

Ghana's Contribution to the Promotion of Kiswahili: Challenges and Prospects for African Unity

by

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Abstract

On the occasion of the celebration of 50 years of Kiswahili as a language of African Liberation, unification and Renaissance, this paper seeks to appraise the historic role Ghana has played in the bid to support the promotion of Kiswahili on the continent. In addition, it argues that although Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist ideologies and advocacy for its adoption as a continental lingua franca formed the key motivational factor for the adoption of Kiswahili by institutions such as the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Ghana Institute of Languages and the University of Ghana, today, there is still a legitimate need for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental lingua franca. Notwithstanding the fact that the promotion of Kiswahili in Ghana has declined, in view of the potential that it still possess as a possible continental lingua franca for Africa, Ghana and other stake holders such as the Kiswahili speaking states and indeed the African Union (AU) ought to do their best to pursue the worthy quest for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental lingua franca as a common language will be a catalyst to the achievement of political, economic and social unity in Africa.

Keywords: Kiswahili, Ghana, Pan-African, Tanzania, East Africa

Introduction

Recently, the University of Dar es Salaam, the African Academy of Languages (ALCALAN), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) felt the need to jointly organise an international conference to commemorate fifty years of Kiswahili as a language of African liberation, unification and renaissance at Dar es Salaam. This joint effort in itself is a clear indicator of the important role Kiswahili has played in Africa over the last fifty years.

Ghana is one of the few non- eastern African countries that have played in our opinion a significant role in the promotion of Kiswahili during the period in question. Thus the focus of this paper is to highlight Ghana's contribution to the promotion of the teaching and learning of Kiswahili since the 1960s and the challenges that face it at this time and also to revisit the quest for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental lingua-franca.

Section one therefore gives a broad background of the role and achievement of Kiswahili in Africa and beyond that portrays its potential for a continental lingua franca. The next section presents the methodology and justification for the study. The third section discusses the background to Ghana's involvement with Kiswahili and its actual contribution to the teaching and learning of the language as well as its contribution to Kiswahili broadcast.

Next, challenges that threaten the future of Kiswahili in Ghana are discussed. Then the next section revisits the quest for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental lingua franca arguing that the quest is a legitimate one and that given the opportunity, it is achievable and the benefits of linguistic unity, which is an essential pre-condition for economic, political and social integration cannot be underestimated. In the final section we conclude by emphasising the need to revisit the quest for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental lingua franca for Africa.

Methodology and Justification

Data for the study were solicited from various sources. Due to the nature of the study, it was necessary to conduct interviews with several individuals who were witnesses to some events or had insight into some information that was needed¹. Another source of information was official documentation such as brochures and magazines of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, and published Annual Reports of the University of Ghana and past Executive Instruments. Thus, there has not been any systematic documentation of the history of Kiswahili in Ghana despite the fact that very important institutions in Ghana have been associated with it for various durations. Therefore this study is seen as an appropriate opportunity to bring together the various facts about Kiswahili in Ghana and to highlight Ghana's contribution to the promotion of Kiswahili for almost fifty years at this time when fifty years of Kiswahili as a language of liberation, unification and renaissance is being celebrated and to re-emphasise the need for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental lingua franca for Africa.

Kiswahili in Post-Independence Africa and Beyond

Kiswahili has been and still is one of the most important languages in Africa and the world today (Moshi 2006, Mulokozi 2002). It has seen significant development and expansion since the early to mid-nineteenth century due to the following factors:

- The development of trade expeditions from the East African coastal area into the interior which emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century and led to the expansion of Kiswahili from east African coastal area into the interior on a large scale.
- European missionaries to East Africa from the mid nineteenth century whose interest in the Swahili language for their missionary purposes led to the systematic study of the language and documentation of its grammar by them as well as the development of a Roman based writing system for the language.
- The late first President of the Republic of Tanzania, President Nyerere's promotion of the language to a National and official language and the medium of instruction for primary education in all public schools and a compulsory subject at secondary school level.

Europe, the Scandinavian countries, China, the USA and other states in their various capacities have contributed to the development of the Kiswahili language in the areas of international broadcast, academic research and publications, teaching and learning and ICT (Mulokozi 2002; Moshi 2006; Chebet-Choge 2012). The Organisation of African unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) has also recognised and promoted Kiswahili by establishing it as one of its six official working languages.

