ-because she COP-be there'. This signifies and signals that the marriage is now official and no new proposal can be accepted in connection with the lady or girl in question. The ceremony consists of giving gifts such as tobacco, cola nuts, drinks, and various amounts of money. When the marriage has been clinched, there is still another rite to be performed before the bride's family formally recognizes the marriage and the whereabouts of their daughter. The rite is called the *lig-nangsuing* 'closing of the gate', lit. 'close gate-way', which is also the seal of the marriage. According to Mrs. Amidu, in this ceremony, the *san-yigmoa* gives a hoe, or, in some cases, a sacrificial animal, e.g. a sheep, to the bride's parents. The offer signifies the formal apology to the bride's family. That is, the *sin-yigma* or *san-yigmoa* apologizes for the manner in which their son-in-law took their daughter away at the dead of night, leaving the front gate to the house open! The animal offering is called *bogluk dung* 'sacrificial animal', lit. 'shrine animal'. In addition, drinks, flour, and smoked guinea fowls are also given to the girl's family. The performance signals officially where the girl now resides, and it seals the marriage. If the groom cannot afford to perform the *lig-nangsuing* with the *akayaali*, he may postpone it to some other time, but, in that case, he is still not completely married, and the bride's parents could, technically, take the woman away from him, and he has a weak case if and when the woman leaves him.

Among the Waswahili too, a man who does not pay up his *mahari* 'bridewealth' well after children are born in the wedlock is regarded as unrealiable. The non-payment is considered a shame and a disgrace to the man and his family (Middleton, 1992, p. 128). In this case, the marriage is, technically, incomplete, and could put pressure on the marriage and lead to early divorce. The woman can ask for a divorce,

or behave in such a way that a divorce is inevitable.

Note that the Bulsa man has to do all the payments or transfer of property. The woman brings no dowry to the marriage, and she may leave when she is unhappy with the marriage, with little or no consequences to herself or her family. Among the Waswahili also, the man does much of the payments and transfer of property. The woman, however, brings a dowry to the marital relationship, but it remains her property and the man may not touch it without her consent. We observe that, in both Kiswahili and Bulsa societies, women have more freedom as married partners than they are often credited with by social scientists and development workers from abroad.

Within the marriage system itself, we discover that among the Waswahili of East Africa and the Bulsa of Northern Ghana, a young girl or woman is married by a man, she never marries a man. On the other hand, a man marries and is never married. Unlike the situation in other languages, the distinctions and roles are again delimited both culturally and linguistically. Linguistically, we use the verb form *-oa* 'marry' among the Waswahili and *faari* 'marry', or alternatively *-dueni nipok* 'marry or take a wife', among the Bulsa when the man is the one marrying a woman. Specific cultural roles are expected of such a man which are not expected of a woman, and the reverse is equally true. We use the passive verb form *-olewa* 'be married' among the Waswahili, and the entirely different verb form *yali* 'marry, i.e. be married' among the Bulsa, when the woman is married to a man. In Kiswahili, the passive verb *-oawa* 'be married', used of a man, is not used. Johnson (1939, p. 350) records it as "seldom used", while the Standard Kiswahili dictionary of TUKI (1981, p. 222) and Issak (1999, p. 213) do not even mention the form at all.

In Kiswahili, the noun *ndoa* 'marriage', is a noun derived from *-oa* 'marry'. Observe, surprisingly, that the noun *ndoa*, unlike the verb form *-oa*, applies to both men and women, and so does not distinguish between the different cultural roles of man and woman in the marital relationship. Among the Bulsa, however, we use *faarika* 'marriage', a

verbal noun derived from *faari* 'marry', for the marriage of a man, and *yalika* 'marriage', another verbal noun derived from *yali* 'be married', when referring to the marriage of a woman.[7] Thus, even though the Waswahili and Bulsa have almost identical concepts about marital relationships between men and women, there are degrees of differentiation in the way these are expressed in each language. The similarities, nevertheless remain striking. In both societies, the man is the active and dominant AGENT, and the woman is the passive and non-dominant PATIENT. This dichotomy permeates the entire system of marriage, establishing the hierarchical relationship between a man and a woman in these societies. In both Kiswahili and Bulsa societies, equality is a marked and highly valued feature of the marital life or relationship. And yet, this equity is not reflected in the linguistic patterning of these languages.[8]

