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Indigenous language capital and development

Abstract: This position paper presents language capital as an alternative theorization to linguistic capital. It applies to the development and multilingual post-colonial contexts, especially in Africa. It argues that Bourdieu's "linguistic capital" is more applicable to the analysis of the access that is granted or denied on the basis of possession of one rather than another variety of a language. Using demographic statistics made up of human and economic development data from the Human Development Index, the World Bank and the World Development Report, the paper demonstrates the relationships that exist between language and the economy and how the alternative language capital model may be useful for development analysis in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: language capital, multilingualism, indigenous languages, linguistic market, regimes of discourse

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> Language forms a kind of wealth, which all can make use of at once without causing any diminution of the store, and which thus admits a complete community of enjoyment; for all, freely, participating in the general treasure, unconsciously aid in its preservation.
> (Auguste Comte [1875] cited in Bourdieu [1991: 43])

> Money speaks in many languages – we understand them all. Barclays, fluent in finance.
> (Barclays Plc Annual Report 2002)

1 Introduction

The link between language and development is well established in the literature (see for example, Williams 1994; Robinson 1996; Rassool 1999; Aitchison and Carter 2000; Kouassi 2000; and Pennycook 2001). We can further corroborate this claim by referring to three thematically similar cases in three different locations

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in the world. First, in the United Kingdom, the Barclays Bank Plc "fluent in finance" advertising campaign from 2002, which I referred to in the second epigraph above, is arguably a metaphor that derives from the language-development link. Second, McLeod's (2002) spirited critique of the role of Gaelic language planning in Scottish regional development[1] similarly lends great support to the existence of a language and development nexus.

The third case is the World Bank's commitment of funds to literacy projects in the developing world especially the global "Education for All" (EFA) programs such as contained in the Jomtien Declaration of 1990. Ten years later, the Against All Odds Conference and the Asmara Declaration in January 2000 presented the African response to the global literacy drive and clearly articulated the continent's recognition of the role of languages in the development process. Bourdieu (1993a: 43) describes Comte's (1875) assertion in the first epigraph above as "an exemplary expression of the illusion of linguistic communism which haunts all linguistic theory". It is indeed an illusion because it articulates the distribution of linguistic resources in liberal terms without acknowledging the intervening factors of hegemony, power and control which impact both the means and process of production as well as the product.

I shall attempt in this paper to validate my justification for Bourdieu's assessment of Comte by interrogating the relationship between language and development in sub-Saharan Africa. I take as my starting point the fact that language policies of sub-Saharan African nations in letter and/or spirit do not as yet genuinely explore the potential of indigenous languages to positively compete for roles in the regional development process (cf. Omoniyi 2003a, 2003b). Even if they did, and in spite of linguistic theory's insistence on all languages being equal, research in applied linguistics has demonstrated time and time again that some languages are more equal than others (Robinson 1996; Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992). The subject of sustainable development provides a context for investigating this perspective on language politics. Nowhere else is this fact more obvious than in postcolonial settings where supposed "First World" languages exist in a diglossic relationship with indigenous developmentally tagged "Third World" languages.

Perhaps a comment is appropriate here on Mufwene's argument that the English language is not a threat to indigenous African languages. He requests that "Anyone who claims that the spread of English around the world endangers indigenous languages should explain how this is possible in countries where it is

1 See details at http://scottishaffairs.org/backiss/pdfs/sa38/sa38_McLeod.pdf (accessed 24 September 2013).

only a lingua franca of an elite minority but is barely spoken by the vast majority, or a large proportion, of the population" (Mufwene 2002: 8). The logic of this argument may be difficult to fault if we only consider population of language speakers. Even in regimes where a minority controls political power, we sometimes find that language ideology is a site of potential resistance. For instance, the 1976 Soweto uprising in South Africa was partly a response to apartheid minority language policy by the majority Black population. In order for Mufwene's argument to be plausible we must also conceptualize threat as completely synonymous with language death. But if we conceptualize threat as the location of a language on a dying continuum, it is certainly possible to make a case for the threat posed by English language in the perpetuation of existing diglossic relationship between it and some indigenous African languages within the framework suggested by Fishman's (2001) Graded Intergenerational Disruption scale (GIDS). It is presumably this latter notion of threat that moved African leaders to pronounce in the Asmara Declaration (2002: 16)[2] regarding the use of African languages in all aspects of national life that:

