

## Interpreting the Indigenous and Foreign Languages Dichotomy in Development Discourse

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### Abstract

*This article evaluates the validity of the views some scholars hold on the relationship which exists between language and socio-economic and technological development. The view that language is closely linked to development is rampant in African scholarship. Proponents of that view advocate for linguistic determinist view that language determines development. In fact, they hold that development cannot be realized if during implementing programmes of development, stakeholders use foreign and not indigenous African languages. The proponents of that view include among many: Mazrui (2000), Prah (2000), Chimhundu (2001), Mutasa (2006) and Magwa and Mutasa (2007). The viewpoint in question is influencing some students in institutions of higher learning. For instance, Rwaendepi, a former student of the Department of African Languages and Culture at the Midlands State University, produced a seventy page honours dissertation in 2012 advocating the view that without the use of Shona, an indigenous Zimbabwean language, in education and programmes of societal development, the people of Zimuto District of Zimbabwe's Masvingo Province will never attain socio-economic development. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) have established the weaknesses of the linguistic determinist theory as it is applied to human cognition. This article grapples with the degree of the genuineness of the linguistic determinist view when it is applied to issues pertaining to development. The article does that through critically appreciating what different scholars propose on the relationship that exists between language and development. The paper concludes that, since what some scholars hold on the relationship between language and development is influencing budding critics and intellectuals in institutions of higher learning, those scholars should embark on a thorough foregrounding of that relationship before they make recommendations on it in their works.*

**Key words:** Linguistic Determinism, Linguistic Relativist Theory, Downright/Radical Linguistic Determinist Approach to Development, Linguistic Determinist Approach with Qualifications, Development, Democratic Development.

## Introduction

Scholars hold different views on the relationship which exists between language choice and development. However, the dominant view is that, nation building is unachievable when foreign languages rather than indigenous languages are centred in programmes of development. The view implies that stakeholders in development issues ought to promote indigenous African languages and to abrogate foreign languages from all proceedings of that nature. That particular viewpoint has roots in linguistic determinist theory. The theory has roots in the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativist theory, (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998). The Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativist theory holds that, "Human beings are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society..." (Whorf, as cited by Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998: 53). In other words the theory pivots on the idea that,

Language influences the way in which we perceive reality, evaluate it and conduct ourselves with respect to it. Speakers of different languages and cultures see the universe differently, evaluate it differently, and behave towards its reality differently" (Mwaura, as cited by Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998: 53).

What that means is, from a linguistic relativist viewpoint and by extension, from the linguistic determinist understanding, language determines how human beings perceive the world and their position in that world. Further, in that viewpoint, language is held to determine and to condition every human activity. Since different languages are considered to determine the way people view themselves and the world, what that means is, in the linguistic determinist theory as what is the case in the linguistic relativist theory, "...speakers of the different languages [are considered to] map the world in different ways," (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998: 53).

Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) further discovered that, in Africa, "linguistic determinism has often been to second language situations" (1998: 54). In fact, the two scholars have established that, there are African scholars who link human cognition to second language acquisition. Some of those scholars, who include wa Thiong'o (1986) lobby for the idea that the mastering and the use of a second language such as English, that was introduced to Africa during colonialism, in speech or writing, lead to mental colonization whilst the mastering and use of indigenous African languages in speech or in writing lead to the decolonization of the mind. When it comes to developmental discourse, there are African critics and scholars who see a cause and effect relationship between

choosing to use either indigenous African languages or foreign languages in programmes of socio-economic and technological development.

For clarity's sake and for the sake of creating a valuable argument, this article divides the linguistic determinist approach into two categories. There is what it calls the downright and/or radical linguistic determinist approach and what it calls the linguistic determinist approach with qualifications. The first category of the linguistic determinist approach to development is represented by scholars such as Chimhundu (2001), Mutasa (2006), Magwa and Mutasa (2007), and Ngara (as cited in Chiwome and Thondlana 1992). The downright linguistic determinist approach to development argues that indigenous African languages are the centripetal forces in socio-economic and technological development in Africa whilst foreign languages are the centrifugal ones. In other words, it argues that use of indigenous languages in development programmes, leads to development whilst use of foreign languages in those programmes leads to under-development of the Africans and the African countries. The linguistic determinist approach with qualifications is proposed by scholars such as Prah (2000) and Mazrui (2000). This second category of linguistic determinism is a linguistic

deterministic approach which is less radical than the first in that it does not consider indigenous languages to be perfect agents of development and foreign languages to be epitomes of under-development. The approach creates conditions that are necessary for indigenous languages to enforce development in Africa and conditions which cause foreign languages to lack the power to enforce development in Africa. The concept of development itself and the two forms of linguistic determinism, which have been identified by the writer, need to be discussed further.