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7) Observe that there is no way of expressing literally the meaning of the 'passivized' noun *yalika* of Buli in English. I use the term 'passive' in a semantic sense rather than in a grammatical sense. Grammatically speaking, Buli is a passive-less language, and this may explain the use of distinctive active verbs types for expressing the different roles in the marriage relationship among the Bulsa. It seems clear that languages with passives use inflectional derivation to distinguish distinctive meanings, while languages without passives may use lexical differentiation to express distinctive meanings. The evidence in Buli suggests that active versus passive relations are, in some languages, allosyns of the same syntactic syn, and hence one member of the active-passive pair is viewed as redundant, and hence has been deleted by the grammar altogether. We find the same redundancy in Kiswahili grammar, such that Kiswahili, in fact, has passive inflection which is frequently neutralized in predication-sentences, with the result that active-passive constructions are often simply types of transitive constructions than transitive versus intransitive structures. Typologically, therefore, Kiswahili stands between languages with passives and languages without passives in my view (Amidu, 1999, 2000).

8) It could be argued that the stereotypic views that members of communities have about male versus female relations in marriage and the societal roles played out by men and women are indirectly also reinforced by their linguistic 'perceptions' of marriage.

2.1. Language, culture and development objectives

We see from the above illustrations that the cultural perception of marital relationship is encoded in the languages Kiswahili and Buli respectively. It seems to reflect the behavioural patterns of the men and women in the home and in the society and indeed, also reflects the expectations of the partners. It follows, in my view, that a development research which advocates equality of genders or sexes and opportunities in social and communal life in order to optimize the social, material, educational, health and other benefits of development assistance, in the form of inputs and projects to the recipient-consumers, may be sound at the level of basic human rights, but, perhaps, shortsighted in selling the idea to a Kiswahili or Bulsa community, if it does not take into consideration the linguistic idioms of the speakers. The linguistic idioms examined above encode a stereotypic relationship between the sexes in the community or society. Married couples, after all, form the bedrock of the society, and are the sources of transmission of new ideas to the younger generation of future leaders and elders.

Several problems confront the development researcher in the field. For example, the question always arises in the mind of the Bulsa or Kiswahili male as to whether equality of the sexes or gender also means the right of the woman to marry the man! How should the development researcher respond to this anxiety? He or she may choose to dismiss it as trivial or peripheral, and see the issue as a typical reaction of overprivileged males who have oppressed women most of their lives. And yet, the question reveals that equalization without linguistic understanding could lead to the rejection of a well-meaning programme for the simple reason that it is seen as a threat, real or imagine, to the stability of the social fabric of a group or groups of people which is largely male dominated. Breaking down this kind of cultural barrier cannot simply be legislated in a vacuum, or preached from pulpits, minarets and raised platforms. Education, supported by legislation, may with time lead naturally to people recognizing the rights

of each other. Access to education may also lead to the emergence of new types of relationships. As a consequence, new forms of language usage may either come into being or old forms fall into disuse or acquire new meanings. This type of epiphany takes a long time to emerge in a society, while the development researcher is, understandably, impatient for results here and now. If we wish to accelerate equality of opportunities among men and women, as defined in international fora, then development research must be prepared to invest in language training and education as much as in the development programmes themselves. I wish to suggest, therefore, that the development researcher should make plans for long term development requiring a lot of painstaking acquisition of language competence and cultural values of the speech communities they are out to assist. A development researcher who is not well versed in the language and culture of a people may leave in the minds of recipient-consumers, vivid examples of the dangers of accepting new ideas into the society whatever their evident technical advantages. On the other hand, governments which fund development programmes may be discouraged if the cost of such programmes become too high. A successful programme does not come cheap, and it is, in any event, better than a cheap one that fails, in both the short and long run, because the dangers and threats perceived by the recipient society seem to outweigh the immediate advantages of the projects and programmes that have been put in place.