In East Africa, the East African Community (EAC) which is made up of five states; Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda has also endeavoured to promote Kiswahili by adopting it as one of its three official languages, namely Kiswahili, French and English as stated in the East African Community information Guide for Investors (Chebet-Choge 2012). Other than the EAC, Kiswahili has been adopted by Eastern African States such as Tanzania, Kenya, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as either the National language or one of the National languages as is the case in the DRC. It is a major lingua franca in countries such as, Tanzania and Kenya, as well as major cities of Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, the Comoros, and Somali. It is the Medium of Instruction throughout primary education in Tanzania and parts of Kenya and a compulsory subject in primary and secondary education in Kenya and it is also taught in schools in Uganda. At the tertiary level it is taught in a lot of East African universities and in several non-East African universities. It is taught in universities such as the University of Dar es Salam, Tanzania, Makerere University in Uganda, Moi University, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi in Kenya,

Apart from Eastern African universities and educational institutions, there are universities in Northern, Southern, western and central Africa that have Kiswahili in their curricular. In Libya, Sebha University offers Kiswahili as the most popular African language of the Department of Languages and African Studies with over one hundred students and it has been taught since 1984. (<http://www.tripolipost.com/articledetail.asp?c=4&i=3041> 25/06/2013). Other Libyan Universities that teach Kiswahili are Nasser University and Al-Feteh University (Chebet-Choge 2012). In Nigeria, Kiswahili was taught at the University of Port Harcourt from 1979/80 academic year until the early 1990s (Amidu 1996). Although the Kiswahili programme collapsed due to lack of teaching staff, there has been Kiswahili broadcast by the External Service of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) also known as Voice of Nigeria since 1969 (<http://www.voiceofnigeria.org/Kiswahili/ourhistory.htm>).

Ghana is one of the few African countries that have contributed significantly to the promotion of Kiswahili since Tanzania's independence. A historical appraisal of Ghanaian institutions that have and continue to promote Kiswahili is the subject of the forthcoming section.

Ghana's Contribution to the Promotion of Kiswahili

Kiswahili in Ghana owes a lot to the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, first President of Ghana. In the early post-independence era, he was one of the African leaders who encouraged the possible adoption of Kiswahili as a continental language in order to promote Pan-Africanism (Chimera 2000; Chebet-Choge 2012). He showed his commitment to this call for Kiswahili as a continental lingua franca by championing its adoption by some Ghanaian public institutions.

The following sub-sections attempt to appraise Ghana's past and current contribution to the promotion and development of Kiswahili through various Ghanaian institutions since independence; namely, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Ghana Institute of Languages, University of Ghana and SOS Herman Gmeiner College.

Ghana Broadcasting Corporation

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) was established on July 31, 1935 by the British Government under the code name Station Zoy. An External Service unit of the Corporation was inaugurated on June 1, 1961, a few years after independence. It was established to be "A true voice of Africa helping in the struggle for total emancipation and political union of African states." It "came about primarily because Kwame Nkrumah, the then Prime-Minister saw broadcasting as an opportunity to propagate his Pan-Africanist message to his fellow Africans" (Kugblenu 1975: 8-9).

The External Service unit broadcasted in six languages: French, Hausa, Arabic, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Bambara (spoken in Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal). These languages of broadcast at the external service, were very strategic, each had particular target areas in Africa or beyond as their audience. The target areas for the Kiswahili broadcasting were Eastern and Central Africa. At some point there were over twenty hours of Kiswahili broadcasting weekly. The External Service put out current affairs programmes that explained Ghana's viewpoint on burning issues affecting Africa and the world through informative, educative and entertaining programmes. The programmes also attempted to break cultural barriers and encouraged the promotion of African unity and highlighted the African liberation struggle (Kugblenu 1975). Frempong (2008: 5) saw the presence of the External Service as "an important tool of Nkrumah's Government Foreign Policy". Herd and Kugblenu (1978: 126) also state that the External Service Department became "one of Africa's ambitious international radio propaganda stations in keeping with Nkrumah's ambition to play a leadership role in the Pan-African Movement".