### **The concept of development**

Cultural and media theorists have observed that "meaning is not...transparent and clear but [is] socially-produced and contested," (Painter and Jeffrey, 2009:1). The observation of these theorists is particularly true when it is applied to the term development. The term development is pregnant with meaning since different scholars define it differently. Therefore, the meaning of the term development is socially-produced and is contested by scholars and some other stakeholders who partake in that field of study. In his study of the relationship that exists between modernity and development, Mazrui (2002:201) has defined development as "modernization minus

dependency". For him modernization is "...change that is compatible with the present stage of human knowledge, that seeks to comprehend the legacy of the past that is sensitive to the needs of the future, and that is increasingly aware of its global context". Therefore, for Mazrui, although development has to be informed by a people's history, it should be future-oriented. As such, it should not be divorced from emerging trends in modern technological advancement. Again, in his thesis, Mazrui (2002) believes that for it to foster development in Africa, modernity needs to be decolonized. He proposes five strategies which Africans can use to decolonize modernity. They are indigenization, domestication, diversification, horizontal interpenetration and vertical counterpenetration. What is vital in Mazrui's understanding of development is that he sees development as not immersed in the past but as future-oriented and as linked to modern technology and the changing global trends. However, he does not particularly equate development to the positive changing trends in the conditions under which human beings find themselves and operate at any given historical moment. That is what Chivaura (1998) has tried to do.

Chivaura (1998) understands development as people-centred. For

Chivaura, genuine development is human factor development. Chivaura says of development from an African context,

At the heart of that development are Africans. These are the Human Factor (HF). They are the ones who should be developed. They are the ones who should bring about that development, their own development. That is to say they are the ones who should develop themselves. (1998:1).

Again Chivaura (1998) believes some two things ought to be valued if Africans are to work towards their own development. In the first place, Africans need technology that is necessary for use in the process of producing goods and services needed for their own development. In the second place, Africans need the skill (know-how) to produce such technological gadgets that they will use to foster their development. His thesis has value in that he sees Africans as potential movers of their history and as having the human agency that is needed to enforce their own development. However, his understanding of development is solely economic. It does not consider improvements in some other aspects of life as constituting human development as what Boutros-Ghali



and the other members of the Panel for Democracy and Development (2003) do.

Boutros-Ghali (2003:8) interprets development to mean, "...the whole range of economic, social and cultural progress in which peoples aspire." For him, that sort of development is "sustainable human development" (2003:9). Boutros-Ghali's understanding of development is not limiting in that it considers economic, social and cultural progress that is enjoyed by human beings in their societies to be the prime marker of development. However, Boutros-Ghali's understanding of development emphasises less on the position human agency plays in bringing progress in the different spheres of the human beings in a given society.

This brief debate shows that the meaning of development is socially-produced and is highly contested. Given that situation, this article works on the understanding that, development is the sum total of the positive improvements in the politico-economic and socio-cultural arenas of the African people that are enforced by the African people's use of indigenous and modern knowledge systems. That form of development starts with the African people's having total control over their economies and over their destinies as

individuals, and as groups of individuals in a given society and as nations.

### **The downright/radical linguistic determinist approach to development**

The downright and/or radical determinist approach to development pivots on a general assumption that, "Language is an emblem that switches [people and countries] from misery to plenty, from backwardness to progress and from backwaters to the centre of life..." (Hurskainen, 2002: 22). Chimhundu (2001), who is one of the exponents of the tenets of the downright linguistic determinist approach to development, says that:

Much as we might admire what our former colonial masters from Europe have done for themselves in Africa and in their own countries, we must not fail to recognize the fact that no European country has been developed in foreign languages. By way of comparison we must also observe that Asian countries that have developed and are developing much faster do not function in foreign languages (2001: 24).

In the quotation, Chimhundu establishes that, former colonialists developed themselves in Africa and developed the economies of their home

countries through the use of their own indigenous languages such as English, French and Portuguese. The issue is, although those languages were indigenous to the colonial masters, they were foreign to the colonized populations of Africa. Chimhundu also establishes that Asian countries, probably of the likes of China and Japan, developed and are still developing because they use indigenous languages and not foreign languages to enforce developmental programmes. What Chimhundu lobbies for is in line with what other scholars think about indigenous languages and economic development. Ngara (as cited by Chiwome and Thondhlana in Herbert 1992: 247) echoes the same view when he says that,

To embark upon a program of national development without careful consideration of the languages used in a nation is to invite an incalculable waste of vital resources simply through the compounding of every day inefficiencies in communication. Even more serious in the long run, is the waste of human potential that occurs when children are subjected to ill-conceived and inadequate language instruction during the school years.

It seems Ngara sees a close link existing between language choice and national development. In fact, he suggests that,

in every nation, it is the language of the majority that should be the language of socio-economic development if nations are to avoid “the compounding of every day inefficiencies in communication.”

Magwa and Mutasa (2007) are critical of African countries for their failure to promote indigenous African languages to languages of development. The two scholars emphasise the idea that indigenous languages have the potential to enforce development of African countries whilst foreign languages such as English, Portuguese and French lack the same potential.