3. Linguistic and cultural identity and development strategies

The goal of development, after all, is to better the lives of human beings whose material conditions, social situations, and physical and mental well-being are constantly in need of renewal and uplift or which fall below a minimum level of decency for human beings.

Let us consider, for example, the vexed issue of birth control and the use of contraceptives as preventive measures both for unwanted pregnancies and as a protection against health hazards like HIV and AIDS. In Kiswahili, childbirth (*uzazi*) is regarded as the key component of marriage, its *raison d'être*. When a woman is pregnant, people are not allowed to carry live wood fire or coal fire past her. The belief is that violation of the taboo will lead to a miscarriage (-*haribika mimba*, lit. 'spoil/abort pregnancy') or lead to the infertility of the woman after she gives birth (-*katwa uzazi* = 'be cut off as to birth') (Farsy, 1960, p. 7). The belief and practice just mentioned are, today, less observed in the urban areas where, in any event, the inhabitants have better access to electricity, good medical care and advice than the people in the rural areas.

Among the Bulsa of Ghana also, childbirth (*biam*) is the cornerstone of any marriage and the stability of the home. Thus, any act or artifact which interrupts childbirth (-*geb biam* = lit 'cut or stop or interrupt birth') unnaturally, or would have the same effect of preventing birth, is frowned upon. Even natural abortions, called -*biagi kaasi* 'abort, miscarry', lit. 'give birth spoil' among the Bulsa, are attributed to supernatural causes, the act of witches, enemies and rivals. It is the pride of every woman, therefore, to give birth, and no risk is too great in achieving this goal. This is so central to the Bulsa that when there is a long delay between the first child and the next child, this is called *wusum biam* 'horse's birth', lit. 'horse birth' (Kröger, 1992, p. 57, who gives a delay of "*four years or more*" as describing this birth). Thus, spacing between normal childbirths for women should be less than four years in Bulsaland. A long delay, by Bulsa standards, leads to suspicion of infertility (-*biagi zaani* = 'stop giving birth', usu. unexpectedly, lit. 'give brith stand'). It is a very distressing state and period for many women.

Agyekum (1996, p. 115) has also written that:

"The Akan by their matrilineal system of inheritance believe that

one important feature of femalehood is marriage and delivery of children, i.e. the provision of new members for the family. Every Akan woman feels it an honour to partake in the mystery of procreation by giving birth."

From all the above cultural values expressed in linguistic terms, therefore, we find that childbirth, and fertility are aspects of culture which find definitive expression in the languages spoken by people. The principles of birth control and contraception, on the one hand, and the need to reproduce as often as possible, on the other hand, are often antitheses of each other even though they are well understood by the people concerned. In short, the practices of birth control and contraception would seem to run counter to the native idiom that equates complete womanhood with large numbers of children. For both the woman and her husband, therefore, a number of anxieties often arise about birth control and birth spacing. One such anxiety is whether or not birth control and birth spacing could lead to a curtailment in the numbers of children delivered to the couple, whereas cultural pride expects and demands more childbirths as a mark of prestige for the woman and her man. In addition, not many women, who regard themselves as complete and whole, are willing to accept from their peers and society the stigma or label 'horse's birth', even after they are advised that birth control and birth spacing may enable them to stem poverty, malnutrition, over crowding, and over population, and ensure a better future for their children and themselves.