A survey of the programme line-up of Kiswahili broadcasting during some months of the years 1965-1969 indicated that in 1964 and 1965, there was only one hour transmission in Kiswahili for five days each week; Tuesday to Saturday, but from 1966-1969, it was increased to five hours daily for six days a week; from Monday to Saturday. The programme line-up included news, music, current affairs as well as women and youth programmes. The news included translations of opinions expressed in the major Ghanaian daily newspapers and weeklies. The Kiswahili programmes were advertised in Kiswahili in a magazine put out by the External Service unit, *Radio Ghana Calling*.² Some of the Kiswahili programmes as they appeared in the magazine included:

<i>Habari za Leo na Mazungumzo ya Habari Ghana Leo</i>	'Today's News and Discussion on the news' ³ 'Ghana Today'
<i>Muziki kutoka Kusini</i>	'Music from the South'
<i>Majibu ya Maswali kutoka Wasikilizaji Chaguo Lenu</i>	'Questions and Answers from Listeners' 'Your Choice'
<i>Maendeleo Nchini Ghana</i>	'Development in Ghana'
<i>Muziki Wenu</i>	'Our Music'
<i>Wagombea Uhuru</i>	'Freedom Fighters'
<i>Maisha ya Wanawake Kiafrika</i>	'lives of African Women'
<i>Chaguo cha Mabibi</i>	'Ladies' Choice'
<i>Mambo mbali mbali ya Afrika</i>	'African Issues'
<i>Matokeo ya wiki</i>	'Events of the Week'
<i>Afrika Leo</i>	'Africa Today'

Also to enhance the output of the External Service, a correspondent was posted in Dar es Salaam to cover the target areas; Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. Both Ghanaian and expatriate staff were recruited from the language areas to handle broadcasting in Kiswahili. Some of the Ghanaian Kiswahili broadcasters were Sam Owu (*Radio Ghana Calling* June 1964: 15), E. Y. Kumi (*Radio Ghana Calling*, January 1967: 23), and Theresa Dogbe. Some Tanzanian broadcasters were Anna Msuya, Joe A. Mwetta (*Radio Ghana Calling* March, 1968:23), Rose Krescheiner (*Radio Ghana Calling* November, 1968:23) and Edith Tetteh (*Radio Ghana Calling* July, 1969:19)⁴. The *40 Years of Broadcasting* brochure of 1975, reports that there were some efforts at “Ghanaianization” of the External Service Unit, hence, there was an effort to recruit Ghanaians who were proficient in Kiswahili. This move it seems was motivated by financial difficulties in the running of the External Service Unit. The present study could not establish the actual year and date that the Kiswahili Service folded up⁵, however, indications are that it was shut down in the late 1970s.

Ghana Institute of Languages

The Executive Instrument 114 of 1963 established the Ghana Institute of Languages (GIL) on September 3, 1963. The objectives for its establishment were to ‘provide courses of instruction in non-Ghanaian African languages and foreign languages for Foreign Service personnel and civil servants and to furnish advice to government and public authorities in respect of the teaching of those languages. The institute was the first of its kind in Africa (Executive Instrument 114 1963:1).

This institution was close to President Nkrumah’s heart for as mentioned earlier, it was directly under the auspices of the office of the President. Per the Executive Instrument, the Principal of the Institute was to be appointed by the President. After the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1965, the Institute was brought under the Ministry of Education, then later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (currently, it is directly under the Ministry of Education). And today, the institute was made up of three schools: School of Bilingual Secretary, School of Translation and School of Languages..

According to Mr. Christopher K. Angkosaala, head of Research Department and former acting director of the Institute, The Institute was established at a time when many citizens of neighbouring African States that were struggling for independence were residents in Ghana. Some were on Ghana Government scholarships and others were political refugees.

Kiswahili was one of the founding languages of the Institute. Students who studied Kiswahili studied translation in French and Kiswahili or Kiswahili and English. According to Mr. Angkosaala, the Kiswahili Programme thrived for over twenty years. Kiswahili student numbers dwindled over the years as more African states attained independence and many foreigners and refugees returned to their home countries.

By the mid-1980s, due to lack of lecturers, students and logistics, the Kiswahili programme folded up. Today the Institute offers courses in eight languages, including Chinese, German and Portuguese. Unfortunately, Kiswahili and Hausa, the only authentic African languages that were also two of the founding languages of the Institute could not be sustained. Hence, the two authentic African languages did not survive while the other foreign languages thrive. The current Director of the Institute's message on the institute's website that the Institute is considering reintroducing Kiswahili and Hausa as soon as is practicable offers a glimmer of hope.

