



The Role of Language and Its Linguistic Impacts on Pan-African Cultural Development

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Abstract

This study evaluated the formative influence of Pan Africanism in the role of language and its Linguistics impacts on Cultural Development. Language production is a culturally learned behavior as culture is a representative of language, culture is not only inseparably related to language, but also plays an important role throughout the process of its development because Pan-Africanism was a type of nationalism that fused traditional culture and modern ideology to generate social power that it was. However, the knowledge gained through the study will help unveiled many practical consequences of language and its linguistic impacts on Pan-African Cultural Development.

Keywords: Pan-African, Culture, Development, Language, Linguistics

INTRODUCTION

Language production is a culturally learned behavior because culture is a representative of language, culture is not only inseparably related to language, but also plays an important role throughout the process of its development because Pan-Africanism was a type of nationalism that fused traditional culture and modern ideology together to generate social power that it was to liberate African people against enslavement and colonization through the development of her culture. Pan-Africanism is a worldwide movement that aims to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between all indigenous and Diaspora ethnic groups of African descent.

The principle of Pan-Africanism is based on the fact that African both at home within the continent and in the Diaspora maintain common history, political movements, cultural unity based on the belief that they have a common descent and belong to a single race. The promotion of Pan-Africanism leads to the formation of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) in 1963. The African Union Commission has its seat in Addis Ababa and Parliament has its seat in Johannesburg and Midrand. It emphasises on the importance for collaborative self-reliance for cultural development and political movement. Pan-African proponents are: Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Toussaint Louverture, King Sobhuza II, Dr. John Pombe Magufuli, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Muammar Gaddafi, Haile Selassie, Thomas Sankara, Kwame Ture, W. E. B. Du Bois, Joseph Robert Love, Malcolm X, Antenor Firmin, Marcus Garvey and others. Pan-Africanists are of the opinion that unity and common front will enable African continent to be liberated from colonialism to attain her full potential in order to independently fulfill the needs and aspiration of her people in the continent and to empower African people across the globe.

Pan-Africanism being a culturally driving, political and intellectual movement advocates for the solidarity, unity and empowerment of African countries and her citizens, both within the continent and in the diaspora. Its significance can be seen in multiple dimensions. Historically, Pan-Africanism emphasizes the need for African countries to politically and economically synergize in order to resist neocolonialism, external aggression, internal divisions, and exploitation. The movement has played a vital role in encouraging and supporting Africa's struggle for self-determination from colonial rule. It also advances the revival and appreciation of African diversities in languages, traditions, and philosophies that were previously jettisoned by colonialism.

In contemporary times, the relevance of Pan-Africanism remains profound. The creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) embodies Pan-African economic ideals by seeking to establish a unified market, enhance intra-African trade, and reduce dependency on Western nations. Political cooperation is evident in institutions like the African Union (AU), which pursue conflict resolution, regional stability, and good governance under Pan-African influence. Moreover, the movement empowers young Africans to promote digital transformation, entrepreneurship, and knowledge expansion. Pan-Africanism also strengthens regional ties with the global African diaspora, advancing cultural exchange, investment, and advocacy for African people.

New insights offered by Pan-Africanism include the rise of Afrofuturism and an intellectual renaissance, reimagining Africa's future by integrating technology with indigenous culture and knowledge, while challenging Western hegemony. The decolonization of knowledge and education is another emerging focus, emphasizing the creation of African-centered curricula across educational levels with strong roots in indigenous philosophies and epistemologies. Furthermore, the movement now highlights ecological and sustainable development, advocating for homegrown environmental solutions, green energy acceleration, food independence, and climate resilience. Through digital and media influence, new Pan-African voices are reshaping African narratives and uniting people across the globe for collective change.

RESEARCH METHOD

The objective of this evaluation is to ascertain the role and the level of Pan Africanism influence on the formative content and advancement of cultural policy in Africa and to benefit the national and desporal cultural interest of Africans. The study adopted Historical Textual Analysis which is engaged in reviewing past documents, treaties, and declarations on African unity to track the evolution of language in Pan-African ideology. It is designed to employed qualitative analysis, consultation of vital hard and electronic books and journals. This paper establishes that Pan-Africanism remains vital in

evolving with African nations aspirations through advocating for self cultural pride advancement, economic self sufficiency and polical emancipation..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language and Its Place in Pan-African Culture and Nationalism

The fact that Language production is a culturally learned behavior because culture is a representative of language and culture is not only inseparably related to language, but language is being impeded with multiple obstacles at national level preventing it from being a vehicle for cultural development across Africa thereby fostering crisis as witness in Rwanda between the two major language and cultural group of Hutu and Tutsi. This challenge has elicited a dandy debate and called the interest of political leaders and national intellectuals across the continent of Africa. The impedance is comprehended as advancement in response to European influence against indigenous language, linguistic domination and control, conflict, resistance, adaptation, assimilation and other European influence threatening the wholeness of African languages. The underline fact from historical background affirms that African languages can be identified based on the experiences of subordination to what can be seen as culturally superior foreign languages which includes English, French, German and Portuguese leading to marginalization and moving against the establishment of control models of African languages.

