

The Promotion of Kiswahili for African Development: The Weakest Link

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Abstract

Language serves as an important resource in the socio-economic and political development of any country both in Africa and beyond, and Kiswahili is not an exception. Kiswahili is believed to be one of the most widely spoken and influential languages in Africa today. Its role in aiding national development in a number of countries has been recognized by many scholars. Important fields of development pointed out by these scholars include African liberation, social participation and integration, unification, African diplomacy and conflict resolution, commerce, administration and governance, politics and democracy, cultural heritage, education, science and technology, mass media and broadcasting, environmental conservation, and health. However, the quest to develop Kiswahili into a language of African identity has taken decades to be realized, and Kiswahili is largely seen as a language of some countries particularly in Eastern and Central Africa. This setback is attributed to a number of factors. In this paper, we qualitatively engaged with the available literature, complimented with our own observations and insights, with the aim of delineating the weakest link in the promotion of Kiswahili into a truly continental language. The findings reveal five weak links: Eurocentric language policies, institutional weaknesses, diminishing Pan-Africanist spirit and lack of political goodwill, lack of adequate human resource and immobility, weak language cultivation strategies, and language ideologies and language attitudes. Institutional weaknesses and diminishing Pan-Africanist spirit/lack of political goodwill emerge as the weakest links; these two have the potential, power and ability to impact positively on the rest and alter the status quo. Thus, we recommend setting up strong national, regional and continental institutions for promotion of Kiswahili across Africa, as well as creating positions of language ambassadors for Kiswahili from the Kiswahili speaking countries, particularly Tanzania and Kenya to the rest of Africa.

Key words: Africa, Language, Kiswahili, African Development, African Identity, Weakest Link

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By

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Introduction

The concept ‘development’ is broad and multidimensional, and as such understood and applied differently in different disciplines and by different people. As Burkey (1993) observes, development encompasses social, economic, political and human development, and that economic and political development must translate into social development. Social development in turn translates into overall human development. Because human beings live communally in a society, development from a society’s perspective entails, as observed by Uzoma (2006), bringing the society to a more advanced and progressed state or form. This is also noted by Todaro and Smith (2006) who see development as a process meant for equitable social and economic transformation of the society through institutionalized social structures and people’s positive attitudes for an accelerated and increased growth and poverty eradication.

For a society to realize accelerated growth every citizen has to have the ability and means of exploiting whatever exists in their environment in order to achieve their desires. This means that citizens should be empowered with the resources that will enable them to participate in the process of bringing about development together with others. This points to the concept of ‘participatory development’ or ‘people participation’ (Burkey, 1993), which is often used in economic and social arenas to refer to the collective involvement of the citizens in the initiatives and decision-making processes about issues that concern their lives. It has been argued that the primary role of people participation in development initiatives is to create a more socially responsible citizenry who are able to use their minds creatively and collectively to improve their living conditions through poverty eradication.

Due to lack of adequate people participation in development initiatives and decision-making processes, most African countries have failed to realize substantial and accelerated economic development and as such, most African countries are classified as Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Nonetheless, most recently, African countries have moved to embrace the concept of participatory development by availing different resources to their citizenry to effectively realize this grass-root approach to development. One key resource for people participation is language; and for this case, an effective language. As we demonstrate later in this paper, an effective language for greater development varies from society to society, but before we make this demonstration, we start by highlighting, in a general sense, the role of language in the development process.

The Role of Language in the Development Process

As observed by Uzoma (2016), language serves as an important resource in the socio-economic and political development of any country. This assertion is supported by Mkwinda-Nyasulu (2013) who stresses that where there is no language there is no development. This position is also held by Olaoye (2013) who argues that language is a weapon for the uplift of the underprivileged, the marginalized, the un-informed or the illiterates in the society. This is so because language as the basic medium of communication enables people to participate in the day-to-day activities that directly or indirectly contribute to development. It is through language

that the basic needs of human interaction at both individual and collective levels are satisfied (Uzoma, 2016).