Tenets of the radical linguistic determinist view which these and other scholars lobby for in their study of the relationship between language and development are influencing some students in higher institutions of learning in Zimbabwe. Rwaendepi (2012), who is a former student of the Department of African Languages and Culture at the Midlands State University, is among some such students.

In her honours dissertation with the title “The Role of language in social development – The case of Shona in Zimuto District” Rwaendepi (2012) makes propositions on the relationship between language and development that have roots in the linguistic

determinist theory. As what is the case with most radical linguistic determinist theorists, Rwaendepi argues that, it is the use of an indigenous Zimbabwean language (Shona) and not of a foreign language (English) in programmes of development that can lead to sustainable social development in Zimuto District. Particular statements which she makes, reveal her radical linguistic determinist stance in debates on the relationship between language and development. At one moment Rwaendepi says that, "...development which fails to manipulate local languages in its initiatives excludes the target people from participating in the whole process" (2012: 51). She also says that, "...there is a correlation between under-development and the use of foreign languages and sustainable development is associated with the use of local languages" (2012: 55). Above all, she says that, "...it is the researcher's argument that local languages are very critical in social development and that no meaningful development can take place without the use of local languages.

From this point on, this research questions and debates if it is true that the use of indigenous Zimbabwean languages in programmes of development leads to the attainment of development in Zimbabwe whilst the use of foreign and other languages in the same programmes brings development to a halt.

### **Mazrui's and Prah's linguistic determinist approaches with some qualifications to development**

In the Herald Newspaper of 6 January 2000, Mazrui spoke of the need to "scientificate" indigenous African languages in order for them to be able to enforce techno-economic development in Africa. Mazrui (2000) says that,

No country has ascended to a first rank technological and economic power by excessive dependency on foreign languages. Japan rose to dazzling industrial heights by 'scientificating' the Japanese language and making it the medium of its own industrialization. Korea has approximately scientificated the Korean language and made it the medium of its own industrialization.

In the quotation, Mazrui makes some three points pertaining to language and techno-economic development. The first point he makes is that, a country cannot achieve techno-economic development when it "excessively" uses foreign languages in programmes of development. His second point is that, unlike Japan and South Korea, African countries have not managed to link their languages to techno-economic developmental activities. The third point which Mazrui makes is that, in

order for indigenous African languages to help enforce techno-economic development they need "scientification". The general view that emerges from his words is that indigenous African languages can enforce techno-economic development in Africa. The view is deeply rooted in the downright linguistic determinist approaches to development. However, Mazrui adds that, for those languages to be able to enforce development in Africa, they need to be 'scientificated' first. In that way, he makes a move away from the downright linguistic determinist approach by virtue of his giving a condition (scientification) that is necessary for indigenous African languages to be able to stimulate development in Africa.

One other way in which Mazrui makes a move away from the downright linguistic determinist view is his acceptance of the idea that, foreign languages do also have the ability to help Africans to develop on the level of economics and technology. However, his view is that, using foreign languages, the same countries can still develop but they will fail to reach the zenith of techno-economic development if they 'excessively' use the foreign languages. In other words, those countries will not ascend to first rank technological and economic powers. Therefore, Mazrui seems to be lobbying for the view that, it is the

maximal and not the minimal use of foreign languages in Africa's programmes of development that has the potential to hamper those programmes. In that way, Mazrui distances himself from the fallacious belief that the moment African languages are adopted in development programmes will become the very moment when development will be realized. The same view helps to distance him from the mendacious claim that the moment foreign languages are used in programmes of development becomes the very moment when under-development will become the order of the day.

Whilst Mazrui has somehow distanced himself from the downright linguistic determinist theoretical view, he still remains a radical linguistic determinist theorist by virtue of compounding his vision in terms that are vague and not easy to decipher. Mazrui believes that African countries cannot reach the zenith of techno-economic development when they 'excessively' use foreign languages. That means, he is calling for a minimal and not maximal use of foreign languages in development projects held in Africa. The question is; what differentiates 'excessive/maximal' and 'minimal' use of foreign languages in development? This problematic issue

develops from the query that, at what level should the people say there is now either minimal or excessive use of foreign languages in development endeavours? If there cannot be made a distinction between maximal and minimal use of foreign languages in Africa's programmes of development, then Mazrui's views, that seems to be distancing him from downright linguistic determinist approaches to development, remains rooted in those approaches by virtue of their being compounded in words and phrases that students at institutions of higher learning and some other people cannot easily decipher.

One more other thing which is a bit confusing in Mazrui's views is the fact that, he believes that the 'excessive' use of foreign languages will not help African countries to reach dazzling industrial heights and to become first rank technological and economic powers, (Mazrui 2000: 3). The vexing issue that results from this claim is on what sort of a barometer is he using to measure 'industrial heights' and to measure 'first rank technological and economic development'. Deducing from what he asserts in the already given quotation, it seems as though Mazrui is using western industrialization and modernization as barometers for use in measuring an African country's industrial, technological and economic prosperity. That particular stance,

falsely "associates development with western scientism" (Chiwome 2000: xx). Therefore, if scholars lobby for the use of indigenous languages in programmes of development basing their arguments on the view that those languages will help Africa to reach great industrial heights as they are defined within the confines of western scientism, they will lead African countries to suffer negative effects of a crisis of indigenous and foreign languages dichotomy.