1. No language is intrinsically developed: it is through usage that development occurs and that a language extends its technical scope.
2. A language that performs several functions inevitably acquires prestige and, once possessed of growing prestige, it gains access to new functions.
3. Creativity has no limits and therefore technicalization and terminological development have no limits.
4. Limited access and restricted roles and functions in the education field adversely affect the development of African languages and their transformation into national languages.
5. Even in the most radical analysis by economists, there is growing recognition of the fact that economic and technological efficiency cannot be dissociated from the cultural context.
6. The shortage of staff and material in mother-tongue teaching, learning and promotion is the result of long-standing discrimination, which can be eliminated.
7. Negative attitudes which downgrade African mother tongues while at the same time favouring imported languages are based on obvious and superficial rationalisations in an attempt to justify imbalances born of injustices rooted in historical circumstances.

2 UNESCO (2002: 16).

One final comment on the description of English as a threat to indigenous languages which shares the spirit of Mufwene's argument is that oftentimes those charged with the task of improving the lot of indigenous languages in the developing world through planning and policy-making invoke this charge to cover their own inaction; they attempt to give the dog a bad name in order to hang it. Unfortunately for them, English is an enduring dog. Ironically, the same people are also members of the elite class in whose interest it is to preserve the status quo.

2 Theoretical framework

Bourdieu's (1993a) articulation of the notions of the linguistic market and linguistic capital present us with useful theoretical tools for conceptualizing, contextualizing and debating the role of indigenous languages in development in sub-Saharan Africa. Bourdieu notes that:

> Linguistic capital is power over the mechanisms of linguistic price formation, the power to make the laws of price formation operate to one's advantage and to extract the specific surplus value. . . . When I bring in the notion of the market I underline the simple fact that a competence has value only so long as it has a market. . . . That is what I mean by linguistic power relations: they are relations that transcend the situation, irreducible to the relations of interaction as they can be grasped in the situation. (Bourdieu 1993a: 80–82)

According to Bourdieu, if a field functions as an instrument of censorship, that is because when we enter it we are immediately located in a particular structure which is described as the structure of the distribution of capital. In that field, the group does, or does not, grant people the right to speak; it does, or does not, *credit* them. This way, the field censors what we might like to say, our peculiar or *deviant* way of saying it, *idios logos*, and compels us to utter only what is deemed appropriate by the group, what is normatively *sayable*. Bourdieu notes that field "excludes two things: what cannot be said, given the structure of the distribution of the means of expression – the unsayable – and what *could* be said, almost too easily, but which is censored – the unnameable" (Bourdieu 1993b: 80–81).

This observation is significant in the way that it creates a perspective of access, rights and claims that are articulated using language resources particularly in multilingual and diglossic situations. Any articulations also reflect the locations of articulators within social structures. Bourdieu elaborates further adding that:

> [O]ne needs an analysis of the social conditions of the constitution of the group in which the discourse is produced, because that is where one finds the true principle of what could and what could not be said there. More profoundly, one of the most effective ways a group has of reducing people to silence is by excluding them from positions from which one can speak. Conversely, one of the ways for a group to control discourse consists in filling the positions from which one *can* speak with people who will only say what the field authorizes and calls for. (Bourdieu 1991: 91)

2.1 Linguistic market

Within sub-Saharan Africa, the "linguistic market" in Bourdieu's sense comprises two interrelating axes; one of ex-colonial "national/official" languages and local languages, and the other of majority and minority indigenous languages that perform functions from which their statuses derive. The functions are either formally assigned through language policy provisions for the colonial languages, and emergent local majority languages, or by natural selection for the indigenous languages based on the population of their native speakers within the polity. The bottom line in this proposition is that some kind of economic theory can be applied to the analysis of language viability (cf. Grin 1990, 1993; Grin and Vailancourt 1999). In this regard therefore the linguistic market may be identified as operating in the following spheres:

- Local-local sphere: this encompasses the rural/traditional community and economy and it is mostly homogenous, so for guest settlers in rural communities, membership and participation in the local social processes are dependent on how they fit or adapt to the linguistic ecology or landscape. Rural economies are mostly conducted in the dominant local and indigenous languages. Farmers, traders, artisans, etc. conduct their business in the indigenous language and expect venturing guests to converge. The school system in the rural sphere, even though reserved by policy for local languages and English as medium of instruction, is unofficially dominated by the former.
- Local-urban sphere: ethnic diversity in the cities provides additional support to the policy backing that colonial languages already receive. English serves a useful purpose as lingua franca. The workplace, both public and private sectors, has low, middle and high level personnel with proportionate levels of proficiency in English and inversely proportional levels of need to use the dispreferred language in the workplace, usually an indigenous language.
- Urban-urban sphere: this is the sphere of official transactions and the level at which the national economy is operated and plugged into the global economy. Evidently, this sphere advantages English and completely excludes some of the indigenous languages. In a country like Nigeria, oil, the mainstay

of the economy involves trans-national companies whose operational languages in global trading are former colonial languages.

2.2 Language-development link

The language-development link is highlighted in a civil society complaint brought by the Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights (YOHR) expressing concern to the World Bank in January 2008 on the link between the English-only policy of the bank and the failure of development programs in Yemen. According to Rebecca Harris in *Foreign policy* (The Bank of Babel, 30 June 2009)[3] the civil society request for an Arabic translation of the terms of a $51 million grant to the government of Yemen was refused. The bank suggested that the people should translate the document themselves, "a rather daunting task in a country where literacy is just 57 percent, few read English, and the cost of translation (at about $1,800 or $2,000 for a single document) would eclipse the $930 per capita GDP of the average Yemeni". This observation and attendant narrative are shared by an estimated 140 eligible World Bank borrower countries in the world. Harris goes further to say:

> Issues of transparency aside, there are other reasons to question why the world's leading development institution would expect to do business solely in English in a country (like Yemen) where Arabic is the national language. From the outset, that decision excludes the majority of the host country's population from every step of the process.

This kind of exclusion from process amounts to a significant undermining of the political structure, especially in a system that purports to be a variant of Western-authored liberal democracy as we find in a number of developing economies today. I shall move the discussion on to the next segment, beginning with a cautionary note to the effect that the claims that I make here are limited by the fact that the theoretical model has been applied to and explained with reference only to an understandably confined development context in a few developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria) and Southeast Asia (Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia). Until a larger scale study is conducted to ascertain if the model can equally be applied across the majority of contexts, any claims I make here can only be tentative at best. The irony of course is that across all the spheres described above – local-local, local-urban and urban-urban – but particularly in the second and third, lower down the production-line the indigenous languages po-

3 http://experts.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/06/30/the_bank_of_babel_0 (accessed 30 June 2009).

tentially perform significant and fundamental roles albeit largely undocumented in the sociolinguistic literature and unacknowledged in the discourses of the developed economies where such lines terminate ultimately. For instance, the formation and maintenance of social relationships and camaraderie responsible for ensuring the existence of a facilitative and enabling working environment and consequently increased production levels are traceable to a notion of sharedness such as membership of a language community. Of all the three spheres presented above, it is in the urban-urban sphere that indigenous languages attract the least amount of acknowledged capital.

From the development angle then languages have defined roles. As a global development institution, the World Bank makes interventions and responds to the specific needs of countries and regions predicated upon its evaluation of specific situations using as its parameters fundamental notions of universal fairness, justice, human rights and dignity. To complement these, the countries in question must localize their policies and development models to suit their particular needs. Sub-Saharan Africa is quite a complex context as far as the analysis of development is concerned because there are far too many intervening variables as the papers in this special issue demonstrate. These include low yet varying literacy rates, complex and diverse ethnic configurations, multilingualism, gender-based cultural differences and expectations, unstable economies which are anchored to different western currencies (dollar, sterling pound and euro) among other variables. I shall focus on variability created by civilization and colonization. Using these two variables as parameter, we may classify the region along the following lines:

- By civilization: Western, Middle Eastern and Traditional African; the first two are external influences. The result of influences from varying civilizations includes differences of culture, religion, literacy and education. The language complex associated with this includes Western languages (English, French, German etc), Arabic from the Middle East, and Africa's indigenous languages.
- By colonization: Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone. The third has only minimal presence in sub-Saharan Africa – Angola and Equatorial Guinea being the main ones. This creates a binary opposition between economies formerly strapped to the franc now subsumed in the euro on one hand, and the pound sterling on the other. The language complex associated with this is a neat but problematic ideological divide between *la francophonie* and *l'anglophonie*. On one hand, the postcolonial paradigm seems to undermine the relevance of other euro-affiliated languages to development in the region through its focus on *la francophonie* as one half of the *anglo-franco* duel. On the other hand, that *la francophonie* is constructed as a zone of euro-dominance indirectly invokes the other languages in which the euro is fluent

– German, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. At this stage it is necessary to construct a typology of language capital in order to demonstrate how the indigenous languages are situated within these language and development complexes.