University of Ghana, Legon

The University of Ghana (UG) was the third Ghanaian institution to be associated with Kiswahili in Ghana. During the 1963/1964 academic year, plans were far advanced to expand the then Department of French Studies to include the teaching and learning of Arabic, Russian, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Kiswahili. Concerning Kiswahili, contacts with Dar es Salaam language department were established with exchange of views and ideas (Annual Report 1963/1964: 17).

The committee that was set up to work on the expansion of the Department of French Studies to the Department of Modern Languages was headed by Professor Rebecca Posner (ibid: 18). As mentioned above, Dr. W. O. Animfem who served as one of the sources used for this work noted that the committee's decision to include Kiswahili as one of the languages to be taught in the new Department was likely to have been inspired by the desire to promote Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist ideologies. The Kiswahili broadcast at the GBC and the teaching of Kiswahili at the GIL a few months earlier were also instrumental in the decision to include Kiswahili in the University's curriculum.

The Department was established in October 1964. During the 1964-1966 academic years, the Department offered Kiswahili at the general degree and subsidiary levels. During those years, there were two part-time Kiswahili tutors, Dr. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville who was sent by the British Government through a bilateral agreement with Ghana and Mr. Sam Owu, a Ghanaian who was also a Kiswahili newscaster at the GBC External Service, taught the Kiswahili courses (Amidu 1996: 92). From the very onset, staffing for the Kiswahili Section was a challenge, as the Section did not have any full-time staff during the first few years of its establishment that is from 1964-1969. During the 1969/1970, the Section finally had two full time tutors, Mary Wagstaffe and Mr. Sheik Kassim Hafidh, both from London. During this same year, there was one part-time tutor, B. A. Rashid from Dar es Salaam. The external examiner for that year was W. H. Whiteley of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Annual Reporter 1969/1970: 90). In 1972, the then head of the Kiswahili department at the University of Dar-es Salaam, Mr. Maganga paid a two week visit to the Kiswahili Section (Annual Report 1972: 66). During the 1972/1973 academic year, T. B. M. Bugingo from the University of Dar-es Salaam who was appointed under the UG's agreement with UDS handled the Section and Dr. Joan Maw of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London was the external examiner that year.

In 1978, Mrs. Hamida Harrison, a Tanzanian now retired and on part-time, joined the Section as a tutor. Several Academic Staff including the late Professor Maganga, and Professor Rubanza of the University of Dar es Salaam have acted as External Examiners for the Section in the past. Until 1972, the UG relied mostly on the British government for Kiswahili lecturers. Most of the British who were sent as Lecturers or External Examiners were scholars of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

The 1980s and 1990s saw an expansion with four Ghanaians who joined the Section as Lecturers. Currently the Section composed of two-full time Ghanaians, a Senior Lecturer/Coordinator and an Assistant Lecturer. In addition there are three part-time lecturers; one Ghanaian, one Tanzanian and one Kenyan. This trend clearly indicates the lifelong resource base challenge experienced by the Kiswahili Section in the Department. In the current Undergraduate Handbook of the University, one can find at least 37 courses covering various areas of studies in Kiswahili language, literature, history and culture. To enhance the Combined Major programme by producing students with high level language proficiency, deserving third year students are sent to the University of Dar es Salaam for a one year study abroad programme. The One Year Abroad Programme was instituted in the mid 1960s and has been sustained to-date. Over the years, it has been tenable at different periods in Kenya, Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania.

The Kiswahili Section of the Department of Modern Languages at UG has produced renowned Kiswahili scholars such as Professor Assibi A. Amidu of the University of Trondheim and the late Dr. Jonathan K. Mensah. For the 49 years that Kiswahili has been taught in the University of Ghana it was only during the 1967/1968 academic year that students were not admitted due to lack of teaching staff (Amidu 1996).

The SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College, Ghana

In 1990, the charitable, non-profit SOS Kinderdorf International Organisation founded the SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College in Ghana to offer academic programmes that are designed to develop African students' sense of social responsibility and commitment to Africa's development. Its Kiswahili Programme commenced in 1995. The primary purpose for introducing the language was to give students from Eastern and Central Africa an opportunity to learn and build their proficiency in the Kiswahili language, which is the lingua franca in those parts of Africa, and to reflect the school's philosophy of Pan-Africanism. The other languages offered by the school are French, Amharic and Spanish. The School offers the IGCSE IB programme at the Beginners, Standard and Higher levels.

It is commendable that most of the Kiswahili teachers of the college have been UG graduates and therefore products of the Kiswahili Section. Over the years, students of various African nationalities have taken the Kiswahili course. They include Ghanaians, Kenyans, Zambians, Tanzanians, Malawians, Lesothos, Zimbabweans and Ugandans. The programme commenced with only four students, but currently there are 45 students studying Kiswahili at various levels.

According to my informant, Mr. Shadrack Mensah who currently handles the Kiswahili Programme, students have shown a very positive attitude towards the courses in Kiswahili over the years. They willingly choose to enrol in the programme. In recent years, to enhance the curriculum for the Kiswahili Programme at the College, a new initiative that offers students a study abroad programme of about three weeks in Zanzibar has been introduced.

Cumulatively, it is clear that Ghana has played a critical role in the promotion of Kiswahili over the years. It has shown dedication in both the teaching and learning of the language and in international broadcasting using the language. Although the External Service unit and the GIL were unable to sustain their commitment to promoting the language, the University of Ghana held its bargain steadfast. Furthermore the Kiswahili programme at SOS Herman Gmeiner College continues to grow strength and student interest.

Challenges for the Consolidation of Kiswahili in Ghana and Beyond

The University of Ghana is the only Ghanaian institution that has sustained its commitment to the study of Kiswahili over the years. At the GBC, the Kiswahili service was active for over twenty years, but faced with financial difficulties. Needless to say, the measures taken were taken to resolve the problem were not sufficient to sustain the External Service. The GIL on the other hand, was confronted with a series of problems shortly after it was established by an Executive Instrument and was placed directly under the Office of the President. After Nkrumah was overthrown by a coup d'état, it was re-designated under different bodies, first the Ministry of Education, then the Ministry of Information and eventually back to the Ministry of Education. The institute was dogged by low enrolments, a scarcity of lecturers and logistical problems that made it impossible to sustain the Kiswahili Programme.

To explain the survival of the other languages of the GIL over the years, one has to look at the level of support the Institute receives from the home governments of these languages. Needless to say, the Kiswahili Programme at the UG has survived to-date despite the myriads of problems such as human resource and high attrition rates of students and a lack of equipment and tools for effective language teaching and learning.

The Kiswahili Section has been branded the least endowed and therefore the endangered Section of the Department of Modern Languages in every sense of the word despite the fact that it usually has more students than the Arabic Section. One would have liked to see it endowed with more human resources. A recent attempt to get the Masters Programme approved by the University authorities failed, as the proposal coincided with the resignation of one of the two PhD. holders of the Section. Again, the other Sections receive substantial technical, human resource and financial support from the governments of their host countries (e.g. France, China, Spain, Russia, Egypt and Sudan) through their embassies in Ghana. The Kiswahili Section does not enjoy any such support. Recently, though, the Kenya Airways initiated some financial support for the Kiswahili Students Club activities.

Over the years, the University of Dar es Salaam has supported the Section by hosting its Year Abroad Programme, but students have to bear the full cost. Consequently, sustaining the programme is threatened by the high costs that the government has to incur to sponsor deserving students for the programme. Other problems include the reduction of scholarship support from the Ghana Government and occasional delays in releasing funds for the programme. A glimmer of hope that is associated with the posting of an Ambassador to Kenya does not assure us of the future ability by the government to sustain scholarships for the Year Abroad Programme.

However, these challenges have not dampened the enthusiasm from students and the teachers associated with the programme. This is attested by student enrolments over the years. In the first two decades of the programme, student numbers at any given time were in single digits. The situation improved in the 1980s and 1990s with an average of 50 to 100 students. Today the average number of students stands at about 190 a year. The breakdown of the average is as follows: first year (155); second year (24); third year (17) and final year (10).

