

The Dilemma of the African Language Vis-À-Vis the African Philosophical Project

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Abstract

African philosophers of diverse academic backgrounds have argued that the African language is fundamental for the doing of African philosophy. However, in spite of the importance of African language in the African philosophical enterprise, African scholars are agreed that the African language is limited on various fronts, which makes it difficult for it to play its specific roles in the doing of African philosophy. These challenges that affect the quality of African languages in relation to African philosophy include: globalization, which is gradually turning the world into a global village; there is the problem of multilingualism or the diversity of African languages; the lack of appreciation of African languages by Africans, especially in institutions of learning; the undeveloped nature of the African language, as it is not able to conceptually encompass certain realities which Western languages are able to. There is the challenge of the educational system run in Africa that is still deeply colonial or Western in character. Thus, it still runs on the educational structures set by the colonial masters. There is the problem of documentation, national integration and poor language policies and implementation. This research submits that for the African language to be employed meaningfully for the African philosophical enterprise, there is need to face these challenges and develop the African language further than it is. For the purpose of this research, the thematic and critical methods of investigation were employed.

Keywords: African, Language, Philosophy, Multilingualism, Western, Colonial.

Introduction

In the perspective of friends and foes, Heidegger has been acknowledged for his unique method in the use of language in his philosophy. Although Grene (1958), Faber (1959) and Glicksman (1938) refer to his methodology as pretentious, stupendous and conflicting, Okonkwo (2009) believes that there is no doubt that within the same parameter he has shown a high sense of creativity and originality in his quest to grasp the grounds of being. He understands the importance of language in relation to the revelation of being. For him, a language question is a being question (Heidegger 1968, 1971). In this, he makes a very strong connection between philosophy and language, asserting that the manner of language is the manner of philosophy and that the game of philosophy would be impossible without language. Heidegger (1956) writes: "Without a sufficient consideration of language, we never truly know what philosophy is... nor what philosophy is as a distinctive manner of language" (9). In an earlier work, Heidegger (1949) posits that the human person uses language not only as a tool for communication but as the modal way for the being of man as *man qua man*:

Language serves to give information... but the essence of language does not consist entirely in being a means of giving information. This definition does not touch its essential essence, but merely indicates an effect of its essence. Language is not a mere tool, one of the many which man possesses; on the contrary, it is only language that affords the very possibility of standing in the openness of the existent. Only where there is language, is there world... Language is not a tool at his disposal rather, it is that event which disposes of the supreme possibility of human existence. (276-277). Language, therefore, becomes an instrument for the disclosure of the mode of being-in-the-world and gives being its ontological and logical descriptiveness. It is an instrument for the intelligible and articulate disclosure of the being project and worldhood relations in their structural thingness, boundaries and obscurities within their structural matrix in such a manner that something indicates itself as something (Heidegger 1962, 1974). Language makes it possible to comprehend the 'essent' of the essences of being, and since being is intangible and without shape or colour, it is language that makes it comprehensible (Heidegger 1961).

Within the context of the relationship between African philosophy and African language, the perspectives of scholars have been categorized into the conservative and progressive. The

conservative perspective refers to the perspectives of African thinkers who argue that African local languages or mother tongue should be employed for the doing of African philosophy. African scholars who hold this view include: Lupan (2015); Ki-Zerbo (1981); Whorf (1993); Iroegbu (1994); Gyekye (1987); Wiredu (1995; 1998; 2000); Sodipo and Hallen (1986); Ogunmodede (1993); WaThiong'o (1993); Ozumba (2004); Uroh (1994), Keita (1999), Bewaji (2002) and Afolayan (2006). The progressive position agree that there is need to do African philosophy in African languages but might not be firm in holding on to this position, since their positions are suggestive of alternative approach(es). Notable among these scholars is Bello (1987); Makinde (1988); Bewaji (2002); Tangwa (1992); Egbunu (2014); Ezenabor (2004); Bassey, Enang and Nwaeke (2018); Kanu (2015; 2021).