Although that can be interpreted to be the case from reading what Mazrui lobbies for in matters to do with language and development, still there is one interesting discovery which Mazrui makes in his endeavour to shift from a purely downright linguistic determinist approach to the debate on indigenous and foreign language bipolarity in development discourse. That discovery is based on his view that indigenous languages can potentially lead to techno-economic development in Africa when they become 'scientificated'. What that means is, for Mazrui, in their current (un-scientificated) state, indigenous African languages cannot lead to techno-economic development in Africa. In other words, 'scientificating' indigenous African languages is the condition which Mazrui views as having the potential to aid indigenous languages to enforce techno-

economic development in Africa. In that sense, he moves away from the uncritical view that the use of indigenous languages in development leads to the success of developmental projects in Africa and that the use of foreign languages leads to their failure. Although Mazrui is bringing up this particularly novel view, the issue is, Africans are called upon to grapple with what Mazrui implies by the phrase 'scientificating African languages'.

The obvious implication of the idea of 'scientificating' a language is enabling an indigenous African language to express scientific traits, scientific know-how and scientific trends that are in use in the modern world. In other words, what it seems is, in Mazrui's scholarship, 'scientificating' a language connotes the need to expand the lexicon of an African language through the art and science of term creation up to a point that the language can be used to express scientific knowledge that is in prevalent use in world affairs. If the deductions made in this article which pertain to Mazrui's call for the scientification of indigenous languages for use in programmes of techno-economic development in Africa are held to be correct, then just like Hadebe (in Chiwome, Mguni and Furusa 2000), Mazrui seems to lobby for the view that, "...new terms need to be created to indigenize Western

knowledge systems..." (Chiwome, 2000: xix-xx). Such a view, "...appears to associate development with Western scientism, [yet the truth is] African knowledge and technology have their technological base in their languages" (Chiwome, 2000: xx).

What that means is, by lobbying for the idea that African languages need to be 'scientificated' first in order for them to be able to enhance development in Africa, Mazrui is absolutely certain that if African countries are ever to attain and enjoy techno-economic development they should struggle to indigenise and/or domesticate western technological advancement using indigenous languages. That view is premised on the need to shove Africans to the periphery of development by virtue of the fact that, Europe and some Asian countries will become privileged to develop new technologies which Africans will then benefit from through indigenizing them using their mother tongues. That sort of thinking calls upon Africans to uphold countries of the west and of the east as copycats in matters to do with technological and economic development. Probably what makes Africa very much undeveloped in technological and economic terms is not its failure to indigenise western knowledge systems by 'scientificating' African languages but is Africa's failure to be

technologically minded to the point where it comes up with its own home-grown technological advancement. A technology, that is home-grown, is a technology that is developed using indigenous African languages. That very sort of understanding of technological advancement implies that indigenous languages will be scientified through their use in the process of developing home-grown technological knowledge systems. Probably, Mazrui has to learn from Leon Trotsky who established that, for the Marxist, unlike for the formalist the motto is "in the beginning was a deed and not a word". This article lobbies for the idea that, techno-economic development is not achieved by creating terms that will enable Africans to use western techno-economic knowledge systems. Rather, it is achieved through developing and using home-grown indigenous techno-economic knowledge systems during development endeavours carried out in the different African countries.

Therefore, although Mazrui has opposed the downright linguistic determinist approach to development by lobbying for the idea that, in their current state, (Before they are scientified), African languages cannot lead to techno-economic development, he remains more of a downright linguistic determinist theorist who holds the view that

development in Africa will only come through the use of indigenous and not foreign languages. The downright linguistic determinist approach to development has detrimental consequences on Africa. The approach is debated in the later sections of this article. At this point, let us focus on Prah's version of linguistic determinist approach with qualifications to development.

Prah (2000: 71) says that, No society in the world has developed in a sustained and democratic fashion on the basis of borrowed or colonial languages...countries in Africa remain underdeveloped partly on account of the cultural alienation which is structured in the context of the use of colonial languages. The developing countries of the Pacific rim and all of the old developed countries use their indigenous languages for education and development...This requires a commitment to provide resources for the development and use of these languages.

In the above quotation, Prah makes five points. First, Prah asserts that foreign languages can of course facilitate development in Africa, yet that development will not be sustainable and democratic. Second, he asserts that it is indigenise African languages that can aid Africa to attain 'sustained' and 'democratic' development. Third, Prah

asserts that, the under-developed state of African states is partly and not wholly caused by a form of 'cultural alienation that is structured in the context of the use of foreign languages'. In the fourth place, Prah holds that, countries of the Pacific rim have developed through the use of indigenous and not foreign languages. In the fifth place, he avers that resources should be availed for the purpose of developing ('scientificating') indigenous languages so that they become usable in development projects.