Language helps human beings to express themselves and communicate with each other. When this communication is done effectively, those involved develop some form of oneness in their goals and aspirations. This oneness is important in enabling development in society.

The importance of language in development is also evident in augmented development witnessed in some African countries as a result of broadcasts done in local languages (Alumuku, 2006). Thus, language is rightly understood to be at the core of personal, group, national and international communication.

It is generally argued that due to the existence of a multiplicity of languages in a society, a common language of communication is always desirable for that society to achieve increased and sustained development. The common language in this case serves to unite people of different ethnicities and linguistic backgrounds, foster social participation and integration, and act as a language of common identity for the people. A common language is important for unity of purpose in all that we do including development activities (Mkwinda-Nyasulu, 2013). This perhaps finds relevance in the old age slogan of ‘united we stand, divided we fall’.

In Africa where there exists between 1000 and 2500 African languages (UNESCO, 2010), Kiswahili is one of the languages that have been recommended for promotion into a continental *lingua franca* and language of African identity. Before we examine the place of Kiswahili in African development and the challenges that it has and continues to face, we first make generalized comments about the language situation in African countries in order to help us appreciate the need for adopting African languages for African development.

African Languages in African Development

Upon colonization of Africa in the 19th century, the colonial governments introduced their languages as official languages of African countries. The colonizers favored and promoted the use of colonial languages in official arenas such as education and administration. Education was particularly the main arena in which the colonial policies were advanced and perpetuated (Obeng & Adegbija, 1999). Upon attaining independence, most of the African countries maintained this status quo, making the colonial language policies a long-lasting legacy of colonialism in Africa. The widely held expectation that after independence African governments would aggressively pursue language policies that promote African identity, and even assign more prominent roles to African languages did not materialize; the colonial languages continued to take centre stage in all key aspects of development (Mohochi, 2015).

Ever since independence of African countries, colonial languages have enjoyed high status and prestige over the African ones. This is due to the fact that colonial language policies in African countries accorded high and superior status to European languages while devaluing the African languages (Kanana, 2013). With their language policies, the colonizers succeeded in instilling a belief in the African minds that the African languages were inferior to European languages. Unsurprisingly, competence in foreign languages has over the years been viewed by many Africans as more prestigious and an indicator of intelligence and academic excellence, and by extension, a vital source of socio-economic development of self and society.

The forgoing serves to illustrate that African languages have not been accorded their rightful place in the development of the society. This situation has been highlighted by authors such as (Mberia, 2015; Ndhlovu, 2008) who have demonstrated the usefulness of African languages in socio-economic development and challenged the political authorities to provide

favorable conditions that will enable the use of African languages in spheres such as social participation and integration, unification, African diplomacy and conflict resolution, commerce, administration and governance, politics and democracy, cultural heritage, education, science and technology, mass media and broadcasting, environmental conservation, and health.

Accordingly, there has been a growing clamor for the recognition of African languages as important vehicles in the overall development and growth of African countries, and the enactment and adoption of policies that foster this recognition. As observed by Ndhlovu (2008), the clamor finds impetus in the *Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literature (2000)*, which among other issues calls for promotion and advancement of research on African languages in order for them to take on the duty, the responsibility and the challenge of speaking for the continent, as well as helping in the decolonization of African minds for African renaissance. The clamor has seen attempts by most countries to promote African languages to not only national languages, but also official languages. As a result, between the years 2000 and 2018, African countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa have recognized African languages as co-official languages to foreign languages.

Regional bodies have also warmed up to the clamor for African languages in development. In July 2004, the African Union (AU), citing reasons of continental unity, adopted Kiswahili as one of its official languages. The desire to promote Kiswahili into a continental language were raised for the first time by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and later echoed by among others, President Kwame Nkrumah (the first president of the Republic of Ghana), the African writer and Nobel Prize Winner Professor Wole Soyinka, the Pan-Africanist Professor Ali Mazrui and the African Writer Professor Ayi Kwei Armah (Mulokozi, 2002; Waliaula, 2013). The voices of these Pan-Africanists have without doubt had a positive effect on the position and status of Kiswahili in Africa and beyond.