At the extreme end is barrenness. This is known as *kirik* in Buli, *obinini* in Akan and *utasa* in Kiswahili. Barrenness is regarded as a curse, a sort of punishment for a sin, either committed by oneself or visited upon the individual for the sins of the parents. In a marriage, among the Bulsa or Waswahili or Akan, it is usually the woman who is the cause of childlessness. This is because a woman needs to prove that she is fertile, by being pregnant, while a man does not have to do so. The issue often leads to divorce in many African communities. A

woman is only vindicated when she becomes pregnant outside marriage, called 'testing her fertility' or in a second marriage. Agyekum (1996, pp. 115-116) has also recounted that, among the Akan, barrenness is considered such a serious disability and a shame that the term for it, *obonini*, has become a taboo word — an unmentionable word.

Consider also the following custom found among the Waswahili or Swahili people. Among the Waswahili, there is a 'test of virginity' which takes place after "the nikahi, the formal agreement of marriage, is signed and witnessed" (Middleton, 1992, p. 147). At night, a white sheet of calico is spread on the wedding bed before the newly wed climb into it. The female instructor (*kungwi*) or confidante (*somo*) or an elderly woman is nearby to help the couple. When consumation, or rather penetration, occurs, the *kungwi* goes to inspect and remove the sheet. If there are blood stains, then the bride was a virgin prior to her wedding. The girl's family declares the marriage a success by announcing that *harusi imejibu*, lit. 'the wedding has responded favourably'. If no blood stains are found, then it is assumed that, most probably, the bride has been a flirt and had been deflowered of her essential youthfulness by others.

The proclamation that the bride is a virgin, i.e. '*harusi imejibu*', is done before the bride's female family members and eventually close circle of invited relations. This is accompanied by great rejoicing and jubilation by the bride's family. The groom gives gifts in grateful appreciation. On the other hand, if it turns out that the bride is not a virgin, per the stimulus test, there is shame and grief all around and the man may even divorce his bride on the spot! It is known medically that the hymen of a girl may break due to natural causes, or forms of exertion and hard work without her sleeping about with men. Usually, however, the family sense of shame, in the cultural set up, is so great, especially if it involves the marriage of a first daughter, that such explanations do not redeem a lost honour. The Kiswahili sense of honour explains, in part, why some families betroth their daughters at an early age, and/or seclude the girls upon their reaching puberty.

In the 'virginity test' system of the Waswahili, the bride is under consderable pressure to establish her purity as a bride. No such demand is made on the groom, even though he is equally anxious that nothing should go wrong. A very vivid description of the practice and its side-effects, followed by very strong condemnation of it, is given by Farsy (1967, pp. 18-21) (Middleton, 1992, p. 148). We see in the above practice that in spite of increased awareness and knowledge about the weaknesses of the system, the practice still survives, and some families look forward eagerly to the results.

We can see from the illustrations above that a development programme which attempts to control and space childbirths and prevent diseases like HIV/AIDS by introducing reasonable controls sometimes runs counter to the existing linguistic and cultural beliefs of a people. In these contexts, merely asserting the advantages of a programme or strategy, or the dangers of ignoring the counsels of programme leaders is not enough. There is also a need to understand the extent of the impact of both the cultural and linguistic idioms on the lives of families that have no children, have children born with long spacing between them, or have too few children to show for feminine and masculine fertility, etc., and to introduce a programme of education that minimizes these social anxieties.

4. Idioms, identity and development research

The idioms, and figures of speech of two or more language groups might be alike in remarkable ways, as illustrated with Kiswahili and Buli, and, to a limited extent, Akan above. We may also infer from §§ 2.-3. that the languages of the human world are different from each other, and each has its own idioms, metaphors, and figures of speech generally, even though they belong to the same linguistic umbrella. It is, therefore, necessary to recognize the similarities and differences between linguistic idioms and the values they carry when crossing over from one cultural and linguistic milieu into another. I would, therefore, like to

see, an increase in the level of integration between language use and development research philosophy as a means of optimizing the goals of the latter.