While the perspectives of African philosophers on this issue occupy a fundamental place in this discourse, this work focuses on the limitations of African languages that have partly created the basis for the progressive perspective of African thinkers on the relationship between language and philosophy. After discussing the limitations of African languages, this work will further proffer ways of improving on these limitations so as to prepare African languages for African philosophy.

The Dilemma of the African Language

The dilemma of the African language focusses on those factors that affect the quality of African languages in the doing of African philosophy. Factors such as: globalization, which is gradually turning the world into a global village; there is the problem of multilingualism or the diversity of African languages; the lack of appreciation of African languages by Africans, especially in schools; the undeveloped nature of the African language is itself a challenge as it is not able to conceptually encompass certain realities which western languages are able to. There is the problem of the education system run in Africa that is still deeply colonial or western in character, as it is still running on the educational structures set by the colonial masters. There is the problem of documentation, national integration and poor language policies and implementation. These challenges would be discussed thematically.

a. Globalization

Globalisation is from the words *globe*, *global*, *globally*. From the root words, globalisation can be defined literally as an attempt to make global. Tandon (1998) observes that globalisation is a new feature of the world economy and one of the most challenging developments in the movement of world history. Ohiorhenuan (1998) and Kanu (2019) argue that it is currently affecting the physiology of the African society through its imposition of constraints on policy-making autonomy or independence of Africa vis-a-vis our capacity for authoritative allocation of scarce and critical societal values or resources, among other functions.

According to Fafowora (1998), globalisation refers to the process of the increasing economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries. It deals with increasing the breakdown of trade barriers and the increasing integration of world market. Oluabunwa (1999) gives further insight when he defines globalisation as an evolution which is systematically reconstructing integrative phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and other fields of endeavour. Omoregbe (2007) avers that "globalisation was not something that was planned or decided at a conference table by certain states or individuals. Rather, it is a natural process of socialization, a process of world history, a phase in the world historical process" (152).

The world is currently globalizing, and as the world moves on, every part of it, including Africa, cannot avoid moving with it. Part of the movement is that some languages are taking the center stage as their countries are at the heart of world economy and politics. These countries determine movements, trade, currency, etc. The consequence is that the languages of these nations automatically become more relevant for the relevance of individuals at the international level. Thus, there would be more emphasis on these languages than on the local languages in Africa. According Bamgbose (2011):

As far as language choice is concerned, the assumption seems to be that the language of globalization has to be a language of wider communication such as English, since it is only such a language that can facilitate maximum access and participation in the global village (5).

This is the reality that has continued to hunt African indigenous languages. When you have learnt some African languages, only to move to the next state to discover that no one else understands what you are saying, neither are you able to understand what others are saying.

b. Diversity in African languages

One of the cases that have been raised against the use of local languages for philosophy in Africa, or against the return local languages in Africa in post-colonial Africa is the complex and multiple language situation in the continent. Pwalikova-Vilhanova (2018), Roy-Campbell (2006) and UNESCO (2003) observe that there are more than two thousand spoken languages in Africa, and that over 30% of the world's languages are spoken in Africa.

This linguistic diversity, based on the Single Origin Theory of Migration, is traced to the understanding that life began from Africa and, thus, Africans, unlike other peoples of the globe, had more time to develop their languages. While building their empires, European kingdoms focused on assimilation, as in the cases of the Greek and Roman empires that forced their colonies to speak Greek or Latin. This was different in Africa, as languages were allowed to flourish and develop alongside the other(s). Instead of assimilation, African colonies were related to through interpreters. Therefore, while European empires assimilated languages that were not widely spoken, the African empires promoted diversity in the use of language.