However, as we argue in this paper, the desire of the Pan-Africanists of having Kiswahili as the most widely used language in Africa and the sole language of African identity has taken long to become. Before exploring the possible reasons that have slowed down the process of development and promotion of Kiswahili in Africa, we devote the next subsection to discussing the genesis and spread of Kiswahili in Africa while citing cases of how the language has aided development in some African countries, particularly in Tanzania and Kenya.

Kiswahili and the Development of Africa: Case Studies

There is no doubt that Kiswahili is one of the greatest indigenous languages in the continent whose role in development cannot be gainsaid (Mukuthuria, 2006). In its initial spread, Kiswahili was aided mainly by the long distance trade involving the early Arab traders, the East African coastal communities and later, the interior communities (Chimerah, 1998; Mazrui and Mazrui, 1995; Mbaabu, 1978; Mukuthuria, 2006; Okombo & Muna, 2017).

The missionaries and German colonial governments in Tanzania and Rwanda-Urundi were also instrumental in the initial spread of the Kiswahili by using it in administration and allowing its use as a medium of instruction in lower classes in primary schools (Rubagumya, 1990). The British colonial government initially disallowed the use of Kiswahili in schools and administration, but later changed tact and formed the Inter-Territorial Language Committee to promote the use of Kiswahili in the East African protectorate (Marshall, 2015).

The African freedom fighters such as Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania would later pick on Kiswahili to unite Africans in the struggle for his country's liberation from colonialism, and after independence, Tanzania adopted Kiswahili as the official and national language. Mzee

Jomo Kenyatta – the first Prime Minister and president of Kenya aped Nyerere and made Kiswahili the national language of Kenya after its independence in 1963.

In recent years, there have been more attempts to raise the status and prestige of Kiswahili in various parts of East Africa and Africa. In 2004, the African Union declared Kiswahili as one its official working languages. Uganda became the first to respond in 2006 by making Kiswahili a co-official language to English although as observed by Namyalo & Nakayiza (2015), this constitutional provision is yet to be operationalized by parliament through relevant legislation. In 2010, Kenya, through its new constitution, declared Kiswahili a co-official language to English in addition to it being an official language.

In 2016, Kiswahili received a major boost from the East African Community (EAC) which, through the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), passed a resolution to make Kiswahili as one of the official languages of the Community (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013; Okombo & Muna, 2017). Rwanda responded in 2017 by declaring Kiswahili one of their official languages. Plans are also underway to increase teaching of Kiswahili in Burundi and South Sudan in preparation for it being accorded official status, with the later having signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tanzania that will see Tanzania sending teachers to teach Kiswahili in South Sudan (Mbamalu, 2019).

More voices in support of the use of Kiswahili as a common language in Africa have been heard, most recently, in 2018 to be precise, from South Africa where the veteran opposition leader Julius Malema, who is the leader of Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party called for the promotion of Kiswahili as a language of African identity (Mbamalu 2019). Malema's sentiments were reinforced by South Africa's minister for Education who later in 2018 announced plans to teach Kiswahili as an optional language in South African schools from the year 2020.

In parts of Africa where Kiswahili has been used, it has been hailed for contributing to development in areas such as African liberation and unification, social participation and integration, commerce, African diplomacy and conflict resolution, administration and governance, politics and democracy, cultural heritage, education, science and technology, mass media and broadcasting, environmental conservation, and health.

