

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity and Social Change: Potency or Encumbrance?

Omondi Oketch (Ph.D)

The Technical University of Kenya,
Department of Language and Communication Studies,
P.O. Box 52428 – 00200,
NAIROBI
E- Mail: omondio@gmail.com

Abstract

One of the main objectives of development agencies is to instigate change in the livelihoods of the vast population in the rural emerging economies of Africa using local resources. However, given the global campaigns and cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of the people involved in the social interactions some scholars and development practitioners have argued that these diversities are hindrance to the realization of the objective. In this paper, I discuss the role that diverse linguistic and cultural resources play in capturing the local voice and instigating participation hence contributing increasingly to processes of democratization and development within and across linguistic borders. Drawing upon community interaction in Western Kenya, and arguing from a Systemic Functionalist approach, I illustrate how multilingualism and multiculturalism aids the process of change and empower the 'minority languages' to actively negotiate and disseminate development messages as well as some of the challenges facing multilingualism in development in the area. I conclude that multilingualism is a gift that aids in successful social interactions thus leading to democratization and development in the rural communities in the emerging economies of Africa rather than a hindrance as has been hitherto thought.

Introduction

While it is evident that social interactions are sustained by agreeable communicative principles, the role of language and the different language choices available in areas where development interventions take place have received very little attention from the concerned parties (Robinson, 1996). This has greatly impacted on the quality of interaction at the grassroots level and the realization of the set development objectives. More often than not it is assumed that once there is a common language, effective communication will take place. This assumption has given support to the argument in favour of embracing monolingual approach to speed up the process of development in the developing countries (Prah, 2000; Bamgbose, 1991; Robinson, 1996). Emphasis on the use of language(s) of the majority as the panacea to penetrating rural communities have also gained ground as the most appropriate communicative design in social change such as found in development. However, as shall be demonstrated later in this paper, communicative success and by extension development success in a multilingual and multicultural context, such as found in Kenya, demonstrates that there is need to reconsider the social roles and the different languages serve in that society. This paper discusses the implications of multilingualism and multiculturalism as resources in social transformation with specific reference to Western Kenya.

Language scholars have argued that the language of the masses should be used to communicate development messages (Prah, 2000; Djite, 1996, 2005; Bamgbose, 1991) since such language express who the people are, aside from being the language that gives power to their identity and collective voice. A similar argument has been put forth by scholars who advocate for an approach which sees people's language use as their linguistic human rights as documented in the universal declaration of human rights of Barcelona (1996) seeks to guarantee the promotion and respect of all languages and their social use in public and private, the Asmara declaration (2000) championed use of Africa languages and linked them to effective and rapid development of science and technology.

The arguments have been particularly strong in the debates on the politics of language choice in development and social transformation in the third world countries. While such suggestions are informed by genuine concern for the majority of the masses in the rural areas who have the disadvantage of not having gained formal education, it must not be taken for granted that all people in the rural areas are monolingual and will wholesomely and willingly use the first language in the emerging global discourse. Such arguments have a strong opposition to the so called 'language of power' usually languages of the former colonial masters which have been used in education.

Until recently, development organizations employed personnel on the basis of language such that even if the project officer did not speak the language of the target communities the organization employed junior colleagues from the community. The junior colleagues were meant to bridge the communication difficulties with the project officers, the knowledge of the language of the target group became a prerequisite and added advantage when it came to securing a chance to work for development organizations in the rural areas in the area. Such a move encouraged a monolingual approach to social development issues even in multilingual contexts, thus wholesomely prescribing what they think is best for the target communities. However, while knowing the target beneficiaries' language is a big boon to effective communication in areas where the target community is largely monolingual, it is the concern of this paper that this approach has its own inhibition to the process of social transformation in a multilingual and multicultural environment where participants have functional assignments to the diverse linguistic resources at their disposal. In fact a monolingual approach in a multilingual set up amounts to infringement of the people's linguistic rights.