The questions that arise at the call for a return to African languages for African philosophy is: to which language would African philosophers return to? If everyone were to write his own philosophy in his own language, who would be able to have access to the content of the philosophy? In countries like Nigeria where you have more than 250 spoken languages, the colonial language which is English turns out to be an easier option in terms of communication and, in fact, a unifying factor among the diverse peoples who must stay together as a nation. This constitutes a very serious challenge regarding the question of the use of African language for African philosophy.

c. Local languages not appreciated

The educational system instituted by the colonial government was done in such a manner that local languages had no place in that system. This is still obtainable, even after the attainment of independence. In schools in Africa, students as young as 5 to 20 years are punished for speaking their mother tongue. Nwesigire (2014) observes that the punishments for the crime of speaking a person's mother tongue differ:

The most common one in Uganda is wearing a dirty sack until you meet someone else speaking their mother tongue and then you pass the sack unto them. In some schools, there are specific pupils and students tasked with compiling lists of fellow pupils and students speaking mother tongues. This list is then handed over to a teacher who is responsible for punishing these language rule-breakers (1). There were times that students were caned at school for speaking their mother tongue. This created much fear to the point that even at home, pupils were not sure of the language to use for communication, as they feared being reported at school for speaking their mother tongue. This attitude towards our mother tongue shows the level of our inferiority complex and our lack of confidence in our local African languages. Bamgbose, (2011), therefore, observes that:

One would have expected speakers of an African language to be proud of their language, but quite often, one encounters negative attitudes. The common attitude is that of elites who prefer education in the imported language for their children. Taking their cue from the elites, it is not surprising that parents belonging to lower social groups also want similar education for their children (5).

These punishments meted out to pupils or students at the ages between 5 and 20 leaves them with the lesson that our local languages are useless. Wearing of a sack-cloth sends the message that those who speak their mother tongue are uncivil, savage and primitive. Thus, the colonial languages become a way forward towards the Promised Land of civility and life, even 60 years after independence. The arguments presented in schools for the criminalization of mother tongue are that there is need to improve the English language of the students and second, there is need to foster national unity. And yet, there is no place where speaking the same language has guaranteed unity, neither is there a time when the using of mother tongue has stopped the learning of English language. The problem has always been about defective pedagogy and the absence of role models.

d. Undeveloped nature of African languages

Connected to the problem of documentation is the challenge of the underdeveloped nature of African languages that places them in a position of disadvantage when it comes to philosophical reflection. The advantage of documentation is that it provides the ground for development over a period of time in history. This poverty of African languages, in the contention of Makinde (1993), is the basis for the inability of Africa to contribute to scientific knowledge. Some African languages are yet to be put into writing so as to be used in schools, and those that have been put into writing also need to be developed so as to cope with domains and realities that are outside of the domain where the local language is spoken.

Only a scientific language can bring about development in the area of science. Makinde (1993) writes that:

The reason for underdevelopment in language is hinged on the fact that unlike the continental languages of Europe which shows similarity in logical grammar, African languages possess no such similarity in logical grammar. Not only does this poverty affect the development of an African science, it has become a stumbling block to philosophic activity. (11)

Writing further on this, Makinde (1993) avers that: "It has not been possible to do African (Yoruba) philosophy in the native language. This is so because our language is not yet developed to the extent that its vocabularies and logical syntax can handle abstract philosophical discourse" (12). However, Makinde believes that one of the problems of using African languages for Africa philosophy is that it is under-developed, Horton (1967), Ruch (1974), Oruka (1975) and Wiredu (1991) rather think that the problem with African languages is not under-development but that they are not subjected to formal analysis, interpretation and clarification.

e. Educational system still Western

The educational system is a battleground for the development of African languages. It was a system of education that was founded by the colonizers during the colonial period, as European colonial model which continues to implement the colonial linguistic and cultural policies (Migge and Isabelle 2007). Even in their absence, it has continued to serve the political, economic and cultural purposes of the colonial government (Spencer 1971 & 1985 and Pennycook 1998, 2001 & 2002), which instilled European morality in their subjects and formed easily available and cheap resources for their economic interests. This reshaped the linguistic make-up of many regions in Africa which had far-reaching negative consequences on language and education. Countries in Africa, even after independence, have continued to teach their citizens in colonial languages, while the local languages are taught in a manner that does not show any commitment on both the students and staff.