Michael Taylor (1968, p. 3) has summed up the importance of breaking down communication barriers between human beings who are in constant interdependent relationships as follows:

> "No one at an international school can regard a given language A as being the only possible vehicle of experience, when on all sides he hears other perfectly normal human beings using languages B, C, D, etc., for the same purpose. This elementary shock will shake him out of his linguistic complacency—and, of course, some linguistic groups are more prone to complacency than others—and he will develop an interest in what language is and what it does."

Development, after all, is about doing something for people and language is one of the vehicles for doing so effectively. Every development research should, therefore, take cognizance of what language does in a community or society. It should also pay attention to the diversity of the languages of the people among whom the results of the research are to be implemented and make adjustments to communicate the results more effectively to the recipient-consumers. 'Linguistic complacency', as Taylor calls it, is probably one of the major causes of the failure of many well-intentioned and well-planned development projects in the third world, in my view.

4.1. Goals of research, development, and language

The goals of development research are in fact the same as for any other academic and even non-academic discipline. In order to achieve the objectives of development and language research, therefore, what we need is a clear statement of goals. Within linguistic studies, Stevens (1968, pp. 26-27) has provided us some guidelines on the subject. Under the title, 'The Nature of Research', he claims that "Anyone can carry

out useful investigation if he takes care that his work reflects certain basic rules of conduct." Stevens (1968, p. 27) lists the following points as the 'basic rules of conduct' required in doing any good research:

(a) to limit the scope of the study and to deal with only one problem at a time;

(b) to decide in advance what questions one is asking and to find out the right sequence for asking them;

(c) to formulate the question in an unambiguous way;

(d) to put forward as one's conclusions only such generalizations as are completely justified by the evidence;

(e) to make every effort to discover what previous work has been done on these and related questions;

(f) to be at once imaginative in one's design of the investigation and objective in one's assessment of the evidence.

I wish to add two basic rules of conduct, which Stevens (1968) appears to overlook, to the list above. These are:

(g) to gather preliminary evidence from/about the subjects of the study, or a representative sample of them, prior to formulating the research questions in an unambiguous way so as to ensure the relevance of the questions to the needs of the recipient-consumers; and

(h) to make every effort to discover and understand the linguistic idiom and culture of the targets or recipient-consumers of the end product so that the end design is clearly understood and accepted by them.

The steps above will help to achieve the objective goals of research within a society or community of people. Stevens' 'basic rules of conduct' appear, however, to be aimed at a 'poly-cultural' society with a more or less homogeneous lingual system. In a homogeneous

linguistic set up, e.g. research aimed at a largely European or European-related audience, the transfer of research results from one group to the other may not require 'radical translation and education'. This is because the societies in Europe or of European background share a large measure of a common cultural heritage in their diversity. The same attitudes, however well-tested in Europe, towards the transfer of research results to other societies which are distinctive both in the form and content of language and culture, may not work nearly as satisfactorily as might be expected or predicted by researchers. My addition of two more basic rules of conduct of research to Stevens' list, I believe, enhances the relevance of his general basic rules of research to a wider world. My additions attempt to remove the element of 'linguistic complacency' that often accompanies the transfer of research findings and programmes to the less favoured parts of the world.

From the basic rules of conduct of research outlined above, we discover that the methods and theories of research are standard and in general basic for most areas of scientific investigation. There is no reason, therefore, why development researchers and linguists cannot cooperate more closely in finding ways of packaging developmental and educational strategies for recipient-consumers in such a way that they will lead to long lasting changes of attitudes and still preserve the cultural and linguistic pride of the communities involved. Already, in Europe and America, the coming of the information technology age, called the internet, has led to an increased use of linguistic information to package products for consumers in their diverse languages which clearly impact the behaviour of the end-users. Development research could achieve the same or better results in developing countries by harmonizing language packaging and education to its causes.