3 Rethinking language and capital

I return to Bourdieu's theorization to take issue with the wholesale adoption of the concept of linguistic capital in relation to the complex multilingual situations presented by postcolonial contexts, and as a matter of fact, contemporary migration-enriched globalised economies of our post-nation world (Heller 2011). There is a case to be made for a refinement of the paradigm. We need to distinguish between linguistic capital and language capital where the former concerns intra-language competition between standard and non-standard varieties or dialects while the latter is a phenomenon of language competition and hierarchy in multilingual contexts. This latter distinction is plausible if we relate Bourdieu's claim that "a competence has value only so long as it has a market" (1993a: 91) to the possession of systemic knowledge and skills in a language.

Thus we would expect unequal returns from the possession of high levels of competence in reading, writing, speaking and listening two languages; one minority and the other majority. Possession of linguistic capital then becomes a characteristic of individuals and groups within a monolingual analytical framework; for instance, the kind of distinction that was made in early scholarship between Received Pronunciation (RP) in English and the regional varieties. In contrast, the notion of language capital applies to language communities discriminated by size and therefore of their share of control of the local economy, especially in the developing world. On the basis of these distinctions, in theorizing the link between language and development in sub-Saharan Africa it is necessary to construct a typology of language capital which shows the relationship between languages and local and global economies. Such a typology establishes a unified hierarchy of the world's languages and currencies determined in the main by the following two factors.

Factor One: number and territorial spread of language speakers and currency users respectively determine location on the hierarchy. In relation to Africa, the hierarchy of languages based on this factor may look something like the development-based categorization of African languages agreed by the delegates of the Asmara conference of 2001:[4]

4 UNESCO (2002).

1. *mother tongues*, defined as the languages learnt by children through social interaction with members of the communities to which they are linked by parentage;
2. *community languages*, defined as the dominant languages used in areas broader than their ethnic boundaries but not having a national scope;
3. *national languages*, which may be either *linguae francae* or one or more local languages decreed for nationwide use throughout a country;
4. *inter-African Languages*, which are *languages of African intercommunication* used widely across national boundaries, such as Kiswahili in East Africa or Pulaar and Mandinka over much of the central equatorial belt from west to east;
5. *international languages* such as English, French and Portuguese that are used for communication within and outside Africa.

As far as national development is concerned, language capital increases from categories (1) to (5) in conventional thinking. But the issue I am raising here is that development is multilayered and that at some level the premium on language weighs more heavily in favor of Category 1 languages and decreasingly through the ranks to Category 5. One realizes that this proposition is problematic because of the manner in which languages are conceptualized as single close-ended units whereas in reality competence reflects speakers' different degrees of fluidity in the contents of repertoires. At the material/physical end of the production process, on factory floors for instance, or even in the sourcing of raw agricultural produce from the farms where seasonal manual labor is engaged, efficiency may be enhanced by shared local languages while at the conceptual/ideational end of the decision and policy making process involving finance, industry or trade ministers and other bureaucrats acting on behalf of nation the more global official language may be beneficial.

Factor Two: The Global Power Index (GPI) of a language and its associated currency expresses their joint potential impact on development and the global economy. This potential in turn determines the relative status of a language on a global hierarchy of languages. GPI is calculated based on the average of all national GDPs supported by a language. In theory therefore, for English language, the GDPs of all countries in which English is spoken natively and those of all ESL countries divided by the respective number of countries in either category represent the GPI (Native) and GPI (ESL) respectively:

$$\frac{\text{Native English GDP}}{6} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\text{ESL GDP}}{16}$$

The index can be calculated for all former colonial languages too – e.g. Spanish, French and Portuguese, German and Dutch in some places. The GPI is different from Abram de Swaan's (2001) Q-value concept which sets the communicative value of languages and identifies individuals as the ultimate decision-makers on language use. The model proposed here posits that language choices are predetermined or strongly impacted by their GPIs. The latter are determined in quarters in which inhabitants of the developing world have little or no effective representation; for instance, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Based on the GPI concept, I postulate a four-tier hierarchy of languages derived from their relative capital worth below.