This was, however, not true of all the colonial schools. The schools that were managed by the missionaries ensured that education was carried out in native languages. They favoured the indigenous medium of instruction over English or French, out of a pragmatic purpose. They discovered that the faith was better transmitted through the local language of the people. According to Awoniyi (1976), the school thus became the institutional agent of the church, with the people's mother tongue as the media. However, education generally focused on colonial values and the understanding of the people's values through the colonial eye.

f. Problem of documentation

Although Africa had recorded feats of civilization before her encounter with Europe, Jahn (1958) maintains that two cultural achievements were absent: architecture and writing. This has further crippled the applause expected of African civilization, since modern science rates writing as a basic tenet of civilization. For those who have writing are, according to Jahn, "thought to be capable of retaining past experience and so of hastening from progress to further progress, while those without writing are said to be at the mercy of historical accident" (p. 185). Rettova (2002) observes that the "lack of writing in African languages is the main obstacle to writing African philosophy in African languages and to a more effective elaboration of the philosophical thoughts contained in folk wisdom" (150).

The consequence of the absence of record is that while Western philosophy is the record of the philosophies of individual persons, for instance, we have Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas,

Descartes, Locke, Hegel, Russell, Whitehead, Rawls, Rorty etc., in African philosophy, it is different. Afolayan (2006) writes that, “Instead of the gallery of individual philosophers who symbolize the cultures confrontation with its experiences, ... there is an attempt to summarize the philosophical enterprise in Africa into a collective, communal framework” (22). Criticizing oral tradition as the cause of group philosophy, Appiah (1992) thinks that, “Oral tradition has a habit of only transmitting consensus” (92). Based on the collective character of African philosophy, Hountondji (1976) describes African philosophy as simply a myth, the myth of unanimity and consensus. It is not surprising that he rejects concepts such as Igbo philosophy, Akan philosophy, Bantu philosophy or Dogon philosophy.

In relation to doing African philosophy in African languages, the lack of documentation poses a very serious challenge. There is the concern of the laws of explanation to be employed by contemporary African philosophers, since there is no record. The absence of a record makes it difficult, given the complexities in African languages.

g. The problem of national integration

Some scholars have argued that the use of the colonial language is the major impediment to national unity and development (Lodhi 1993, Mhina 1972, Indakwa 1978). There are also those who argue that multilingualism in African to the cause of national disunity and under-development (Simpson (2008). Lodhi (1993) also argues that:

The abundance of languages in Africa has meant enormous problems of communication, in education and as far as political stability is concerned. It is demanding too much of the human and material resources to produce newspapers, radio programs and teaching materials in several languages in each country, for example. Multi-linguism is, therefore, an important factor of under-development which in turn perpetuates multi-linguism and slows down development activities (80). For instance, in Nigeria, there is no local language as a national language that holds the Nigerian people together or that unites the people in terms of governance, and there is no agreement on a national local language that would hold the Nigerian people together. Instead, every language, about 250 in number, is always in relation to the particular ethnic group that speaks it. This has also affected the doing of philosophy in local languages. There is no way every Nigerian will understand the 250 languages, and if every Nigerian philosopher is to do philosophy in his own language, there will be the problem of communication. It might not be enough to do philosophy in local languages, just for its sake, when no one is able to understand the language.

In the table below, the researcher makes a presentation of the different countries in Africa with all the languages spoken therein. The interest is to know the national languages that have been endorsed by the different countries for their nations and the other languages that are obtainable among the people.