In my view, therefore, development strategies should go hand in hand with linguistic engineering in matters like health education, gender equality, etc. When this is done, the old stigmatic idioms will disappear gradually, and new and more positive terms will replace them (Amidu, 1997, pp. 144-146, on lexical engineering in Kiswahili). The new terms

will express new realities over the old ones. It is only in this way that birth control, birth spacing, and the use of contraceptives, etc. will be more widely accepted, and the desired goals of development planning achieved efficiently. Linguistic engineering, therefore, needs to be part of the packaging of development strategies. For, this is where language and culture education can and ought to underpin the efforts of development research. In this regard, the development researcher and worker need to be exposed to linguistic idioms before they embark on their mission or project or programme.

5. Language, politics, culture, and loyalty

Why do people adhere to customs which may be harmful to themselves and their children after so much is done to guide them in new directions? Why would a community or group of people reject or turn their backs on new techniques and their concepts which are designed to enhance the quality of their lives? And why are ethnicity and ethnic conflicts on the increase in the Third World and in some developed countries today? Perhaps, the answer may be found in the term LOYALTY, both in a political sense and in a linguistic and social sense. According to Taylor (1968, p. 2) the trend in Europe is towards greater loyalty to the nation-state such that in his view,
"education has become a divisive force determining exclusive loyalty to a given state and a given cultural pattern."
Today, Taylor's claim may not be altogether valid since Europe is moving gingerly towards some form of integration of its economic, political, and legal institutions. But what about cultural institutions? Whereas, today, Europeans, generally, are striving to overcome bottlenecks to integration, some are vacillating and uncertain. Norway, for example, though a member of the EEC is not a member of the EU and may not even join the common currency system, the Euro. In Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, for example, the trend is towards relative national exclusivity, or towards maintaining national neutrality

at the expense of increased integration. Cultural and linguistic complacency seem to be gaining the upper hand in debates about integration in a larger Europe. This trend is, after all, only human. Perhaps, it was for these reasons that Taylor observed further that political loyalty is easily diffused. A Norwegian might decide to become British, a Ghanaian Norwegian, etc., because in all these nation-states, people share several things in common. They want good and transparent government, good health delivery systems, good educational institutions, protection from poverty, homelessness, etc., and good pension schemes.

Cultural loyalty, on the other hand, involves "a definite set of attitudes and assumptions reflected both in artefacts and in language." (Taylor, 1968, p. 3). Cultural loyalty, Taylor maintains, is, therefore, more problematic for human beings. He writes,

"Loyalty to a culture, on the other hand, is the germ of our morality, and only by accepting this allegiance, in all its frailty and narrowness, can we build upon it a more solid and comprehensive inter-cultural awareness. To deny ourselves is the worst possible starting point for understanding others." (Taylor, 1968, p. 3).

From the above views on loyalties, we observe an interesting paradox, namely to be loyal to a culture is also to be loyal to a language spoken by members of the culture, and to be loyal to a given language is to be loyal the culture in which it is used.

In Europe, political loyalty is now going hand in hand with cultural loyalty. Even the best native European in Africa looks to his ancestral homeland, namely Europe, for his or her inspiration and not to Africa, and many have dual loyalties and passports. In Africa, however, one often gets the impression that development research and researchers expect the opposite from recipient-consumers. They expect recipient-consumers to be politically and culturally loyal to Europe or the West from where the donations come, and hence to be disloyal to

their own cultures and societies. For example, democracy and religion are first defined from a Eurocentric perspective and prescribed as valid universally, as fundamental to human rights. We know that President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, former President J. J. Rawlings of Ghana, President Arap Moi of Kenya, President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, and many others, have been dragged screaming to the table of democracy under threat of losing vital developmental assistance from the industrialized nations, the World Bank and the I.M.F. The new Government of Ghana led by President J. K. Kufour has agreed to join the group of highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) on advise from the British government. Quite naturally, the paradox also implies that to accept development packages is also to accept or subordinate one's cultural loyalty to the foreign culture and its language. Breaking this cycle of suspicion by participants in development is one of the challenges of development research and education today. To break it requires a bilingual or multilingual development researcher. His/her task will be, inter alia, to determine how far it is desirable to de-culturalize a people in the name of development and how far it is not so desirable. This is one area that we need to concentrate on in the future.