Prah's linguistic determinist view is revealed in his assumption that, it is indigenous and not foreign languages that can lead to 'sustained and democratic' development in Africa. However, his move away from a radical determinist viewpoint is evident when he does not deny that foreign languages can bring about development to Africa. The question is, is it true that foreign languages can lead to development which is not both sustainable and democratic in Africa whilst indigenous languages can lead to development that is both democratic and sustainable? If it is true, then Prah's linguistic deterministic approach with qualifications will become something worthy of reckoning in African scholarship and criticism and in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe and Africa.

Orwell (as cited by Wingo, 2008: 451) has established that, the word democracy has no clear-cut agreed meaning. Be that as it may, attempts to define democracy are many. In fact, ...Lincoln reminded us, democracy - from the Greek *demos*, the people and *kratos*, rule - in essence translates as "government of the people, by the people, for the people". In other words, what that means is, democracy connotes to a government that is ultimately answerable and accountable to the people." (Wingo, 2008: 451).

Boutros-Ghali, (2003: 7), understands democracy as,

...a system whereby the whole of society can participate at every level, in the decision-making process and keep control of it. Its foundation is the full observance of human rights, as defined by both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Pacts and Declaration of 1993. Wamala (2008), Teffo (2008) and Wingo (2008) understand the ideas of 'government by consensus' and of 'solidarity' to be the sine qua non of democracy in African indigenous cultures.

The scholars referred to give an understanding of democracy on the political level. The question is what does Prah imply by 'democratic development'? Basing on Lincoln's view of democracy, democratic development may be held to imply,



development of the people, initiated by the people, for the benefit of the people. In other words, it is development that is people centred and development in which the majority of the people are centred and not peripherised. The targets of developmental projects that are people-centred, are the people themselves. As such, democratic development can be interpreted to mean development in which the people target themselves in all their developmental programmes and projects. Given this understanding of democracy and democratic development we are apt to wonder if it is true that indigenous languages lead to democratic development whilst foreign languages lead to undemocratic forms of development in the African continent.

There is truth in that, when it is used in development projects, a language of the majority of workers, serves to create a community of communication within the production system. Therefore, it is that language which has the potential to aid the majority of workers and all other stakeholders in development projects to participate without experiencing communication barricades. That being the case, the question is: is it only the use of the language of the majority that makes production of wealth democratic. This article lobbies for the view that there are some other factors besides language which are of critical importance to

development and that can serve to democratize the process of producing wealth. In poor-fare states of Africa (Chinweizu, 1987) and/or weak postcolonial states of Africa (Sorensen, 2004), the economy is in the hands of a dozen few elites. Nkurumah (cited by Sleman, 2005) and wa Thiong'o (1981 & 1986) have considered African states to be neo-colonial states. A state that suffers neocolonialism is "...in theory independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from the outside" (Nkurumah, as cited by Slemon 2001: 102). Chinweizu (1987: 430) equates neo-colonialism to the Americanization of the world when he defines neo-colonialism as "The American style of empire being emulated by Europe".

Thus, in a neocolonial state, the means of producing wealth and all production relations are controlled by a few elites who will be working hand in glove with the former colonial masters to plunder economic resources of the neocolony. Gauba's (2003) definition of neo-colonialism helps to clarify this particular view. He defines neo-colonialism as,

The practice under which an advanced nation does not maintain its political domination in a foreign territory, but taking advantage of its superior

position in organization of trade and industry, uses the developing nation as a source of cheap labour and raw materials as well as a big market of its own products. It is subtle method of economic exploitation of developing nations by the developed nations, (2003: 130).

The stratified nature of neo-colonies enables production of wealth to be controlled by the minority and not by the majority of those who produce the wealth. In the end, the wealth that is produced will mostly benefit the former and not the latter. In such a set up, the use of indigenous languages as the languages of wealth production will of course create a community of communication in production sectors. The existence of the community of communication will in turn improve production efficiency since it will make the whole process of producing wealth to become people-centred. Although that set up allows wealth production to be people-centred, it does not automatically push the distribution of wealth to become people-centred too. As a matter of fact, indigenous languages will improve efficiency in the production of wealth for the benefit of the elite and the former colonial masters. That becomes the case since the use of the language of the majority (indigenous languages) will make sure production of wealth will be by the

people but it will not automatically imply that the distribution of wealth will be done for the people. Therefore, substituting foreign languages with indigenous languages in development projects that are carried out in a neo-colony does not necessarily serve to enhance democratic development of the masses and the neo-colony itself. That becomes the case since the neocolonial masters will siphon the products of the sweat of the masses to overseas markets for their own sole benefit.