Consequently linguistic human rights must be interpreted as the liberty by human beings to use any or all of the linguistic resources available to them without restriction or coercion. In which case linguistic right should encompass multilingualism after all it is the right of the individual/community to use all the resources available to them as a matter of choice. As such it must be defined not as a restrictive in-group possession but also to encompass the multilingual realities in the rural communities which as we now know, are not made of a homogeneous friendly, warm hearted natives living together in harmony (Burkey, 1993). Instead communities are composed of people with complex mixture of cultural and linguistic experience and any issues of human rights must take into this complexity. It is this mental image of the community as some harmonious entity oppressed by their poverty and perhaps also their ignorance that has created the harmonic model to community development and thus given credit to a monolingual approach (Omondi, 2006).

This paper therefore pays attention to the freedom with which participants in social change exploits linguistic fluidity between languages as they utilize the various linguistic weighting in their realities. Thus it delves into the how informal interactions are sustained in the discourse of social change and specifically how the multilingual reality helps in the awareness creation and realization of true participation of the poor in development, poverty alleviation, health, good governance and democracy. In so doing the paper

explores the place of language in the development in Kenya by examining development discourses, the linguistic choices available and the language preferences against the background of competing linguistic resources in development initiatives. In this regard the paper is not a numerical account of the existing languages in the study area, but a critical analysis of the functional weighting accorded to each of the language and their communicative impact on the development goals in the study area.

The Language Situation in Western Kenya

Kenya is a multilingual society with over 43 ethnicities speaking no less than 47 languages if we consider other foreign languages like English, French, German and Arabic. The indigenous languages are organized in terms of broad linguistic grouping hence Bantu, Nilotes and Cushites. They are further classified on the basis of language status thus we have English and Kiswahili as the official languages, Kiswahili as the national language and all the other ethnic mother tongues as regional and even local languages associated with ethnic identities and everyday local relevance (Omondi, 2006; Stroud 2002). Over seven languages are spoken in Nyanza province where the study was undertaken, namely English, Kiswahili, Dholuo, Ekegusii, Kikuria, Olusuba, Sheng plus other cross-local varieties existing through what Prah (1995) calls linguistic continua. While Dholuo is the dominant local language all the other languages are spoken actively in everyday interaction especially in the specific ethnic national or districts since the province is divided administratively along ethnicities forming the 12 districts. Like the Kenyan Policy, the province is largely multilingual as well as multicultural.

Olusuba which was once spoken in the islands of Mfangano and Rusinga, and parts of the present day Suba district, now has a total population of less than 60,000 people who are basically assimilated by the dominant Luo culture, although the language has been listed as one of the endangered or extinct languages (Ogechi, 2003; UNESCO, 2002), Kembo-Sure (2001) reports that only a few old people speak the language. Indeed the field experience revealed that the people in the district largely speak Dholuo and a hybrid variety of Dholuo and Olusuba plus some variety of Kiswahili, although they subscribe to the dominant Luo culture. However, in the recent past the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E) embarked on efforts aimed at 'resurrecting' it through writing of documents such as bibles and developing of Olusuba primers and orthography. It is yet to be seen what such efforts will yield especially bearing in mind that Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E) has not trained teachers who are expected to use the books written in Olusuba. Be that as it may, they few who speak Olusuba plus the elite from among them have fought so hard for their identity as well as their voices to be heard and this saw the creation of Suba district. This recognition by the Kenyan government has elevated the Suba people from invisibility under the Luo domination (both culturally and linguistically) to a people with precise identity thus allowing them the liberty to think as a people and plan their own destiny.

By the time of this study, it was noted that the social transformation agents in the area did not subscribe to the trifocal Kenyan language policy; instead a number of organizations had realized that the realities on the ground did not permit a strictly monolingual approach to communication. The experience as one Project officer observed is that:

People are not interested in policies which do not work. Our experience here (in development communication) is that people will use whatever language as their disposal as long as they are communicating...my experience is that for you to succeed here you are better off using what the people are using forget what about the policy. (Interview in Siaya 2.02.2005)

Thus, interactional discourses are guided by practical realities on the ground rather than what the policy states. It is clear that the existing language policy does not take into account the new realities arising from resettlement of people in areas away from their ancestral homes. For instance, due to liberal land policy which allows Kenyan citizen to purchase land and settle any where in the country, most of the rural communities in Kenya comprises people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Secondly the field of development attracts people from diverse backgrounds as well as professions for example teachers, social workers and retirees who have worked in various urban areas.