5.1. What development research and education can do about linguistic and cultural loyalty in Africa

If development research is to have any lasting impact in so-called developing countries, then what needs to be done is to reach out to people in the idioms of their own languages and cultures in a way that also breaks down some parochial loyalties within the communities themselves. In this way, development funded from outside will not be seen as a call to people to deny themselves, i.e. culturally and sometimes linguistically. It will be seen as a process of education and integration into a wider world. For example, a woman's loyalty to expanding the lineage of the group should not be at the expense of her health or well being or the survival of her children. Problems of fertility

should be viewed as medical problems rather than punishments from gods and enemies. Virginity tests add nothing to the stability of the home and bring nothing substantial to family pride. Once a people begin to understand and even question their own practices and linguistic usage, then the first steps towards development have been attained. To achieve these idyllic states, the recipient consumers must be involved in developing solutions to their problems that will be long lasting and enduring.

Eradicating gender imbalances in language use and practices requires that work on the native languages of recipient-consumers should go hand in hand with work on improving the material well being of the recipient-consumer group. Many attitudes are enshrined in proverbs and other linguistic patterns. For example, Sacleux (1939, p. 560, p. 711) records the proverbs or sayings of the Waswahili below.

1."*Mume ni kazi, mke ni nguo*, l'homme travaille, la famme se pare"
   Cl. 1 he-husband COP-be Cl. 9 it-work, Cl. 1 she-wife COP-be
   Cl. 10 they-cloth

The literal gloss in (1) is my work and follows the method in Amidu (1997).

2. "*Mtu nyumbani mwake hatiiwi ni mkewe, haonwi kama ni mume asipompiga twa!*"
   Cl. 1 he-person Cl. 17/26 there—house Cl. 17/26 in there-his NEG-Cl.
   1 SM he-obey-PASS-PRESENT NEG.-MOD. CONJ-by/with Cl. 1
   she-wife-his, NEG-Cl. 1 SM he-see-PASS-PRESENT NEG.-MOD.
   CONJ-as COP-be Cl. 1 he-husband, Cl. 1 SM
   he-NEG.CONDITIONAL-Cl. 1 OM she-hit-MOD. ADV-whack!
   "A man is not respected in his house by his wife, he is not treated
   like a real husband (i.e. man/master) until he wallops her whack!"

Proverbs like the above reflect the gender prejudices and bias of the

society. The attitude reflected in the proverbs are stereotypic views which subordinate women to men, and often deny them access to good education and self-respect. The attitudes are found all over Africa and the developing world, and once existed in a marked form in Europe, too. But, I am sure that if we address the language, cultural and other problems mentioned in this study through education, development research and projects will achieve better dividends and achieve their desired goals of raising awareness about global changes and trends, improve literacy in surprising ways, and lead to increased gender equality and respect. Integrated language, cultural, education and development research will result in the eradication or alleviation of poverty, hunger and disease through self-reliance and social justice.

6. Conclusion

Language and culture, in my view, will determine, in the end, attitudes towards new techniques. Language and culture will also determine changes in the behavioral patterns of the recipient-consumers with regard to the findings of developmental research and education. Working among the recipient-consumers breaks down suspicions, loosens loyalty bonds, and builds trust about the intentions behind the introduction of developments programmes. This is especially so when communication in the local languages serves as a medium for disseminating new information. The most intensive period of communication occurs when the local community is actively involved in the projects or programmes as a sort of in-service training. In addition, the participants will be spurred on by the hope of one day being able to efficiently manage the programmes without foreign assistance or even advice, or both. Integrating the programmes or projects into the language and culture of a people in these circumstances ensures a high degree of acceptance, and a lasting impact on the communities, in my opinion.

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