As indicated by the break down, there is a very high rate of attrition of students, right after the first year, a consequence of the lack of students' sponsorship for the year abroad language proficiency programme.

There is also a need for a language lab. Authorization for the construction of two large language laboratories for the Department of Modern languages has yet to be finalized. The expectation is that when the laboratories are completed, local immersion programmes, which have already been approved by the University Council, would enhance the proficiency of the students who are unable to go for the proficiency strengthening year abroad. Reduction or waivers of tuition by the host institution of the Year Abroad Programme would also contribute to the sponsorship of more students to the programme each year. Concerning the human resource challenges, the Section has resolved that the only way to ensure full capacity is to train its own faculty through staff development. To be able to achieve this there is need for external institutions to support the training of more PhD and MPhil students who would staff the Section upon completion of their training.

This would be in addition to the requisite faculty to roll out its own graduate programme for future staff development and sustainability of the Section. We are encouraged by the currently initiative from the International Programmes office at UG which has offered to sponsor a teaching assistant to pursue a graduate course in Kiswahili for the purpose of staff development.

Furthermore, given the needed support for staff development, the University of Ghana could reposition itself to train prospective teachers to support the teaching and learning of Kiswahili in the West African sub region.

The Promotion of Kiswahili and its Prospects for African Unity

The quests for Pan-Africanism and African unity were punctuated by a call from famous African scholars and personalities for the adoption of a common language, Kiswahili for Africa. A common language therefore was deemed an important factor in the promotion of Pan Africanism. Chimera (2000) and Chebet-Choge (2012) report that Nkrumah and Wole Soyinka were prominent non East African scholars and patriots who advocated for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental language for the whole of Africa. As the pro-term Secretary-General of the then newly formed Union of African writers, part of Soyinka's vision was to make Kiswahili a continental lingua franca. Furthermore he encouraged all African writers to work towards the translation of their works into this continental lingua franca (Jeyifo: 2004: xiii; Chebet-Choge: 2012). Again, Soyinka at the FESTAC 1977 spoke about the need for African governments to adopt Kiswahili and made an appeal for a firm commitment to Kiswahili as the continental language (Gibbs 1980: 6).

The Late President Julius Nyerere, Ayi Kwei Armah an African writer, and Professor Ali Mazrui, a renowned Pan-Africanist are among the staunch supporters and advocates for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental lingua Franca (Chimera 2000; Mulokozi 2002; Katembo 2008: 112). However, there has not been a strong movement from African states in support of this proposal. The lack of interest is not only from African leaders but also from the African people. They were and continue to be mainly concerned about the cost of such an undertaking and the efforts required to create a continental lingua franca.

Faced with these challenges, the idea of a continental lingua franca fizzled out of the struggle for African Unity. Scholars and supporters of Pan-Africanism have avoided the subject of linguistic unity in the quest for Pan-Africanism. Many scholarly papers on Pan-Africanism and African unity rather iterate the need to address other challenges that prevent Africa from achieving its goals of Pan-Africanism. Adogamhe (2008:17-26) for instance, discusses issues such as security, political and economic challenges that face the quest for African unity but merely acknowledges the issue of linguistic challenges. Mateene (1999) argues that instead of pursuing a common language for Africa which in his opinion is neither achievable nor desirable, efforts should be made towards promoting regional lingua francas possible.

While we agree that the promotion of regional lingua francas should be worked at, however the pursuit of a continental lingua franca is equally important. Scholars have failed to acknowledge what Nkrumah, the father of Pan-Africanism, saw in advocating for an African linguistic unity and that his vision had everything to do with finding the pertinent tools for the promotion of African unity. President Nyerere of Tanzania used the unity factor as a foundation to enforce Kiswahili as a common language for his country. His success was instrumental in pulling in all East African countries to consider linguistic unity as critical in the development of the African people.

There are various reasons why the AU and the entire continent should work towards adopting a common language for the continent and equally compelling reasons why this common language should be Kiswahili. In a continent that boasts of over two thousand languages in fifty four countries (referred to as the tower of Babel Ornstein (1964).), there is no doubt that, a common language (linguistic unity) can be a means to an end in the quest for unity in the areas of political, economic and geographical integration, difficult as the task may be. It is not too late for Africa to return to the issue of a common language. As Kiswahili has no doubt been consolidated as a Regional Lingua Franca (Chebet-Choge 2012), its promotion in the rest of Africa is achievable at least to some extent.