The approach of cultural nationalism which language revivalism occupy an integral portion need be seen as response to the psychology of colonialism as analyzed by Franz Fanon, who opine two ideas as observed by the colonizer and often un-opposed by the colonized: firstly, it involves the settler, who induces facts, enlightenment, order and progress; secondly is the native who are domicile in a bestial world of superstition, darkness, anarchy and backwardness. This act induces resistance, albeit subtle by individual Africans to colonial authorities who ignore African tongues was the root cause of African linguistic nationalism. The linguistic nationalism movement received a bust by the action and activities lead by new generation of Africans educated in the western world based on their realization of gap between the reality and practice of African language compared with the European language within her continent. Thus, this lead to the assertion by Simala, (2001: 317-318) “that African language politics during colonialism was characterized by widespread disaffection and alienation which found expression in a rising tide of cultural and linguistic nationalism”. The discovery made by the educated new generation African leads to a new driving force for Pan-Africanism towards linguistic nationalism and liberation movement. According to Ki-Zerbo (1986:46) “that most manifest and coherent of all cultural systems-language... Language is a creative force, a fundamental tool of civilization and development. The very concept of what it means to be “human” is invariably defined with reference to language. The essence of our humanity and of our uniqueness as a species is a function of our language”. Language being a fundamental requirement of our capacity as humans, any disruption to it will inevitably subvert our strength for human development. According to Chinua Achebe “culture is not only a force of creativity, but also the utilization of human intelligence for social development”, but culture cannot achieve its creative and utilitarian potential without the vehicle of language. According to one of the most influential advocate of the use of African language for development of African programs in the person of Cheikh Anta Diop (1978) opined that “to create our linguistic unity through the choice of an appropriate African tongue promoted to the influence of a modern cultural language, linguistic unity dominates all national life, without it, national cultural unity is but fragile and illusory...European language must not be considered diamonds displayed under a glass ball, dazzling us with their brilliance. Our attention must be fixed on their historical development”. As observed by Mazrui (1998:43-46), the linguistic state should be seen from five perspectives of linguistic Eurocentrism. Firstly, it is the classification of Eurocentrism where European linguists divide world languages along racial line leading to unscientific assumption that the languages of lower races were termed primitive than the languages of higher races. According to the classification African indigenous languages falls to the categories of lower races with European grouped under the higher category. The second perspective is based on identified terminological Eurocentrism in which language families have been grouped by the European based on criteria established by the European, as a result, the terminology of language grouping has continued to be overwhelmingly Eurocentric. As observed that it the twenty-first century, no clear and consensual picture exists with respect to either the number of languages on the African continent, or how these languages can be effectively classified. This has lead to the

persistent myths in the study of African society: Prah (2002:2) assert that diversity in African language can be likened to Linguistic Tower of Babel and observed “that linguistic diversity is of such proportions that Africans cannot share or work in their own languages. The third perspective of linguistic Eurocentrism is semantic, it categorize African with the terms animism and primitive. Mazru has observed that because of the origins of English, as a language of European, it has assumed a heritage of imagery that associated African with negative connotations. Fourthly, Eurocentrism is classified to be orthographic because European missionaries and scholars discovered that it will be a monumental task when they started transcribing African languages. The missionaries became enthusiasm in the latinization of African languages like Hausa and Kiswahili which was closely related to Arabic script. The missionaries later retraced their plans having discovered that Arabicization of African languages was a way of islamization process which could be against the interest of Christian religion. Fifthly, linguistic Eurocentric is based on demographic sense in which the European wants to have a linguistic domination of peoples of other nations especially the African nationalities, based on this European language is being used to suppress and marginalize other languages with the probable resulting to extermination of African language which is the vehicle conveying the African cultural development both within the continent and Diaspora.