3.1 +Multinational Languages (ML) and +Multilingual Currencies (MC)

MLs are ex-colonial languages that have become the core of Second and Foreign Language businesses – English, French, German, Dutch, Arabic, Russian, etc. They are associated with currencies which easily exchange across multiple language territories on international business corridors; sometimes in translation. These include strong global currencies listed on the Stock Exchange – the Dollar, the Sterling Pound and the Euro among others. +MC also include currencies that are quasi-legal tender beyond the boundaries of their national domicile – in parallel informal economies (Black Market Exchange mechanism – BME). Informal or underground economies as exemplified by BMEs are exclusively a feature of the developing world.

3.2 +Multinational Languages and –Multilingual Currency

This category includes some ethno-national turned multinational languages spoken by ethnic groups bisected by the new boundaries of post-scramble and partition erstwhile African colonial states negotiated at the Berlin Conference of 1885 (Asiwaju 1985, Omoniyi 2004). They co-support with similar status languages currencies that are confined territorially to one nation in the main – hence minus multilingual currency within a global framework. For example, both Yoruba and Hausa are multinational languages in sub-Saharan African being listed by *Ethnologue* against several countries. However, they are associated with currencies that are local to their respective countries. For instance, Hausa in Nigeria is associated with the Naira whereas in Benin and Ghana where it is also spoken natively it is associated with the CFA and Cedi respectively. Similarly, Yoruba in Nigeria is associated with the Naira but with CFA in Benin and Togo where it is also spoken natively. These countries have English and/or French as officially designated languages of interaction with the international community and the official language in which the economy and the currency operates. In reality, the minus multilingual currencies in this category may be multilingual in the minority status languages that make their country of *citizenship* multilingual but they are industrially weak and may not be listed on the global stock exchange. Both the Nigerian Naira and Ghanaian Cedi are unlisted for instance. The languages and currencies of this category have to be linked or affiliated to other languages and currencies through which they then find global expression such as we find in the tourism advertisement for Obudu Mountain Resort in southeastern Nigeria (see Figure 1).

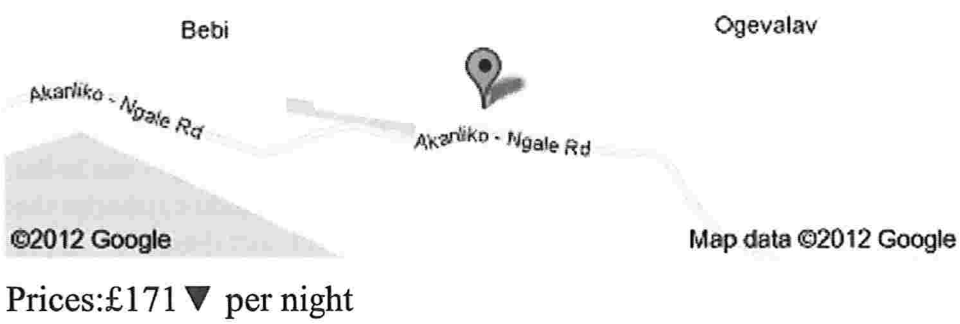

Fig. 1: Obudu Mountain Resort (Source: http://fr.hotels.com/ho276043/obudu-mountain-resort-obudu-nigeria/ [accessed 16 April 2012])

The resort is advertised online by Hotel.com in both French and English and the currencies in which it is marketed are the sterling pound and the euro, certainly a consequence of the global reach of the internet and the prospective client base.