These new realities call for careful and expedient language choice since language use is no longer an issue of policy but of service functionality targeting specific functions in everyday communication. Thus, the new reality presents a rich pool of linguistic resources with differing social and functional weighting in the market of communication. For instance, while the language is meant to be used at home and in local interaction, development and all forms of change initiatives in the rural and peri-urban centres have been packaged as learning experiences hence associated with formal learning. However, the language use is not strictly formal (in the sense of standard forms) thus while the situation remains formal in design the communication is quite informal. For this reason the interactions are carried out extensively in hybridized language that sometimes incorporates as many languages as the situation allows.

The linguistic pool provides the users with options and choices and where there is inadequate proficiency in a language or even inappropriate choice of language the interlocutors tend to switch and even mix codes thus investing on their linguistic and cultural resources to resolve any communication difficulties. The inhabitants have mastered multiple languages and language varieties and it is no surprise that the discourse of social transformation is comprised of highly hybridized speech that cut across language boundaries as well as incorporating diverse cultural discourse styles. Closely tied to the issue of choice is the notion of attitudes and individual preferences. Some interlocutors have a strong sense of pride in using some language as opposed to the other as long as discussions are not held in that language they will not participate. Such attitudes have been expressed especially with regard to Kiswahili which many of the inhabitants of the study area consider with a lot of reservation. Nevertheless interactants are more at home drawing from the rich granary of linguistic and cultural resources than adopting a monolingual approach, which is fraught with attitudinal biases.

Multilingualism in Development Discourse: A Critical Assessment

The question of language use in social transformation and development in the third world countries has received contribution and recognition from scholars and even development practitioners. The importance of language of the masses is recognized by scholars (Djite, 2005; Prah, 2000, 1998; Robinson, 1996) as arising from the fact that the vast majority of the people in sub-Saharan Africa are not proficient in the major languages spoken by the donor nations such as English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish. This lack of proficiency is often tied to poverty and lack of ability to afford education – the institutions from which the majority of the rural people learn the former languages of colonial masters. Such languages are often used as the medium of instruction in schools and as official languages. Evidently therefore those who do not attend schooling seldom acquire the major language.

The emphasis on using the language of the masses is thus justified given the fact that the rural majority are more proficient in their own mother tongues. Such languages have been recognized and packaged as critical to the people's survival thus the arguments in favour of linguistic human rights (Heugh, 2005; Phillipson,

2000; Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummings, 1998). The impact of such arguments has infiltrated into the discourse of development communications and a lot of emphasis has been placed on the use of the target people's language or language of the market place. Development agents have even stressed the need to employ personnel who can speak language of the target community. The challenge with this trend is that they may be fluent speakers of the target people's language but lack the necessary communicative as well as appropriate content of the goals of the development initiatives.

Besides, the linguistic realities in the rural communities such as found in Kenya, require communicators with diverse linguistic competencies rather than fluency in one specific language. Furthermore, although the recognition of the masses linguistic strengths fits well with the much taunted participatory development, it is loaded with monolingual undertones which are more divisive than inclusive. The observed practice is that people are more comfortable with hybrid language and many of the development agents themselves are not fluent speakers of the so called language of the target community. In Nyanza province, other local languages have been incorporated as alternative ways of communication and this has given voice to the hitherto silence majority. Development discourse is fraught with utterances and references to objects and ideas borrowed from other communities within the province.

The colonial experience added English language to the already multilingual society and even though some scholars have argued against the hegemonic influence of English as linguistic colonialism hence a denial of the basic human right (McDermont, 1998) English is viewed by many people in the study area as the route to empowerment, economic success and upward social mobility. In this regard English has been embraced as part of the linguistic resource that flower the multilingual landscape in Kenya and has played a major role in the transformation of societies in Kenya. Since languages are allocated specific social functions, this paper argues that language in a multilingual context acquire functionalities and these functionalities are critical to the social transformation of the communities. As pointed out by Kajee (2001) the multilingual societies select what they consider the most suitable language to serve a particular function.