The approach of European language imposition was a strategy through the use of political power control in Africa to subjugate African language, currently now the francophone African nations are economically control by France colonised nations which is currently causing ripples as a result of military interruption of political power in African francophone nation's of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Garbon. Pan-Africanist linguistic discourse, therefore rise in opposition against this backdrop of African self-review and self-recognition which help to assume the role of intellectual and cultural responsibility to ensure an Africa affinity within the continent in other to encourage faith in African languages. African linguistic reactivation was vital as it serve as an effective weapon that should be used against subjugation by foreigners. Language is meant to be used as a medium for the enhancement of African values, history and ideology justifying the existence of African self-reliance. Pan-African proponents emphases on sustenance of their ancestral languages, and proclaim the imperativeness of African improving on her languages through studying as career courses in institutions of learning. They amplify the benefit and uniqueness of African linguistic civilization against the European subjugation. The empowerment of African languages becomes vital because it is the mother of philosophy, science, literature, art, conveyor of culture and is the pivot for the high moral standards and ethical value of Africans. Language as the epicenter through which cultural development can be enhanced because of its uniqueness and being ancient foundation upon which African civilization was established and upon which it existed through the centuries. Language also help in sustaining the monument of African past greatness thereby preserving her Africanity. Mudimbe (1988:47) opine that during the history of African slavery and colonialism, the imposed languages of the enslaver and colonizer did a great deal to misrepresent human experience and contributed to the situation that lies behind our present crisis of consciousness. There is need to boldly correct the issues involved through establishing an effective strategic plan by formation of excellent blueprint which will enhance effective African languages and cultural development such will make it not to end up in talking level. The commendable effort of Pan-Africanist to address the issue were seen and demonstrated by the Inter-Governmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa (1975), and the Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (1976), both of which recommended the increased use of African language. The Language Plan Action for Africa (1986) by OAU set an agenda and put forth justification for the same but there were setback as it could not provide enough resistance to the dominance of European languages as language right in Africa still suffers from problems such as avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation and declaration without implementation. Findings revealed that most African countries at independence establish a pattern for their national culture as it was not left without control as to ensure sustenance. They encourage the promotion of their national culture through the media, national cultural festival and introducing it into the school curriculum and so on. The Pan-African nationalism movement has amplified the need for sustenance of African culture and language development through constant reminders of ‘our languages’ the reminder place importance on national cultures and languages as a bases that will catalyze the struggle for the total liberation of Africa. There is need to boost the effort of the Pan-African nationalism movement by the AU government through parliamentary legislation and

national gazette as to ensuring that African languages and cultures are consolidated and further developed to global recognition level.

Culture Development and Its Role in Pan-Africanism

The Oxford Dictionary defines culture as “the quality of enlightenment and refinement arising from an acquaintance with and concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, the sum total of the ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another”. Culture is the pivot of development and sustenance of communities across nations and no nation can progress in its absence. It is the point of reference where values, attitudes, preferences, knowledge are attributed to for the behaviour in a particular social group which has an impactful influence on the social well being and development in a given nation. Cultural development is the process of enabling cultural activities and arts advance towards the realization of a desired future, particularly of a culturally rich and vibrant community. Culture development help creates the fundamental building block in our personality and in the ties that help project the objective of Pan-African movement through linking it across African communities and nations.

Culture is a motivating and powerful driving force for development across communities and nations wide social, economic with environmental impacts. Celebrating our cultural development are core aspects of Pan-African movement objective which is aimed at projecting a distinctive platform for intercultural exchange and mutual cooperation among Africans, this cooperation enhance an increase in the intellectual strength, build conscious and understanding tolerant communities across African nations. Cultural celebrations are fun, educative and entertaining as it provides an avenue for dialogue, integrate physically and mentally. It has been observed that at various stages of communities’ level across Africa that a dynamic cultural sector is needed for a well-functioning public sphere within any given environment for elaborate debate and exchange of ideas. Collective or personality expressed via culture is a prerequisite for all human development as it provides the essential fundamental building blocks in the mutual ties that can help link nations across African continent. Individuals’ ability to live cooperatively with his or her neighbors depends to large extent by being able to involve and benefit from his or her cultural identity. It is a general understanding without much clarification that the act of maintaining connections with history, language, natural environment, literature, arts and music which accompanied us throughout our life time is fundamental for our co-habiting and co-existence based on our cultural identity as such proof the need for Pan-Africanism. The obvious intrinsic value of culture to the Pan-African movement irrespective of its role in human development index in Africa, which is obvious to everyone and make it one of the essential demand for any meaningful development in Africa. A constellation of cultural values provided for modern business that makes it a critical requirement for any progressive African economy as it is a support to the fact that economic growth will take more than an introduction of investment capital and latest technology for a sustainable viable economic in Africa. If development will be regarded as the promoter of standard of living in Africa, then such developmental initiative must not ignore culture. There is need for innovative that are responsive to the cultural context and relevant to the environment, community, and capable of advancing a human-focused approach to the development that will be most effective in yielding sustainable, inclusive and equitable outcomes. Cultural development is imperative in the sustainability of any viable African economy as it provide bases for creating jobs; provide safe access to water and food, reducing poverty, preserving the natural resources such as forests, strengthening the resilience of communities in the face of natural disasters which are irreplaceable.