Table 1: African countries and spoken languages

1.	Algeria	Arabic, Berber, Four dialects	French
2	Angola	Portuguese	Bantu
3	Benin	French	Fon, Yoruba and other tribal languages
4	Botswana	Setswana and English (A business language that is widely spoken)	
5	Burkina Faso	French	Native languages spoken by 90% of the population
6	Burundi	Kirundi and French	Swahili
7	Cameroon	French and English	24 major languages
8	Cape Verde	Portuguese	Kabuverdianu (It is a blend of Portuguese and local words)

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE	OTHER LANGAUGES
9	Central African Republic	French, Sangho (Lingua Franca and National Language)	Banda, Gbaya and other tribal languages
10	Chad	French and Arabic	Sara and more than 120 local languages and dialects
11	Comoros	Arabic and French	Shikomoro (It is a blend of Kiswahili and Arabic)
12	Democratic Republic of Congo	French	Lingala, Kingwana, Kikongo, Tshiluba
13	Cote d'Ivoire	French	60 local languages
14	Djibouti	French and Arabic	Somali, Afar
15	Egypt	Arabic	English and French
16	Equatorial Guinea	Spanish and French	Ibo, Bubi, Fang, Pidgin English
17	Eritrea	Tigrinya, Arabic and English	Tigre, Afar, Bedawi, Kunama and other Cushitic languages
18	Ethiopia	Amharic	Tigrinya, Oromo, Gurage, Somali and 80 other local languages
19	Gabon	French	More than 6 Bantu languages spoken
20	Gambia	English	Madinka, Wolof, Fula and other local languages
21	Ghana	English	Akan, Ewe, Ga, Adangme, Moshi-Dagomba and other local languages
22	Guinea	French (spoken by 15-20%)	8 other local languages
23	Guinea Bissau	Portuguese	Crioulo and other languages
24	Kenya	English, Kiswahili	Many other indigenous languages
25	Lesotho	Sesotho and English	Zulu and Xhosa
26	Liberia	English (spoken by 20%)	20 other local languages
27	Libya	Arabic	Italian and English
28	Madagascar	French and Malagasy	None
29	Malawi	English and Nyanja	Lomwe, Tumbuka, Yao and other languages
30	Mali	French	Bambara, Arabic and other dialects
31	Mauritania	Arabic	Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof, French and Hassaniya Arabic
32	Mauritius	English and French	Creole, Hindi, Urdu, Hakka and Bhojpuri
33	Morocco	Arabic	Berber dialects and French
34	Mozambique	Portuguese (spoken by 27%)	Makhuwa, Tsonga, Lomwe, Sena and other indigenous languages
35	Namibia	English (spoken by 7%)	Afrikaans 60%; German 32% and other indigenous languages

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE	OTHER LANGAUGES
38	Reunion	French	Creole
39	Rwanda	Rwanda, French and English	Kiswahili
40	Saint Helena	English	None
41	Sao Tome and Principe	Portuguese	None
42	Senegal	French	Wolof, Pulaar, Jola and Mandinka
43	Seychelles	English and French	Creole
44	Sierra Leone	English	Mende, Temne, Krio
45	Somali	Somali	Arabic, Italian, English
46	South Africa	Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Pedi, Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Tswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, isiZulu	None
47	Sudan	Arabic	Nubian and other dialects
48	South Sudan	Arabic	Nubian and other dialects
49	Swaziland	English and siSwati	
50	Tanzania	Kiswahili, Kiunguju and English (language for business and higher education)	Arabic and some other local languages
51	Togo	French	Ewe and Mina in the South and Kabye and Dogomba in the North
52	Tunisia	Arabic	French
53	Uganda	English	Ganda and other local languages
54	Zambia	English	More than 80 indigenous languages
55	Zimbabwe	English	Chishona, Sindebele and other local languages