The Theoretical Framework

The functional approach adopted in this paper seeks to explain the different functionalities of the languages in the study area and how they are potentially empowering when analysed in social contexts. I assume that each language acts upon, and is constrained and influenced by the social context (see Martin and Rose, 2004; Eggins, 19994). Following systemic functional linguistic (SFL) the papers sees a complete interconnectedness between linguistic and social context thus focuses on how the people in a multilingual context use language to make meanings with each other in their every day activities and how this impact on their social transformation (cf. Christie and Unsworth, 2003).

I use the term language in a generic rather than a singular term to account for the fact that in multilingual contexts people use different languages to carry out different activities or functions. The paper recognizes the fact that 'any language uses serves simultaneously to construct some aspect of experience, to negotiate relationships and to organize the language successfully so that it realizes a satisfactory message' (Christie, 2005:11). Moreover, all natural languages have metafunctions that is, functions that extend across any pattern of language use, and we assume that every grammatical organization of language reflects the functions for which language has evolved to serve in human interaction. Unlike in monolingual societies which are dependent on a single code, in multilingual communities different languages may perform different functions during interaction, including signaling different languages are used to construct different

experiences and messages, as well as to negotiate different roles and relationships. The aim of which is to make their world a better place to live in.

While SFL also accounts for the syntactic structure of language, the approach we have adopted places the function of different languages as central (what different languages do, and how they do it in isolation and in combination) in multilingual discourse in this analysis. The application of this approach is aimed at understanding constraints that ideational metafunction has on the textual metafunctions particularly with regard to the choice of mode here seen as linguistic choices at the disposal of multilingual speaker and the functions for which they emerge to serve. Related to this is SFL's notion of analyzing complete 'text' (i.e. meaningful passage of language) as a basis of linguistic study. In multilingual communities such texts are also likely to be composed of meaningful passages of languages, rather than a single language. This means that the functional approach adopted in this paper is concerned with the analysis of authentic products of social interaction called 'texts' (Christie, 2005) be they from one or more languages, considered in relation to the cultural and social contexts in which they are negotiated rather than a decontextualized sentence or utterances.

Therefore, the approach adopted in this study is concerned with describing the linguistic options or choices that are available in constructing meanings in particular contexts. This is important in this paper because it examines the relationship between languages in use and the social process of change, with the aim to explore the interconnectedness of the linguistic choices and the social transformation, as well as to explain the choices multilingual users of language make the functions that such choices serve. In this idiom, where English is concerned, the argument is not so much the negative impact it has had on the development of African languages, but rather an analysis of the functions to which people in multilingual Africa have assigned to this adopted language.

The Study

This paper is part of the larger study that I carried out between 2003 and 2006 on language use and mode of communication in community development in Nyanza province in Western Kenya. Nyanza is one of the eight provinces of Kenya and covers a bigger percentage of the Kenyan shore of Lake Victoria. The rural population is estimated at 2.4 million and the province is said to have high poverty rates across most divisions and locations (cf. UNDP, 2002; Krishna et al., 2003). Over 54% of the population has no access to improved water supply and according to UNDP reports 2005, the province was rated as the poorest in the country in the previous four years. Records from the NGO council of Kenya established in 1991 reveal that there were over 450 registered NGOs working in various parts of the region, carrying out development initiatives as at the time of the study, thus making it the province with the highest concentration of NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

Operating from a qualitative paradigm, data used in this study was gathered using qualitative data collection techniques such as interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis. Data was collected from development practitioners, consultants, projects officers as well as the target communities where a total of four development organizations were carrying out different development initiatives ranging from water and sanitation, environmental sensitization, poverty alleviation through income generating activities, girl child education, women's rights, politics and governance to HIV/AIDS campaigns. The sample size was 200 and all interviews were recorded and later transcribed and used as data.