Let us take a second example from a different region of the world, Singapore in Southeast Asia. Singapore's national language Malay and the Singapore dollar in global context are +ML and –MC similar to the illustration above. But in the context of Southeast Asia Malay is spoken in at least four Southeast Asian countries – Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei Darul Salam hence it is a multinational language. Thus its National Language status affiliates it to the Singapore dollar which is also associated with a variety of English. In the tourism sector which is largely external-facing, the Singapore dollar is the preferred currency for reservations of the Bintan and Batam Resorts of Indonesia as exemplified in the information excerpts below:

> Facilities & Services
> Bintan Lodge is located within walking distance to Pasar Oleh Oleh, the shopping village and Puja Sera (the local food centre). Free transfers are provided for guests staying at the Lodge to Pasar Oleh Oleh, where they can catch return bus transfers to and from the various hotels for S$6 – unlimited rides per day. Alternatively, a return trip via taxi can be reserved for around S$12.00–S$15.00 per taxi.
> (http://www.bintan-resorts.com/brcms/ContentView.aspx?articalid=e2f1aea4-3b2b-411b-acef-9170bb36d604&articleid=dfa1309d-632f-4832-b5ec-a64ab6d7c271 [accessed 16 April, 2012])

At Tempat Senang Resort, the currency of transaction is exclusively the Singapore dollar as we see in the figure from http://www.tempatsenang.com/content_40_1.php (accessed 16 April 2012). Malay is the official language of Indonesia in which it is located, yet the information on the website is exclusively available in English which is the official language associated with the Singapore dollar as well as the dominant language of global tourism (cf. Thurlow and Jaworski 2010). Similarly, Telunas Beach Resort (http://www.telunasbeach.com/guest-rooms/private-chalets [accessed 16 April 2012]) also in Indonesia is marketed in the same way; in English and in Singapore dollars:

> Weekday
> S$205+/night for double occupancy
> S$35+/night per child (ages 5–17) sharing the room with parents
> S$85+/night for extra adult
> Children 4 & under are free
>
> Weekend
> S$230+/night for double occupancy
> S$35+/night per child (ages 5–17) sharing the room with parents
> S$85+/night for extra adult
> Children 4 & under are free
>
> Peak/Holiday
> S$255+/night for double occupancy
> S$35+/night per child (ages 5–17) sharing the room with parents
> S$85+/night for extra adult
> Children 4 & under are free
>
> Rates above include: – Welcome drink – 3 meals per night of stay – use of beach, volleyball, jungle hiking, snorkeling, fishing, swimming, and more!
>
> Prices do not include 10% government tax. Weekend is classified as Friday & Saturday night. Holiday is the night preceding any public holiday or peak dates set by Telunas Beach Resort.
>
> (http://www.telunasbeach.com/guest-rooms/private-chalets)

The interesting observation arising from the information above is the fact that although these resorts are located in a predominantly Malay speaking area, it has not impacted the mobility of the *Ringgit*, the national currency of Malaysia or the Indonesian *Rupiah* both of which are associated with the Malay language. The currencies of these countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, etc) are pretty much confined to the individual countries.

3.3 –Multinational Languages and +Multilingual Currency

Some non-multinational languages (confined by territory) such as Japanese support currencies that gain expression in the languages of other nations through the support country's industry. In contrast to the previous category here we have non-multinational languages tied to an industrial strength globally indexed currency, for example, Japanese and the Japanese Yen.

3.4 –Multinational Languages and –Multilingual Currency

This category includes non-multinational languages confined territory-wise to one nation that serve a non-multilingual currency. The weakest currencies and minority languages belong in this cohort of the unified hierarchy. Fishman's (2001) "threatened languages" I would argue, exemplify this category of languages.

I want to return and dwell now on the multinational languages (+ML) category because of the impact that it has on the assignment of capital to indigenous languages in the developing world. Membership of the multinational languages (+ML) category is indicative of the wealth of languages used in global institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, UNESCO, the International Court of Justice, International Monetary Fund, and in the conduct of international transactions and events such as the Olympics. The magnitude of the politics of nomination of the languages used in these institutions and events is evident in the protest by French activists who insisted that the organizers of the 2012 Olympics add French to English in observance of the bilingual practice in place since 1908, the commencement of the modern Olympics.

One further instance of the link between the economy and (+ML) is the protest by Yemen against the World Bank loans processed solely in English and the terms of which are not comprehensible to limited competence Yemeni officials.