If democratic development is interpreted from the understanding of Boutros-Ghali and the other members of the International Panel on Democracy and Development (IPDD) it will mean "...a system [of development] whereby the whole of society can participate at every level, in the decision-making process and keep control of it," (2003: 7) The question is that, does the use of indigenous and not foreign languages in developmental projects help the whole society to participate at every level of development and to take part in the decision-making process and keep control of it? One can do agree with the view that, it is the language of the majority that can aid the workers to effectively communicate their views during developmental and other activities. In that way indigenous languages can improve the chances and possibilities of the majority of workers to have chances of making decisions

pertaining to their own development. If that becomes the case, the result will be that, development goals will be attained with the implementation of their views: therefore it will be democratic development. However, the thorny issue is that having a language does not automatically imply having a voice. That riddle implies that, having a language does not automatically equate to being in a position to make decisions that are going to be implemented during production circles. In a neocolonial set up, the masses are not in a position to make decisions on how wealth ought to be produced and distributed whether or not they are allowed to use their own languages. That becomes the case since the critical decisions during wealth production and distribution are always made by the neocolonialist and his allies. The neocolonial master and his allies have the privilege to make production decisions since they will be in control of the means of production and of the production relations. They will also be in control of decision-making processes since they will be having the power to decide on how the produced wealth should be distributed between them and the majority. In such a situation, linguistic democracy and linguistic nationalism may not necessarily equate to democratic development.

If democracy is founded on the principles of human rights, then democratic development has to be

founded on the same principles as spelt out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Given such a scenario, one is apt to question the feasibility of equating the right to indigenous languages to democratic development? The position of this article is that, having excess to the use of indigenous languages in a society, does not necessarily equate to democratic development especially in a situation where the means of producing wealth is in the hands of a few. Furthermore, the article argues that, an unbalanced economic environment does not lead to democratic development in spite of the fact that, indigenous and not foreign languages are the languages of producing wealth. In fact, our argument is that in a situation where a few are in a position to benefit economically at the expense of the majority, the use of the language of the majority in the production of wealth will improve productive communicative efficiency. The benefits of the improved communicative efficiency will be enjoyed not by the majority of the people and the workers but by those who own the factories, the mines and the industries in a given country.

For Wamala (2008), Teffo (2008) and Wingo (2008) both government by consensus and government of 'solidarity' are the sine qua non of democracy in African indigenous cultures. From what the three scholars lobby for, one can draw the conclusion that democratic development is

development that proceeds on the basis of consensus of opinion between and among all the stakeholders that will be involved in productive circles. One can also draw the conclusion that, democratic development is development that is achieved when there is solidarity between the workers and those who own the means of production, who control production relations and who control the distribution of wealth.

What should be taken note of is that, consensus of opinion during development projects can only be reached when there is a full fledged community of communication. The community of communication can only come into existence when development discourse is held in the language of the majority of those that will be taking part in development projects. In Africa, the languages of the majority are indigenous languages and not foreign languages. That means, it is the use of indigenous languages in development projects, that can lead to the rise of a community of communication and that in turn can lead to the enhancement of consensus of opinion and of solidarity between and among stakeholders in development issues. Although that can be held to be the case, scholars and critics, who spread and exalt the downright linguistic determinist approaches to development issues, ought to be reminded that, consensus of opinion and solidarity between and among stakeholders in development

issues cannot be reached when there is an acute vertical relationship between those who own the means of producing wealth and the general populace. Vertical relationships between stakeholders in development will militate against the attainment of both consensus of opinion and solidarity between and among those who engage in development projects. Therefore, before Prah and other scholars celebrate the adoption of indigenous languages for use in development issues in the hope that they will lead to the attainment of democratic development, they have to consider the need for a genuine horizontal relationship between the neocolonial masters and their allies and the majority of the people who take part in programmes of national development. That being the case, Prah and his scholarly 'sons' and 'daughters' need not lure Africans to hold the view that productive democracy will prevail the moment when Africans start using African languages in development issues. The issue that is at stake here is that democracy need not be defined solely on the basis of language and language alone. Democracy that pertains to language choice and use is solely linguistic democracy and is not developmental and/or productive democracy. Probably it is at that point where scholars need to learn to avoid use of certain catchy phrases and lexical items such as democracy and democratic and sustainable development in their discussion of

African languages and development without having put much thought into what they really mean and imply with those phrases and lexical items.

The issue is, although Prah and Mazrui have tried to move away from the overt linguistic determinist approach to issue of socio-economic and technological development in Africa, they have generally failed to make the move in clear-cut terms. As such, the linguistic determinist view is still very strong in debates on socio-economic and other forms of development in African scholarship. Therefore, it needs to be thoroughly appreciated from an understanding of what is happening in Zimbabwe, Africa and the world.