Discussion and Findings

Community development practices, as a social practice, conditions and determines discourse through a set of networks or order of discourse (Fairclough, 2004). In the case of this study, the selection of the available linguistic resources and use thereof is determined by the social conditions and functions of the discourses. In multilingual contexts such as found in Western Kenya where languages acquire specific functionalities it is imperative that participants are cognizant of these functions and how the language behaviour facilitates interaction. Without this knowledge, access to information is limited and so is participation in the process of decision making at all levels.

Evidence from the field revealed that multilingualism is a resource that aids the realization of development objectives and thus social transformation. So while the language policy states that mother tongue should be used in informal set ups, and the organizations peg community jobs on knowledge of the language of the target group, field officers have realized that such requirements are no longer tenable in multilingual contexts where the target participants operate comfortably in a hybridized language. This point is summarized by one participant:

My experience in Nyanza is that it doesn't matter whether you speak Dholuo or not. In fact people you do not need to ask them to communicate in that strange language (any standard language) even me with my deady broken Luo I am able to Pass some extension messages, ya...and that's working. I can say that with our many tongues we've been able to learn a lot on how to tailor our moment agenda to the conditions of the people we are working with... ya and the people have also been empowered in many areas (Interview Feb. 2004).

Thus, multilingualism builds the poor people's confidence and as I mentioned earlier, becomes essential for true participation and genuine articulation of their conditions in their own voices. Because of this recognition of the linguistic realities in communities where they work, development agents attest to the fact that multilingualism empowers the poor and the underprivileged to express themselves in their own voices (tongues), thus seize identification as a group. The reverse of this situation only admits the selected few who have proficiency in one language to dominate and make decision for others. For instance the excessive use of English or Kiswahili or even Dholuo has alienated participants from being part of the decision making regarding their plights. And this is captured succinctly by one participant in a workshop on good governance while reacting to excessive use of English.

This initiative is very selective. It appears to belong to only those who speak English and not for those of us who do not speak that language. But I though you come here so that we can dialogue in order for you to know what we think. If that is the case then you must allow us to use a language that can express our being and out thoughts. That's the only way you can understand us. So let us have a little English mixed with a little Kiswahili and Dholuo also (My translation. The original text is here below)

Giru ni en mar abaguzi kendo nenore ni o belong to some selected few manyalo wacho Dho ngere. Aparo ni ubiro ka mondi omi wa share kit gimawa e yor majadiliano mondo you know kaka waparo. To kimono e winjo na to nyaka uyienwa wait gi dhok mayot nwa nikech mano is the only way ma unyalo ngeyo go kit ng'ima wa gi pachwa. Omiyo afadhali kakikgi odiero moromo, oswayo matin na Dholuo be matin. Koso awacho marach jothurwa? (Captured at a workshop on Good governance in Nov. 2004).

In this text participants renegotiating for equal playing grounds and expressing dislike for a monolingual discourse interaction. It is imperative that the speaker is actually using the linguistic reality (hybridized language) to gain recognition and participation in the discourse event. It is by resorting to the hybrid language – the resources in which the participants were comfortable in that genuine participation actually ensued in the workshop, thereby opening the democratic space and empowering participants to express themselves in their own voice. Multilingualism is thus a platform from which everyday realities are managed and from the above text we can also deduce that competent communicators in the area of development and social change are those who can harness the linguistic and cultural resources to merge and blend with the existing communicative demands.

The reality of globalization and the desire to belong to a global world also determines language choice. Since many social transformation initiatives are western in orientation, they are often packaged in English language. Inevitably and indeed paradoxically many participants in change initiatives prefer to use English language rather than their mother tongues. It was observed from the field that while participants rated development facilitators who use the local language in trainings highly, they themselves insist on using, the language which they are not quite proficient. This is a clear pointer to the underlying ideology of advancement being associated with English language. Over time, it appears survival in development social interaction is based on competing power and status indicators which are easily negotiated and expressed through language choice.