Table 1: Languages of West Africa, speaker population and associated economy

Language	Speaker population	Associated global currency	Economy	
			Primary	Secondary
English	92,000,000	Dollar, Pound, Euro	Oil, diamond, gold	Tourism
French	25,152,200	Euro	Oil, tourism	Oil, tourism, phosphates, gold,
Hausa	24,988,000	None	Groundnut, cotton	NA
Fula	12,269,805	None	Dairy, hide and skin	NA
Yoruba	19,380,800	None	Cocoa, rubber	NA
Igbo	18,000,000	None	Palm oil, coal	NA
Ewe	3,112,000	None	Fish[5]	NA
Fante	7,000.000	None	NA	NA
Wolof	7,000,000	None	Fish, phosphates, peanuts	Tourism

Sources: Compiled from Lewis (2013), UNDP (2003) and http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2862.htm#econ (accessed 10 December 2012).

Although in Table 1 the African languages listed have no global currency associated with them, that is not to say that they do not contribute to the character of the global economy. In fact they play a crucial role albeit this is not very obvious in the discourses of the global institutions I mentioned earlier. The oil economy at the rigs and in the day-to-day management of the pipelines is conducted in indigenous languages in the swamps of Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta States in Nigeria, not in the upscale linguistic currencies of the World Bank and OPEC.

The sociolinguistic literature suggests that there is a close link between literacy rates and development. Countries with the lowest literacy rates are also the least developed. This argument is an obvious one except that the manner in which literacy rates are determined are arguably suspect. Literacy and education are closely linked to erstwhile colonial languages in most of the developing world. In reality, literacy is achievable in some non-European languages but they are largely unacknowledged in that function. In Table 2, the countries with the relatively lower literacy rates also have lower GDP per capita, thus lower levels of

5 Nukunya (1989).

Table 2: Sub–Saharan African nations, their official languages and literacy rate

Country	Official language	GDP* (2009) per capita US$	Literacy rate (2009)
Cameroon	French, English	1,136	71% (2007)
Benin	French	745	42%
Chad	French	610	34%
The Gambia	English	430	46%
Ghana	English	1,098	67%
Cote d'Ivoire	French	1,106	55%
Liberia	English	222	59%
Burkina Faso	French, Moore, Jula	517	No data
Mauritania	French	919	57%
Niger	French	352	29%
Nigeria	English, French	1,118	61%
Sierra Leone	English	341	41%
Equatorial Guinea	French	15,397	93%
Togo	French	431	57%

*Source: World Bank Development Report (2011).

development. The indigenous languages of these countries are also the transactional languages at the very root of development. Language choice within interactional contexts can be more complex than we assume. If we take the case of the cocoa industry in the southwest of Nigeria we could hypothetically come up with the interactional regime and hierarchy of language relationships presented in Figure 2.

The journey from the farm hands at the bottom of the regime of discourse presented in Figure 2 and the World Bank personnel at the top is measurable in language terms. My contention is that lack of development or slow speed of development in some places is due to the lack of coordination between all of the stakeholders in the process indicated above. Language disjuncture is responsible for the lack of involvement of many at the bottom of the scale in the dominant discourse from which decisions are produced or packaged at the top. Thus this disjuncture, it can be argued, accounts to some extent for global inequalities. Literacy and GDP figures are low for virtually all of the countries in Table 2. Considering the relatively small percentage of the total population of these countries that have proficiency in the official language of state it may be argued that communicative efficiency and production levels of the workforce would be better supported by an official recognition and support of the local languages in which they are competent.

World Bank

6 official languages

↑

Multinationals (Cadbury, Nestle, Nescafe, etc.)

State official languages

↑

Federal Government: (Trade & Industry = buying off the farmers, agreeing price in consultation with global body)

Official English

↑

Cocoa cooperatives/unions (to engage with officialdom and also rally local interest groups)

Language of the immediate community — Yoruba

↑

Cocoa farming districts (cocoa estates in clusters around Ilesha for example = other small-scale local businesses)

Ijesha dialect of Yoruba

↑

Individual farms/farmers employing laborers

Dialect Yoruba/Pidgin if *Agatu* 'labor temps'[6]

Fig. 2: Regimes of discourse in development

6 *Agatu* are transient and seasonal laborers who come from Benin and Togo to work on farms in Nigeria for a wage.