As we observed at the beginning of this subsection, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and other liberation leaders used Kiswahili to rally Tanzanians behind the call for independence, and after independence in 1961, Nyerere made Kiswahili the national language of Tanzania and used it to unify the more than 120 ethno-linguistic groups of Tanzania (Gordon, 2005; Rubagumya 1990). In 1962 Nyerere made Kiswahili the official language of Tanzania paving way for its use in administration, National Assembly, education and other official domains. Kiswahili was also instrumental in Nyerere's quest to create an egalitarian society in Tanzania through the famous Ujamaa policy that was rooted in beliefs in grass-roots empowerment and democracy at the lowest levels of society. The success of Kiswahili in fostering national unity, social inclusion and overall socio-economic development in Tanzania has not been contested.

As a national language in Kenya, Kiswahili has since independence been employed as a lingua franca for the more than 42 ethnic groups that exist in the country. This has aided social integration among the ordinary citizens, enabling them to participate in commerce, civic engagements, transport, entertainment and decision making in matters that directly affect their lives. Kiswahili has also aided basic education, as it is taught as a subject from primary school to university level and used as a medium of instruction in lower levels of education in multilingual urban settings.

In both Kenya and Tanzania, Kiswahili has been instrumental in enhancing access to information through its use in broadcasting and mass media, health sectors and political activities. A good number of radio and television stations in both countries broadcast in Kiswahili (Okombo & Muna, 2017). These include Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam, Radio Tanzania Zanzibar, Shirika la Utangazaji la Kenya (Kenya Broadcasting Corporation), Radio Citizen, Radio Maisha and Radio Jambo. Important communication in the health sector has been done in Kiswahili, for instance those relating to outbreak of contagious diseases or health campaigns. Politicians, both in government and opposition have always exploited the vast spread of Kiswahili to sell their political ideas to the electorate.

Elsewhere in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kiswahili is used by some quarters of the population of ordinary citizens as a lingua franca especially in trade, and among the Muslim religious groups and immigrants in urban areas.

In spite of the recognitions accorded to Kiswahili, and the role that it continues to play in the overall development in African countries, it appears that its spread and development is largely driven by itself and the 'market'. That is probably why in some African countries such as Uganda and Burundi, Kiswahili is largely considered as a language of trade, religious groups (the Muslims) and immigrants. This supports our key argument in this paper that Kiswahili is taking longer than anticipated or necessary to penetrate other sectors of development and be seen as a true language of African identity. In the succeeding section and subsections, we discuss our findings about the 'weak links' in the promotion of Kiswahili for development in Africa.

The weak links

We have already shown that the calls to promote Kiswahili into a truly continental language are not new; they started way back at independence of African countries, especially Tanzania in 1961. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere made Kiswahili a national as well as official language of Tanzania and advocated for its adoption as a language of African identity. Since then, several individuals, institutions, organizations and countries have rallied behind this call culminating in the increase of Kiswahili users in some African countries. However, these efforts have encountered various challenges. These challenges are what we are referring to in this paper as 'weak links'. We discuss these weak links in the sub-sections that follow.

Eurocentric Language Policies

Language policies in a majority of African countries can be described as a colonial inheritance. We reiterate that during the colonial rule, the colonialists introduced language policies that segregated the Africans. The policies were meant to exclude the majority of the Africans from major spheres of development. This was done by promoting the colonial languages to official languages, and using them in administration and for instruction in learning institutions (Kanana, 2013). These policies were then adopted by the independent African countries and are in place today. As we have observed, the policies mostly revolved around English and French as official languages, and ended up dividing the African continent into Anglophone versus Francophone countries. The continued use of the languages of former colonial masters as official languages negatively impacts on the growth and development of indigenous African languages beyond their ethnic language communities. This has also affected the promotion of Kiswahili into a continental language in Africa.

On the one hand, while some countries like Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda constitutionally recognize Kiswahili as an official language, no follow up policies have been enacted to

operationalize these policies. On the other hand, although Tanzania has been hailed as the only country in Africa to implement policies on Kiswahili as an official language, there is currently a debate about replacing it with English, especially in administration and as a medium of instruction in schools. If such a change is effected, it will be a setback to Kiswahili because Tanzania and Kenya are considered the inner circle of Kiswahili (Okombo & Muna, 2017), meaning that Tanzanians should be at the forefront of spearheading any deliberate effort to promote widespread use of Kiswahili in Africa.