It is disconcerting that over the years while Europe and America have shown tremendous interest in the Kiswahili language, African states have shown little interest in the promotion of the language. African leaders are content with the use of the language of their former colonial masters (English, French and Portuguese) rather than to develop linguistic unity across the continent using an African language. The lack of a Nyerere or an Nkrumah in the political scene in Africa has rendered the leaders of Kiswahili speaking countries ineffective in advocating for Kiswahili as a continental language. The host countries of the language, namely Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda unfortunately have not set examples that would encourage other African countries to consider limited use of colonial languages (Moshi 2006). Never the less, non-East African States like Ghana, Nigeria and Libya have shown some commitment to the promotion of Kiswahili. Recently the commencing of Kiswahili studies in a South African University; University of KwaZulu Natal which became a headline in the media serves as a laudable effort that other states can emulate.

An increased effort to support and encourage the expansion of the teaching and learning of Kiswahili in Ghana, and indeed the rest of Africa can elevate Kiswahili to a position, where all Africans can take pride in an African language assuming a unity forging role. It is without doubt, the responsibility of East African countries with the backing of the African Union to take the lead to embark on a massive campaign to promote Kiswahili in the rest of Africa. Countries such as the United Kingdom, France and lately China have made it a point to promote their language globally and these are countries not continents.

Today English and French have been declared the official languages of many African States for convenience because the colonial masters paid the price to ensure that they became lingua franca, medium of instruction and administrative languages. Unfortunately, African states have remained content with the use of colonial languages but unconcerned about the question of an African lingua franca.

The answer to the question, ‘why Kiswahili and not another African language?’ is simple. So far Kiswahili is one of the most if not the most developed African estimated to be spoken by about 150 million people in Africa, no other language has as many speakers. It is one of the most researched African languages. There are so many educational materials available for the teaching and learning of Kiswahili including grammar books, dictionaries, online resources as well as many universities all over the world to train teachers in the language.

Today there is Google Swahili and more importantly a Kiswahili version of Microsoft Office launched in 2004. Many mobile phones have Kiswahili as one of their operational languages. Again it is the one language that the fathers of Pan Africanism such as Nkrumah and Nyerere advocated. It is also the only authentic African language that the African Union has been able to adopt as a working language. These indicate clearly that Kiswahili has something that other African languages do not have yet.

In terms of independence, Africa cannot claim to be truly independent when it is still at the mercy of colonial languages. And certainly, a continental lingua franca is not a quest that can be achieved overnight, however, if the AU can assume a leading role by laying out a long term plan towards the adoption and consolidation of Kiswahili as the continental lingua franca, slowly but surely, one day sooner or later, will be achievable. Thus, the UG, with the needed support of all stakeholders can be useful in the promotion of Kiswahili in both Ghana and the West African sub region by the expansion of its Kiswahili programme at the UG and the revival and reintroduction of Kiswahili in the institutions, which were forced to close down for various reasons.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to illustrate Ghana’s significant role in the promotion of Kiswahili over the past half century through its institutions (GBC, GIL, UG, SOS College). It has also highlighted the challenges that confront its consolidation in Ghana and beyond and has argued that the future adoption and promotion of Kiswahili as a continental lingua franca has positive implications for the ultimate achievement of African unity.

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate that although the promotion of Kiswahili in Ghana has been attributed to Nkrumah's quest for a united Africa, considerable efforts have been made to sustain Kiswahili in Ghana long after the days of Nkrumah. The University of Ghana and the Government of Ghana have demonstrated commitment to the promotion of Kiswahili scholarship through the sustenance of the Kiswahili programme and the offer of scholarships for Ghanaians who study Kiswahili.

Teaming up with Ghana, East Africa and indeed all who advocate for linguistic unity in Africa have the potential to promote Kiswahili in the rest of Africa and must be seen to be doing so in the nearest future in order to promote the quest for Pan-Africanism and African unity. This step if taken, in spite of obvious challenges, will go a long way to promote the economic and political unity that Africa seeks and deserves.

Notes

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² A copy of a page advertising the programme line up of the Kiswahili Service in a magazine Radio Ghana Calling has been attached as an appendix.

³ My Translation.