Table 2: African countries with colonial languages as national languages

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE
1	Angola	Portuguese
2	Benin	French
3	Burkina Faso	French
4	Cameroon	French and English
5	Cape Verde	Portuguese
6	Democratic Republic of Congo	French
7	Cote d'Ivoire	French
8	Djibouti	French and Arabic
9	Egypt	Arabic
10	Equatorial Guinea	Spanish and French
11	Gabon	French
12	Gambia	English
13	Ghana	English
14	Guinea	French (spoken by 15-20%)
15	Guinea Bissau	Portuguese
16	Liberia	English (spoken by 20%)
17	Libya	Arabic

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE
18	Mali	French
19	Mauritania	Arabic
20	Mauritius	English and French
21	Morocco	Arabic
22	Mozambique	Portuguese (spoken by 27%)
23	Namibia	English (spoken by 7%)
24	Niger	French
25	Nigeria	English
26	Reunion	French
27	Saint Helena	English
28	Sao Tome and Principe	Portuguese
29	Senegal	French
30	Seychelles	English and French
31	Sierra Leone	English
32	Sudan	Arabic
33	South Sudan	Arabic
34	Togo	French
35	Tunisia	Arabic
36	Uganda	English
37	Zambia	English
38	Zimbabwe	English

The table above shows that there are 38 countries in Africa, out of the 55 African countries, that are still using colonial languages as their national languages. Countries that use Arabic have also been added to this number given that Arabic is not an indigenous language but it came through the contact of Africa with non-African countries. 38 countries stand for 69% of the countries in Africa that are still using foreign languages as national languages. This points to the difficulty of using local languages for African philosophy.

Table 3: African countries with a local languages as national language

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE
1	Ethiopia	Amharic
2	Somali	Somali

The table above shows that only two countries, out of the 55 countries in Africa, that have their indigenous language as national language. The two countries constitute only 4% of the countries in Africa. This percentage throws light on the difficulties of doing African philosophy in African languages, as there is yet to be a profound subscription to our indigenous languages.

Table 4: African countries with both colonial and local languages as national languages

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE
1.	Algeria	Arabic, Berber, Four dialects
2	Botswana	Setswana and English (A business language that is widely spoken)
3	Burundi	Kirundi and French
4	Central African Republic	French, Sangho (lingua franca and national language)
5	Eritrea	Tigrinya, Arabic and English
6	Kenya	English, Kiswahili
7	Lesotho	Sesotho and English
10	Madagascar	French and Malagasy
11	Malawi	English and Nyanja
12	South Africa	Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Pedi, Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Tswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, isiZulu
13	Swaziland	English and siSwati
14	Tanzania	Kiswahili, Kiungu and English (language for business and higher education)

The table above shows that there are 14 countries in Africa, out of the 55 African countries, that have both colonial and local or indigenous languages as national languages. This shows that only 25% of African countries use both languages as national languages. If this is to be added to the countries that use only indigenous languages as national languages, it would amount to 29% of the countries in Africa that have indigenous languages as national languages. The implication is that the use of indigenous languages for African philosophy would be more effective in 29% of the countries in Africa. The quality of this 29% is dependent on the depth of the indigenous languages in relation to the colonial languages that serve as national languages alongside the indigenous languages.

b. Poor language policies and implementation

Part of the problems that have affected the local languages in Africa is the issue of poor language policies by the government, policies which should protect local languages and give them their place in the community of languages. Lodhi (1993) states that:

As far as language policies are concerned, it is difficult to find a comprehensive document in African countries. Language policies are usually taken for granted, and very often they are defined in decrees or directives from the ministries of education stating the language or languages of instruction at different levels of the educational system. In a few cases, it is mentioned in the national constitution i.e. in Egypt and Nigeria. Normally, the language in which a country's constitution is written is generally accepted as the official language of the country (81).