Cultural development play an active role politically, it provide bases for right to values of the people such as freedom of expression, debate about the right of the people with consideration to their diversity. It ensure unity reign during crisis, provide opportunity for new ideas through debate and dialogue, and help in national peace building via a cultural bases reconciliation approach. It provides an effective approach which assist in the link between the ancient and modern democratization. They would have been permanent political colonization across nations in Africa during and after colonialism if not for prior existing cultural structure that was used as a link to the African ancient principle and way of life. Cultural development is absolutely a pivot to African nation’s solidarity and emancipation as rightly supported by the opinion of Pan-African movement and late Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, who once said, “If we go to the root of the matter, it is our concept of death that decides our answers to all the questions which life poses”.

Recommendation

The research underscores the critical relevance of language and its linguistic impact on Pan-African cultural development. It further highlights the immense benefits that the African continent stands to gain if its cultural advancement is driven through the empowerment and use of indigenous African languages. In line with these findings, several strategic actions are proposed to amplify the impact of Pan-African cultural development. First, there is a need to enforce the use and teaching of national languages as vehicles for expressing African culture, serving as mediums for academic instruction and scholarly research across African institutions. Additionally, the creation of a continental body responsible for unifying African cultures through regular continental cultural festivals is essential. A continental institution dedicated to the integration of African arts should also be established to preserve and promote African creativity.

To counter the remnants of colonial influence, educational systems should be restructured to fulfill their mission of enhancing African culture and resisting Western dominance. Youth participation must be actively encouraged by fostering their engagement in transmitting cultural heritage using various African languages. The Pan-African movement should also be strengthened by encouraging the unified cultural use of language across African institutions. Language can further be used to foster cultural decolonization across the continent, especially through media industries, by promoting African languages as primary mediums of information dissemination. Support from African governments for UNESCO projects that publicize African cultural heritage should be reinforced. Seminars at the continental level focusing on language and culture are recommended to promote both economic and social development. Inter-nation exchange programs involving African languages, through radio, television, and film libraries, should be established to enhance cultural solidarity. Additionally, mass media and museum initiatives should be developed in rural areas to promote cultural engagement and education at the grassroots level.

Africans should be encouraged to take active roles in decision-making and the management of socio-cultural affairs, particularly by institutionalizing the use of African languages in parliamentary debates and proceedings. Measures must be taken to prevent the loss of cultural assets to foreign nations, including supporting ongoing efforts such as those led by Governor Godwin Obaseki in Edo State, Nigeria, to reclaim cultural artifacts from colonial powers. Moreover, it is vital to translate significant philosophical, historical, and literary works from foreign languages into African languages to preserve shared heritage. Language programs that promote inter-African cooperation, especially to counter the impact of brain drain among professionals, must also be initiated. Finally, establishing a unified cultural front using African languages across all sectors can help spread indigenous knowledge, while empowering African artists to reclaim historical narratives and participate in the collective cultural and liberation struggles through purpose-built continental institutions. These strategies collectively aim to create a resilient, unified, and culturally rich Pan-African identity anchored in the power of indigenous languages and cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

This article concluded that Pan-Africanism remains vital in evolving with African nations aspirations, advocating for self cultural pride advancement, economic self sufficiency and political emancipation. Its new insights highlight Africa's role in shaping global discourse, leveraging technology, and reclaiming its intellectual heritage. It is important to string the objectives of Pan Africanism through the cultural policies of African countries so as to reap the ample benefits as a contribution to the development of Africa. Therefore, moving forward a new identity in the twenty-first century is dependent on Africa's capacity to manage her nations histo-cultural foothold and the foundation for it has an existed and laid by the Pan Africanism cultural recommendations whose formative content is expected to be adopted by African member state cultural policies. Based on this, Bekenova opined thus; "As African understanding of culture shows, the cultural policy has become an increasingly a decisive factor in country's consolidation, an instrument to improve country's image, to boost tourism potential, to establish cultural ties with other countries, but moreover, there is an understanding that culture is a strategic element of the country's development".

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