4 Millennium Development Goals

With 2015, the target date for all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) now imminent, I shall seize the opportunity of this special issue to explore the ways in which issues of language are implicated in the pursuit of development goals. Although all eight of the MDGs (see World Bank Report 2003) one way or another have a language dimension to them, three are of the utmost relevance for my purposes in this paper:

- Achieve universal primary education
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Develop a global partnership for development

With reference to the universal primary education goal, multiethnic nations present a particularly complex context for its achievement. Education policies in several West African countries like Ghana and Nigeria attempt to address this complexity by nominating majority mother tongues or local languages of wider communication (cf. Bamgbose 1991) in early primary education and the official language of state thereafter as the language of instruction in the school system. This provision still excludes millions of children from minority language backgrounds who can only access education in a non-mother tongue Language of the Wider Community (LWC) and subsequently English or French. In a sense, the question remains then whether this policy is able to fully mobilize ethnic minorities and harness all of the resources from that constituency for national development. Already, sub-Saharan Africa, according to WHO and UN records, has the largest infant mortality rates and poorest maternal health of all regions of the world. Reversing this as well as the goal of combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases has a language dimension. Rampant ignorance and lack of education facilitate the spread of diseases. While there has been an increase in the level of awareness across sub-Saharan Africa, a lot of the debate still takes place in a language in which majority of the population lack competence. The media presents us with a useful indicator in this regard considering its use as a forum for public enlightenment. Let us illustrate this point with radio programming.

Radio Kwara is a state government-owned radio station serving the people of Kwara State in Nigeria. The state has a population of 2.87 million. The station broadcasts in six Nigerian languages: Yoruba, Nupe, Batonu, Hausa, Fulfulde and Bokobaru. In the program schedule for the first quarter of 2012 (January to March), Radio Kwara indicated the distribution of English and Yoruba programs shown in Table 3. The station is on air from 05:30 to 00:06 daily and in that period

Table 3: Distribution of programs by language on Radio Kwara

Time	Programme distribution in minutes								
	English	Yoruba	Hausa	Batonu	Pidgin	Nupe	Fulfude	Bokobaru	Local Laguages
0533–0540	7								0
0545–0600		15							15
0600–0615	15								0
0615–0625		10							10
0630–0640		10							10
0640–0803	23								0
0803–0806		3							3
0806–0930	84								0
0930–1000		30							30
1000–1015	3.75	3.75		3.75		3.75			11.25
1015–1105	50								0
1105–1130		25							25
1130–1202	32								0
1202–1245		43							43
1245–1315	30								0
1315–1330		15							15
1330–1403	33								0
1403–1445		42							42
1445–1530	45								0
1530–1545		10							10
1545–1730	105								0
1700–1730				10		10		10	30
1730–1800				30					30
1800–1812	12								0
1812–1824		12							12

1824–1835			5.5				5.5		11
1835–1915		40							40
1915–2030	75								0
2030–2040		10							10
2040–2055	15								0
2055–2100		5							5
2100–2130					30				30
2130–2200			30						30
2200–2245		45							45
2245–2300			15						15
2300–2303	3								0
2303–0000		57							57
Total	532.75	375.75	50.5	43.75	30	13.75	5.5	10	529.25

on Mondays, a total of seventy-six programs, some live and some recorded, are broadcast with varying durations.

Twenty nine of these programs are broadcast in one or several indigenous languages and the remaining 47 programs are in English.[7] Yoruba is the medium for 23 of the indigenous language programs, three are in Hausa, while three news programs (News Summary at 10:00 and National News at 17:00 and 18:24), have multilingual transmission. The noticeable massive imbalance underlines the potential to achieve the stated goal of public enlightenment if the indigenous languages are assigned more roles and greater recognition.

5 Conclusion

In the context of micro-sociolinguistic analysis, politics and micro-economics, there is a lot yet to be done in terms of determining the fortunes associated with the standard forms of local languages at least in the local economy. While one does not dismiss the significance of linguistic capital in the broader applied linguistics debate, the evidence strongly shows that in some development contexts, especially in Africa and parts of Asia, language capital is the more appropriate concept with the competition solidly between languages more than between varieties of the same language. Linguistic and language hierarchization may apply to different levels and sectors of economic analysis. In this position paper, I have attempted to theorize how language capital works to impact the development process in Africa while underplaying the social divisions that are created by standard versus non-standard distinctions.

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7 I have used the titles of programmes in deciding the medium of their transmission to categorize them.

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