Institutional Weaknesses

Following the disintegration of the Inter-Territorial Language (Swahili) Committee and its successor organizations, the promotion of Kiswahili was left to the individual university departments in East Africa and the Institute of Kiswahili Research (IKR) at the University of Dar es Salaam (Marshall, 2015). While the IKR tried its best to continue with research and publication of Kiswahili books and reference materials, the various university departments of Kiswahili primarily concentrated on teaching the subject to the willing students. IKR as well concentrated on ‘standardization’ and production of materials, missing the aspect of robust language promotion programmes, and as a result, most people in Tanzania are not aware of its existence (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2009).

One aspect of language promotion approach that is missing from the approach of IKR and institutions of the like is exchange programmes across Africa. Exchange programs have a potential impact of influencing the spread of a language through teaching, motivation and mentorship. The net impact of this is the creation of human resource in institutions across Africa, who would then be encouraged to spearhead the development and promotion of Kiswahili in their various countries.

Regionally, there are no organizations that have been charged with the responsibility of spreading Kiswahili outside East Africa. The one that exists in East Africa, the East African Kiswahili Commission, is very recent, and as we know it, the commission is still at planning and strategy formulation stage. This means that Kiswahili has not been deliberately promoted outside its inner circle of Kenya and Tanzania, hence, the slow rate at which it is spreading elsewhere in Africa. The following words from Dzahene-Quarshie (2009) illustrate this situation;

Beyond East Africa, the influence of the [Ki]Swahili language in the rest of Africa is very minimal and the major challenge facing the [Ki]Swahili language at this level is that, again there is no one organization that brings [Ki]Swahili teaching institutions outside the East African region together or promotes the language. [...] comparatively very few institutions in Africa teach [Ki]Swahili. The greatest challenge then is to see [Ki]Swahili promoted and its position consolidated in the whole of Africa.

Dzahene-Quarshie’s assertion above qualifies our claim that institutions and language promotion organizations have an important role to play in the overall process of language promotion and development. However, we note that this resource has not been utilized well in the case of promotion of Kiswahili in Africa.

Diminishing Pan-Africanist Spirit and Lack of Political Goodwill

At the time when African countries attained independence in the 1960s, African countries had a cadre of leaders who believed in and advocated for Pan-Africanism. These leaders were in support of anything African and were strong defenders of the African culture; language being an important part of culture and a medium through which it is transmitted.

As we have pointed out, leaders such as Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya were the first to appeal for the adoption of Kiswahili as official and national languages of their respective countries. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere desired to see Kiswahili promoted as the language for African unity and identity. In Uganda, leaders such as Idi Amin Dada, and now President Yoweri Museveni made efforts to promote the use of Kiswahili as an official language through pronouncements and decrees, although their calls were unsuccessful (Mukama, 1994; Mukuthuria, 2006; Namyalo & Nakayiza, 2015). As we have observed, other Pan-Africanists outside East Africa included President Kwame Nkrumah of the Republic of Ghana, the African writer and Nobel Prize Winner Professor Wole Soyinka, and the renowned author Professor Ayi Kwei Armah. Julius Malema's recent pronouncement to the effect that Kiswahili be adopted as a language for African identity and wider communication all over Africa was bold considering that Malema comes from a country where 11 official languages exist, of which he could have proposed one. It is our considered view in this paper that such bold Pan-Africanists have become rare in Africa. The majority of the African leaders now are a product of Eurocentric education and so epitomize Eurocentric thinking and ideas. They are perhaps proud of their educational background and so continue to believe that an African language is inferior to the ex-colonial languages (Legere, 2006). The idea of African identity seems not to be their concern, and promoting Kiswahili for this purpose is equally not a concern to them.