In places where such laws or policies might exist, there is always a poor political will to ensure implementation. For instance, the African Union as a body have developed several policies on the protection and promotion of indigenous languages for member countries, however, the problem is that of implementation. For instance:

- a. on 25th May 1963 when the Organization of African Unity, now African Union, was founded in Addis Ababa it was agreed in article xxix, that the working languages of the organization and all its institutions should be African languages;
- b. on 8th December 1966, the assembly of heads of state and government passed a decision and founded the OAU Inter-African Bureau of Languages (BIL) which had the principal task of supporting and empowering African languages by encouraging their greater use in the domains of life;
- c. in 1976, the OAU Charter for Africa was adopted in Port Louis, Mauritius by the African Heads of State and Government. This document, in article 6, section 2 called on member states to introduce the teaching of national languages for the purpose of development;
- d. in 1986, the OAU Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa adopted the Language Plan of Action for Africa, which affirmed the fundamental place of the African language as instruments of national development and communication. This document all called on governments to develop language policies for their countries that places indigenous languages in active use;
- e. between 26-30 August 1966, charter held in Accra, which emerged from a Pan-African Seminar on *The Problems and Prospects of the Use of African Languages in Education*, stressed the need of educating the African people in their indigenous languages;
- f. in 2006, ten years after the Pan-African Seminar held in Accra, the AU formed a specialized continental language agency: Academy of African Languages (ACALAN) with the mandate of developing and promoting African languages in partnership with ex-colonial languages; it was hoped that this would bring about the rehabilitation of African culture, education and language;

Unfortunately, since the emergence of policies in OAU assemblies in different parts of Africa since 1960, these policies hardly reflect in the language policies of member countries. Pwalikova-Vilhanova (2018) observes that:

A wish to impose a single indigenous language in the interest of national unity and development, the need to develop African languages for an emergent Africa has repeatedly been expressed, but rarely implemented. Most leaders made affirmations that local African

languages should be empowered and considered as national languages, but these proclamations were often only rhetorical (250).

Focusing on the rhetoric on policies by governments in Africa, which only ended as rhetoric, he added that: Most African countries have lacked a coherent government policy on language development and the position of African languages have always been very ambiguous. Many African countries have made a declaration of intent to adopt a multilingual approach with the objective of promoting and developing African languages and empowering people through African languages (251).

The problem has always been either the lack of policies or the lack of the political will to implement those that are available. Since there may be no language policies in this regard or the political will for the implementation of existing policies, the consequence is that the colonial *status quo* continues to take hold, and most African countries continue to use the former colonial language as the primary language of formal and higher education. Bamgbose, (2011) avers that:

Even when there is a genuine policy in favor of an indigenous language, failure to indicate implementation steps and procedures as well as adequate provision of funds may stultify the policy. In fact, it may rightly be stated that non-implementation is the bane of language planning in Africa. The effect of defective language planning is to vitiate all attempts to enhance the status and roles of African languages (6).

The thought about doing African philosophy in African languages cannot omit a discourse on the need for language policies and the political will of appropriate authorities to implement them.

From the foregoing, Abdulaziz (1977) develops a typology of the language situation in Africa. For countries having one indigenous language that is spoken by a vast majority of the people as mother tongue: Botswana: Setswana, Burundi: Kirundi, Lesotho: Sesotho, Rwanda: Kinyarwanda, Somalia: Somali and Swaziland: Seswati. As a lingua franca: Central African Republic: Sango, Ethiopia: Amharic, Kenya: Swahili, Tanzania: Swahili, Mali: Bambara, Senegal: Wolof and Sudan: Arabic. Countries with a favorable basis for developing an African language with a national status: Dahomi: Ge, Ghana: Akan/Twi, Malawi: Chichewa/Conyanja, Niger: Hausa, Togo: Ewe, Burkina Faso: Mosi/More, Zimbabwe: Shona. Countries that have several indigenous languages that compete with each other: Nigeria: Hausa/Igbo/Yoruba; Sierra Leone: Mende/Temme; Zaire (Congo): Chiluba/Kikingo/Kituba/Kingwana. Countries having no predominant indigenous languages include: Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mozambique.