The non-native speakers of Dholuo and change consultants prefer carrying their interactions in English because it is the language in which development messages are encoded and transmitted. Besides, they are products of an ideologically domineering educational system that favours the use of English, they contend with the new realities of communication that aim at capturing the idea rather than fluency in a specific language:

....but don't forget that English is the official language in Kenya and because we have been having instructions in the language and using it as the language of instruction in schools, from nursery school to this level and because we are urban based and have gone through this urban education, it exposes us to English hence we are comfortable and conversant with English and any case the concepts that we seek to transfer are mostly written in English anyway.. but what has emerged is that Kenyans have developed this mixture of hybrid language.. you know this mixture of languages to communicate and it is working.. in fact we are forced to follow suit and discard the academic Kiswahili or English we use in interviews.

The local communities have internalized the social attitude and practice of using English as a medium of instruction in all formal gatherings. Hence, the tendency to use English at the expense of the local language which doesn't seem to provide significant economic gains or change in one's social status. They prefer the language that will identify them as favourable competitors in the developmentalism market. And to do this, they have learnt to filter their values and experiences through a dominant culture (Devine, 1994) in this case the new capitalism encoded in English. However, the field experience observed that excessive use of any specific language was often problematic.

Furthermore attempts at linguistic convergence by the participants to accommodate the facilitators are too demanding and discriminatory to those who do not speak English. This produces utterances that muddle up the intended information hence, there is no meaningful communication among the participants, as one respondent explains:

....but the thing is that I think in our endeavour to speak English we have left out a very important resource (multilingualism) that can actually be used within the community because first of all, we are ostracizing people and we make them feel inferior, you know, so you ...er...have people not able to come, or we insist of shifting people to suit us. It becomes easy for us to communicate in a language that is ... they are not comfortable in and this has largely affected our work [interview Dec 2005]

However, it must be pointed out here that the use of English is not merely an attempt at linguistic convergence with facilitators, but also symbolically serves to identify participant's educational backgrounds and signals class differences in social interaction. In some circles the use of English has generated negative attitudes towards the users who perceive people who speak in English as elitist and discriminatory. This perception has played a key role in nurturing linguistic diversity. The kind of linguistic hybridization is largely upheld and perceived as an effort to reach many people thus it has become the communication tool of the people. Contrary to this perception is an equally counterproductive use of pure mother tongue as this suggests cultural and linguistic jingoism, traits which are deemed as counterproductive to the democratic ideals associated with collective and communal participation. In this regard virtues associated with freedom and democracy is best expressed in a liberal space complete with flexible linguistic hybridity. This is important in a society polarized along ethnic lines like Kenya

While English enjoys a higher status and preference in the interactions symbolic capital and are relegated to provincial concerns that do not require status signaling, the other languages have very low Kiswahili does not find great favour with the people in the study area. In fact it can be generally observed that not two Luos use Kiswahili in any conversation unless there is a stranger or an outsider who is not conversant with English. Generally speaking, Kiswahili is not spoken among the Dholuo speakers who occupy Nyanza Province and this extends to Uganda where, as Kirunda (2006) points out, it is not received positively and is often associated with criminals, rogues and lawless soldiers. This negative attitude towards the language can be linked to the low functionality assigned to the language through stereotypes which limit Kiswahili to less formal interactions like talking to shopkeepers, water vendors and taxi touts.

Even change agents who are proficient in Kiswahili find it difficult to use the language because for the large majority of the Luo community the language is associated with slyness, trickery and menial jobs. This explains the collective mistrust for those who use it as pointed out here by one informant during a focus group discussion:

The reason our people don't use it is because we associate it with wayward people or thugs or conmen, because it is said that the swahilipeole are liars and conmen...the Luos have an automatic belief that a person who speaks a lot of Kiswahili is a conman [FGD, Dec 2005]

Be that as it may, Kiswahili is a critical resource in bridging simple communicative requirements especially like setting the mood for discourse. The dominant variety used for this purpose is the local variety which is extensively simplified and which also borrows a lot from both English and Dholuo languages. Perhaps the strong point of Kiswahili in this multilingual context is that it provides the syntactic frame with which linguistic hybridization especially Sheng is constructed. Sheng is a very simple, straightforward 'language' and has gained popularity since it draws from the vast linguistic diversities in the area, given the heavy influence of phonological, morphological and syntactical features of the local languages.