Lack of Adequate Human Resource and Mobility

The success of any development initiative rests partly on the availability of adequate human resource which can drive it. The experts and drivers of an endeavor should possess the knowledge and skills as well as the enthusiasm required.

The strength and visibility of Kiswahili 'experts' and promoters seem to have diminished over the years. Initially, scholars such as Professor Ali Mazrui, Professor Mugyabuso Mulokozi, Professor Kitula Kingei, Professor Abdulaziz, Professor Abdilatif Abdalla, Shihabuddin Chiraghdin, Mathias Mnyampala, John Kiango, Lioba Moshi, Mbaabu Ireeri, Professor Rocha Chimerah, Prof John Habwe, among others were very visible and vocal when it came to promoting scholarship in Kiswahili. Their enthusiasm was reflected through their language and literary works and publications, radio and television shows, newspaper columns, seminars, workshops and conferences. Their publications on the origin, development, spread and general history of Kiswahili and the Swahili culture continue to be main reference materials for scholars of Kiswahili studies. Some of these scholars are now deceased and others have grown old and weary, and can only hope to pass on the mantle to the next generation of scholars.

Though somehow enthusiastic, the current crop of Kiswahili scholars appears not as enthusiastic as the former. Apart from a few writing literary works and teaching materials, the majority concentrate on classroom teaching in learning institutions. These new crop of scholars demonstrate less vigor in research and writing specifically with the intention of telling the story of Kiswahili and the Swahili culture. Most of the scholars do not engage in robust scholarly workshops and exchange programmes. It is no exaggeration to say that they are 'immobile and invisible'. As a result, while there is production of Kiswahili knowledge particularly in Tanzania,

Kenya and a few other areas in Africa, effective and meaningful dissemination of the knowledge in those areas and others is lacking.

Weak Language Cultivation Strategies

After the standardization of Kiswahili in the 1930s, robust strategies should have been employed by the then colonial administration to properly cultivate the standard variety in their colonies. However, this did not happen because the colonial masters were not interested in promoting Kiswahili but in using it to propagate their rule (Marshall, 2015). The colonial administration did not endeavor to come up with programs which would have promoted Kiswahili. Such programs include radio programs, newspaper columns and award winning competitions in oral and written skills in the standard variety (Elizabeth et al., 2009). Elizabeth et al. (2009) continues that the independence governments should have ensured the start and sustenance of the cultivation phase of the standardization of Kiswahili. The strategies should have been designed to ignite and sustain positive attitude toward that particular variety of Kiswahili. Such strategies should however not focus on academics only but also include the general public in their day-to-day activities. This is so because it has been argued that in some of the cases, the general users of language defy language policies and structures that are put in place and imposed on them by those in the positions of authority.

Language promotion strategies that aim at promoting the use of Kiswahili among school going children have not been utilized effectively. The few radio programs that could be playing this role by and large concentrate on coaching students to pass in their examinations at the expense of learning the various competence and communicative aspects of the language such as oral and writing skills.

Other than school going children, there are no programs for promotion of Kiswahili among the ordinary citizens in Africa, especially those at the grassroots who have already exited the formal education system. As a result, these ‘lay people’ are not catered for in any language promotion programs yet they form the bulk of the everyday users of language. This is true considering the fact that this segment of the population can’t read nor write in Kiswahili; they do not understand or consume the languages of books and newspapers.

The language cultivation strategies should make Africans own Kiswahili and in turn view it as their continental identity. They should make people, especially in the Kiswahili’s inner circle, love and be proud of Kiswahili. But as we have shown, this has not been the case.