### **More Insights on Linguistic Determinism and Development**

The idea that the use of indigenous languages and not English can lead Zimbabwe and the other African countries to develop economically and socially seems to be based on a gross simplification of the under-developed state of Zimbabwe and of the other African countries. Again, the idea that Asian countries are developing fast because they use Asian languages and not foreign languages in their politico-economic affairs seems to emerge from a misreading of the economic histories of most Asian states. The Chinese situation can supply a brief example

of how Asian countries developed and are still developing very fast.

The credit to China's economic turn around mostly rests with the reforms made by Deng Xiaoping, who became president of China after Mao Zedong, who is China's founder president. In his economic reforms, Xiaoping made sure in the agricultural sector, 'A system of household farming replaced the collectives; private farm markets re-opened in cities and rural areas; peasants could claim much higher prices for their products and they were allowed to set-up small scale under-takings in industry and service,' (Sorensen, 2004: 147). That means what boosted agricultural productivity in China during Xiaoping's rule was not that Xiaoping promoted Chinese indigenous languages in the production processes but that he gave favourable conditions to the peasants to produce more and more goods for both Chinese and export markets and industries.

What helped China to develop in the industrial sector was Xiaoping's introduction of "...a system of decentralization and less state control [which was] combined with the introduction of private enterprise [and] an open door policy," (Sorensen Ibid). As a result of all those moves, China does not uphold the neoliberal "free market" model which the USA

is promoting in the world system rather China upholds a 'market economy with special Chinese characteristics' (Sorensen, Ibid: 148). In addition to that, China also upholds an economic culture, "which includes an entrepreneurial work ethic focused on the wellbeing of the family," (Hurrell Cited in Sorensen 2004: 148). Furthermore, China developed and is still developing fast because, "China greatly emphasizes sovereignty and the norm of non-intervention" (Sorensen Ibid: 14). All what that may mean is, "China is certainly joining the world but only reluctantly and it remains a highly egotistic player" for it upholds 'a hard-line nationalist opposition to globalization," (Sorensen ibid: 149). In other words, China is taking the route which European countries took to develop between 1815 and 1914 (Anderson, 1985). In the period in question, European countries developed through opposing the gimmick of free international trade and through upholding an economic nationalism that was isolationist and separatist, (Anderson 1985). The other thing which scholars, who lobby for the linguistic determinist approach to development, should take note is that, China uses its win-win principle to acquire cheap resources from Third-World countries and to enter economic deals with those countries. Those resources and deals allow China to make a lot of money at the world

market. In most cases, that is done to the detriment of the Third-World.

Generally speaking, this article holds that China and the other Asian countries, that are developing fast are developing fast, are not developing so fast because they are using indigenous Asian languages in their programmes of development. Rather, the article argues that they are developing fast because they are enjoying military and political sovereignties in world affairs. The military and political sovereignties aid China and the Chinese people to be in control of their country's means of production, to be in control of their society's production relations and of the methods by which wealth has to be distributed to the Chinese people and has to be sold to the Chinese and non-Chinese consumers. Military might and political sovereignty also aid China and the other Asian countries to draft policies whether they may be economic, political and foreign without unnecessary intrusion in their affairs by the superpower and the other nuclear-have-lots of the world. Unreasonable intrusion of the great powers of the world in policy drafting and policy implantation in Third-World countries greatly hampers those countries' developmental programmes. Therefore, before Zimbabwean and some other scholars of a non-Zimbabwean origin draw examples from Asian countries to lobby for the idea that it is the indigenous

Zimbabwean languages and not English that can lead Zimbabwe to develop economically, technologically and socially, they should carefully study the economic histories of those Asian countries that are growing very fast such as China, South Korea, Taiwan and others. They should also seek to understand in economic and not in linguistic terms why Zimbabweans are not attaining social and economic development.

For Sorensen (2004) African states belong to the category of what he has called weak and failing postcolonial states. They are weak 'in terms of all the three core aspects of statehood: that is government, nationhood and economy' (2004: 172). Because of their weakness on the level of government, nationhood and economy postcolonial states such as Zimbabwe are not progressing well in socio-economic terms. That situation may imply that, even if indigenous languages are used in the production of wealth in those neo-colonies, development will not be achieved. Possibly, that is why Mazrui (1993, 2004) associates the under-developed nature of African societies to their adoption of either a "lop-sided,crippled capitalism" or a "retarded socialism." He says of the lop-sided capitalism, "The continent had received Western consumption patterns without Western productive techniques, Western tastes without Western performance, urbanization without industrialization, capitalist greed without capitalist

discipline". (1993: 922). For Mazrui, those two modes of production are lop-sided and retrogressive since they are shadows of the real capitalism and socialism as they are practiced in the countries of the eastern and western blocs of Europe. Since they are lop-sided and retrogressive, African countries, which adopt either of the two will remain under-developed even if they resort to using indigenous languages in their socio-economic activities. Therefore, this article lobbies for the idea that, those countries can only attain socio-economic development when they can come up and adopt sound modes of production. They will not attain socio-economic development by merely substituting English with indigenous languages in wealth production sectors. However, they cannot adopt those when they do not enjoy military and political sovereignties, since the sovereignties in question aid them to attain economic and technological sovereignties.