⁴ Edith Tetteh was married to a Ghanaian.

⁵ The study could not establish the exact date due to the unavailability of official documentation at the GBC as a result of a fire which gutted the Corporation burning its archives completely. It was also not possible to solicit information on this from any of the former staff of the Kiswahili Service because they either were deceased or could not be traced.

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University of Ghana Annual Report 1963/1964

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Appendix

JUMATANO

WAKATI

- 13.28/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 13.30 Habari za Leo na Gazetini
- 13.45 Mipigo ya Highlife
- 14.00 Afrika Leo
- 14.15 Muziki Wa Zamani
- 14.28/30 Interval Signal

* * *

- 15.43/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 15.45 Habari za Leo na Mazungumzo ya Habari
- 16.00 Muziki Wenu
- 16.15 Maendeleo Nchini Ghana
- 16.30 Mipigo ya Highlife
- 16.43/30 Interval Signal

* * *

- 17.28/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 17.30 Habari za Leo
- 17.40 Afrika Leo
- 17.55 Muziki Kutoka Afrika Mashariki
- 18.13/30 Close Down

ALHAMISI

- 13.28/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 13.30 Habari za Leo na Gazetini
- 13.45 Mipigo ya Highlife
- 14.00 Afrika Leo
- 14.15 Muziki Kutoka Afrika Kusini
- 14.28/30 Interval Signal

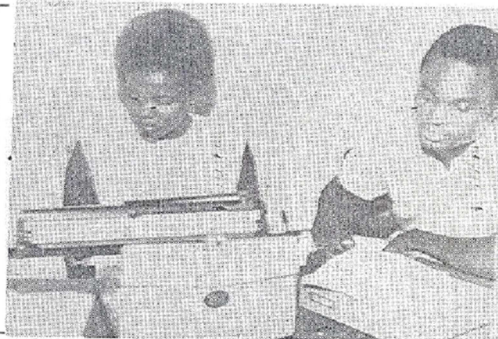
* * *

- 15.43/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 15.45 Habari za Leo na Mazungumzo ya Habari
- 16.00 Watu Mashuhuri wa Zamani
- 16.15 Beni ya Jeshi la Askari
- 16.30 Kontinenti Moja Lenye Watu wa Aina Moja
- 16.43/30 Interval Signal

*

Hapa Tunawaona
wa tangazaji wa
idhaa ya Kiswahili ya
Radio Ghana, Bwana
E. Y. Kumi na Eibi
Anna Msuya wakita
yarisha kipindi cha
Ghana Leo.

*



WAKATI

- 17.28/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 17.30 Habari za Leo
- 17.40 Afrika Leo
- 17.55 Chaguo Kwa Wasikilizaji
- 18.13/30 Close Down

IJUMAA

- 13.28/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 13.30 Habari za Leo na Gazetini
- 13.45 Mipigo ya Highlife
- 14.00 Afrika Leo
- 14.15 Kipindi Cha Hadithi

* * *

- 14.28/30 Interval Signal
- 15.43/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 15.45 Habari za Leo na Mazungumzo ya Habari
- 16.00 Maisha Ya Wanawake wa Kiafrika
- 16.15 Chaguo kwa Mabibi
- 16.43/30 Interval Signal

* * *

- 17.28/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 17.30 Habari za Leo
- 17.40 Afrika Leo
- 17.50 Muziki Wenu
- 18.13/30 Close Down

JUMAMOSI

WAKATI

- 13.28/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 13.30 Habari za Leo na Gazetini
- 13.45 Mipigo ya Highlife
- 14.00 Afrika Leo
- 14.15 Muziki wa Aina Mbali Mbali
- 14.28/30 Interval Signal

* * *

- 15.43/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 15.45 Habari za Leo na Mazungumzo ya Habari
- 16.00 Mambo mbali mbali ya Afrika
- 16.15 Mipigo ya Highlife
- 16.43/30 Interval Signal

* * *

- 17.20/30 Drums and Station Identification
- 17.30 Habari za Leo
- 17.40 Afrika Leo
- 17.55 Mipigo ya Highlife
- 18.13/30 Close Down

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation welcomes listeners' programme comments and criticisms, which should be sent to the Controller of Programmes, External Service, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, P.O. Box 1633, Accra.