Lodhi (1993) strongly believes that the African countries in the first two groups, i.e. "1" and "2" have a far better foundation, given the linguistic circumstances of the countries, of developing a national language. This is because these countries either have an indigenous language spoken by a vast majority of her people or because they have a predominant indigenous language spoken by the people in spite of the presence of other languages.

These problems, among others, are at the heart of the difficulty of doing African philosophy in African languages. However, the problems are situations that can be corrected through right measures, policies and political will, and the African language given its rightful place in the world community of languages.

Preparing the African Language for African Philosophy

From the foregoing, there is, therefore, the need to achieve the following for the integration of African languages in the philosophical enterprise. It is necessary to begin educating young Africans with local languages and about local languages right from their elementary education to their tertiary education, especially beginning from their first three years in school. This would help the African child develop confidence in his mother tongue or local language before making a transition to another language. If children are exposed to imported languages at their early age and are expected to do philosophy in their local languages, which would be difficult.

Major information regarding the national life of countries in Africa should be given in the local language of the people so as to underscore the importance of the local language in both the public and private domains. Even if it does not become the national language, major aspects of the national life which include: constitution, communication, participatory democracy, media, access to justice and information regarding health should be communicated through the local language. For the purpose of harnessing support towards local languages, the United Nations should include local languages in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This would help in giving it the attention

that it deserves. African countries also need to include this in their annual budgets and create a well laid out program for the development of local languages.

There is the need for the standardization of African languages beyond where they are at the moment. Some African languages are yet to be put into writing so as to be used in schools, and those that have been put into writing also need to be developed so as cope with domains and realities that are outside of the domain where the local language is spoken. If this is not addressed, then it is difficult to discuss the use of African languages in doing African philosophy. There is the need to restructure the educational systems in Africa that are still operating on the structures of the colonial educational policies. There is need for a system of education that puts into consideration the local categories for the education of the child. This would also give the rightful place to local languages in Africa.

There is need for the political will on the part of the government in implementing language policies. As far back as 1997, 51 out of 54 countries in Africa attended the Intergovernmental Conference on Language Policies in Harare, Zimbabwe. During that conference, they defined frameworks for the establishment of national languages in African states; however, since then, not much has been achieved, except in Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Somalia, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi, Lesotho Eswatini. It is not enough to make policies, countries in Africa must develop the will power to act on and implement such decisions. Some countries have explained their passivity towards the implementation of this policy on the grounds of the multiplicity of African languages; even this is not enough reason as there are other countries that recognize more than one national language, such as Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, etc.

Conclusion

In spite of the importance of African languages in the African philosophical enterprise, African scholars are agreed that the African language is limited on various fronts, which makes it difficult for it to play its specific roles in the doing of African philosophy. These challenges that affect the quality of African languages in relation to African philosophy as indicated in this piece include: globalization, which is gradually turning the world into a global village; there is the problem of multilingualism or the diversity of African languages; the lack of appreciation of African languages by Africans, especially in institutions of learning; the undeveloped nature of the African language, as it is not able to conceptually encompass certain realities which Western languages are able to. There is the challenge of the educational system run in Africa that is still deeply colonial or Western in character. Thus, it still runs on the educational structures set by the colonial masters. There is the problem of documentation, national integration and poor language policies and implementation.

This research has argued that for the African language to be employed meaningfully for the African philosophical enterprise, there is need to face these challenges and develop the African language further than it is. Improving on these limitations include: beginning the education of the young with local languages and about local languages right from their elementary education to their tertiary education, especially beginning from their first three years in school. Major information regarding the national life of countries in Africa should be given in the local language of the people so as to underscore the importance of the local language in both the public and private domains. There is the need for the standardization of African languages beyond where they are at the moment. Some African languages are yet to be put into writing so as to be used in schools, and those that have been put into writing also need to be developed so as cope with domains and realities that are outside of the domain where the local language is spoken. There is need for the political will on the part of the government in implementing language policies. If these are attended to, the African language will be better positioned for African philosophy.

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