The liberal theorists attribute both the development and under-development of the societies of the Third-World to "the active effort of social forces in society in alliance with state elites," (Sorensen Ibid: 175). What that means is, the liberal theorists do not attribute the under-developed nature of the Third-World; countries such as Zimbabwe to the use of the English language in programmes of socio-economic development but to

the inactive efforts of the social forces in society in alliance with the state elites. Whilst the approach of the liberal theorists is based on the desire to clear former colonial masters of the role they played and are still playing in under-developing African societies, still it serves to clarify the futility of the use by scholars of the linguistic determinist approach whenever they seek to account for the under-developed nature of African societies. Probably one explanation to why African states are under-developed is supplied by the radical dependency and/or realist theorists. The radical dependency theorists

...argue that, under-development is caused by factors external to the poor countries. It is due to domination by foreign economic interests originating in the developed West. Those forces cripple and distort societal structures inside Third-World countries. Third-World dependency and under-development therefore is the result of a global process of uneven capitalist development," (Sorensen, 2004: 174

Sorensen (Ibid) goes on to comment that "the radical dependency explanation thus emphasizes the negative role of foreign economic interests as the primary factor in

undermining weak postcolonial statehood'. The radical dependency theory is advocated in this article since the article lobbies for the idea that the former colonial masters and their allies in world affairs use their military stamina and political muscle to interfere with the socio-economic affairs of the weak countries for their own economic benefit. That is what this article holds to be the meaning of neocolonialism. Therefore, it must be concluded that, it is neo-colonialism and not solely the absence of linguistic nationalism in productive structures and institutions which contributes to the under-development of African societies.

Generally speaking, this discussion is meant to reveal the idea that those scholars and students in institutions of higher learning, who lobby for the idea that it is indigenous languages and not English which can lead to the development of the Zimbabwean economy, are unnecessarily reducing politico-economic issues to linguistic issues. In so doing, they seem to play politics with languages, (Achebe (2009). Achebe says that,

The point in all this is that language is a hard whipping boy to summon and belabour when we have failed in some serious way. In other words we play politics [and economics] with language, and



in so doing conceal the reality and the complexity of our situation from ourselves and from those foolish enough to put their trust in us, (2009: 102).

The whole issue is that the discourses of development and under-development in Zimbabwe and Africa cannot be understood within the parameters of linguistic criteria that are divorced from the prevailing military and politico-economic realities at both the level of the state and the supra-state. Therefore, the argument of the paper is that, the neocolonial activities of the former colonial masters and their allies should be brought to a halt if indigenous languages are to be effectively used to facilitate democratic procedures in both the production and distribution of wealth in Zimbabwe and Africa. In other words, the article argues that military inferiority does not allow a state to attain political sovereignty. In the absence of genuine political sovereignty African states will not be in a position to draft economic policies and implement them since the great powers in world affairs will interfere in season and out of season with the whole processes of drafting and implementing sound economic policies. Therefore, it is neither upholding the downright linguistic

determinist approaches nor the linguistic determinist approaches with qualifications in programmes of development of the neo-colonies that can potentially ransom them from the status of under-development as what scholars would want us to believe and would want students in institutions of higher learning to spread and exalt in their research practices.

### Conclusion

This article has established that, there are scholars of Zimbabwean and non-Zimbabwean origin who lobby for the use of a linguistic determinist approach to development in their research endeavours. The linguistic determinist view which they lobby for is in two categories. The first category of the approach is an approach of those scholars who lobby for what this article has called a downright and/or radical determinist approach to development matters. The second category is an approach of those who advocate a less radical type and which this article has called a 'linguistic determinist approach with qualifications' to development issues. The former approach considers indigenous languages to be the drive and the centripetal forces in Africa's developmental programmes and projects. The latter approach holds the same view, but is less

radical in that: (i) it lobbies for the idea that, whilst indigenous languages are the potential drive in Africa's development: however, in their current (un-scientificated) state, they cannot serve in that capacity and (ii) it also hold that, although foreign languages are not the languages for use in Africa's programmes of development, still their use in those programmes will not bring development to a halt, rather their use can lead to development that is minimal and that is not democratic. The article has established that although scholars such as Mazrui (2000) and Prah (2000) have tried to move away from the downright linguistic determinist approaches to development, still they have struggled in vain to move away from the approach. As such they remain equally radical in their approaches. Therefore, the article has established that the downright linguistic determinist approach to development is still very much dominant in scholarship and is fast influencing some students in institutions of higher learning. The article has established the weaknesses of a linguistic determinist approach to development. Like Achebe (2009) the researcher has argued that, those who lobby for the approach are almost always 'playing politics with language' since they advocate and lobby for the use of that approach in

development after they misread and misjudge economic histories of some countries, such as the economic histories of Asian countries like China.

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