On the other hand, people tend to avoid using Dholuo because it is the language used to 'put things in a simpler way'. There is a belief that learning involves some challenging tasks and therefore it must be the

same with language use, that is, that a foreign language conveys unique knowledge. This accentuates the belief that local languages can function best in explaining simple things. It is this belief that contributes to the negative attitudes towards the local language which is seen as incapable of carrying and explaining more cognitive demanding tasks (Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2002).

Although Sheng was initially associated with the youths and those in the peri-urban areas, the language plus all the hybrid varieties, are adapting to the new realities are used to exploit the diverse innovations. Furthermore linguistic hybridization epitomizes plurality of public voice which is a crucial weapon in democratization and a possible panacea to tribalism a big threat to social cohesion in Kenya.

What these examples tell us is that a competent communicator is not one who is fluent in only one language but one who draws upon the diverse linguistic and communicative resource to facilitate an inclusive negotiation and interpretation of meanings. This resource is a big boon to the often chimerical, elusive and unstable practice of translation in many development intervention areas. More so bearing in mind that there are no trained translators working in the field of development, linguistic hybridity ensures that problems associated with misrepresentation of messages are efficiently ironed out using the rich granary of communicative resources available in the many languages. The advantage here is that interactants will understand the concepts under discussion clearly in their own languages and those who are more endowed resource-wise can explain the concepts in the language that others understand best.

Clearly tied to the issue of language is the equally resourceful cultural diversity available in the study area. Just like a monolingual approach to social change is an encumbrance to any change objective, a monocultural approach is equally problematic. The opening up of boundaries and the melting of tribal and cultural identities has impacted positively in social transformation of the people in Nyanza. Development practitioners attest to the use of field trips especially aimed at sharing what others have done. One such example involved a group of women from Siaya visiting Vihiga district (this is a neighboring district inhabited by mainly Bantu speakers) to see how they have organized what they refer to as 'village parliaments' and courts where women are trained on issues of their rights and how to constitute legal process against abuse. In this regard one participant remarked:

The trip was very helpful because we learnt how other Kenyans are coping problems that face us even here. In fact we are going to establish our own parliament to deal with these men who think we are drums [FGD Feb. 2006]

This is just one instance in which multicultural interactions was employed as resource to initiate social transformation among people in the study area and it illustrates how diversity is exploited positively for change. Traditionally, the inhabitants of Nyanza especially the Luo consider themselves culturally and educationally superior to other communities that neighbor them. However a move like this signals change in societal views and perceptions and by extension change in way of life. Therefore the idea of on-site training and field trips to expose participants to alternative ways of doing things has also helped in cross-cultural interaction and adoption of new forms of awareness based on the best experiences from other people.

Conclusion

It is clear from the discussions above that multilingualism and multiculturalism are important resources in social transformation as such demands on monolingual approach to discourse of development communication needs rethinking since they limit the rich potential of linguistic diversity in facilitating social change. Furthermore, a harmonic and monolingual approach goes against the principles of linguistic human

rights which seek to empower everyone to use a language of their choice for different functional purposes and communicative events.

Secondly, it is also evident that social transformation is an all encompassing process which cannot ignore the resources available to a community. The discourse of development should reflect the linguistic diversities in the communities in Kenya. Multilingualism is not just about the use of different languages but also the different varieties of the available languages as well as the hybridization of the languages. Therefore, approached from a positive and collective manner, the diverse linguistic resources can provide a breakthrough to the communicative efforts in community development.

Thus, as this paper has shown, in multilingual contexts, language choices and preferences are a reality. The choices and preferences are guided by the functions that each language serves in the community. The reality in Africa, and indeed in other parts of developing countries, is constructed by the rich reservoir of linguistic diversity, which is never really utilized to the fullest. The case on Nyanza province has shown that harmonic and monolingual approaches to communication have no place in social transformation in a multilingual context. Evidently, language use in development discourse should not be a debate about the use of a specific language or selected languages, but rather an acknowledgement of diverse communicative reality that draws upon the available linguistic resources. This is why functional use of the linguistic repertoire as well as knowledge of values and attitudes that masses attach to different languages in multilingual contexts is critical to effective social transformation.

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