Language Ideologies and Language Attitudes

Language ideologies and language attitudes are closely related concepts often used together and at times, interchangeably. But to draw a distinction between them, on the one hand, language ideologies are basically the ideas and perceptions that people have about a language and their users (Piller, 2015; Silverstein, 1979), and on the other hand, language attitudes are the feelings that people have towards their language(s) and those of others (Becker, 2014). Language attitudes can be perceived through words, sentences and discourses, and arise from language ideologies. Language ideologies and attitudes are often embedded in peoples’ social and cultural histories. They are also influenced by language prestige and social circumstances that condition language choice (Gaw, 2009). Language ideologies are usually the driving force for actions or activities in language policy and planning initiatives (Namyalo & Nakayiza, 2015).

Many African ordinary citizens and their leaders perceive African languages, in this case, Kiswahili, as inferior to European languages. As a result, those who have knowledge of

languages such as English are considered more educated than their peers who possess knowledge of African languages. This is becoming the case even in Tanzania where the average Tanzanian today places a premium on the English language, as opposed to Kiswahili, and believes that it (English) must be acquired at all costs (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2009). In Uganda, English has been assumed to be a language of wider communication and as the primary vehicle for education, and from a social point of view, English has been regarded as a language of elites, a global language, and a key to employment and success in life (Namyalo & Nakayiza, 2015). Thus, many in Kiswahili speaking regions (inner circle) and Africa in general regard foreign languages as a form of human capital useful in seeking employment and other global opportunities.

An argument has been advanced by some scholars that using Kiswahili as a language of instruction in learning institutions would limit employment and access to knowledge from the European countries. However, there are several developed countries like Germany, Finland, Italy, China, Russia, Malaysia South Korea, and Romania which are using their indigenous languages for instruction in all their learning institutions. The same can be done by Kenya and Tanzania for a start followed by the other East African countries. It is possible to employ Kiswahili as the sole language of instruction in Kenya and Tanzania. These two countries can lead by example in teaching English as a foreign language and a subject from lower grades to universities, and Kiswahili as a medium of instruction.

In some other countries, the negative attitude of the citizens towards Kiswahili arise from the internal historical events that were perpetrated by those who spoke Kiswahili. In Uganda for example, Kiswahili is associated with brutality due to the fact that it has historically been the language of the army and the police since the time of President Idi Amin up to date (Mukuthuria, 2006). Again, due to cultural politics in the country, and in a bid to safeguard the position of Luganda as the widely spoken language in Uganda, the Baganda reject Kiswahili as a foreign imposition (Mukuthuria, 2006).

The foregoing serves to illustrate that peoples' thoughts, perceptions and feelings about a language occupy an important place in the promotion of a language in society, and in this case, Kiswahili for African development.

Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, we have acknowledged the fact that language plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic and political development of a society. Using the case studies of Tanzania and Kenya, we have briefly demonstrated that Kiswahili as a widely spoken language in East Africa has the potential to help realize the socio-economic and political development on the African continent, and also, serve a language of African identity.

We have also shown that since the pre-colonial period, a number of factors have been responsible for the development of Kiswahili from a predominantly East African coastal language to a lingua franca of the Eastern and central Africa.

We have argued that the deliberate efforts to promote Kiswahili as a continental language have been dormant if not slow. This has resulted from a number of challenges that we have preferred to call 'weak links'. From our review and observation, we have identified six weak links: Eurocentric language policies, institutional weaknesses, diminishing Pan-Africanist spirit and lack of political goodwill, lack of adequate human resource and immobility, weak language cultivation strategies, and language ideologies and language attitudes. Although these factors carry almost the same weight, in our assessment, institutional weaknesses and diminishing Pan-

Africanist spirit/lack of political goodwill emerge as the weakest links; these two have the potential, power and ability to impact positively on the rest and alter the status quo.

Thus, we recommend setting up of strong national, regional and continental institutions for promotion of Kiswahili across Africa. These institutions should then adopt strategies that help to cultivate and promote the use of Kiswahili among the ordinary citizens. Politically, we recommend setting up positions of language ambassadors for Kiswahili from the Kiswahili speaking countries, particularly Tanzania and Kenya. These ambassadors should be in charge of setting up centres of Kiswahili language and Swahili culture in various countries in Africa.

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