

The Major African National Language and their communicational role between the Africa Nations

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Language is a means of communication between people wherever they are. It is a means by which knowledge is acquired. It is also a means of delivering different benefits to all nations.

Furthermore language is a means of communicating education, culture and civilization to others.

Africa had been colonized by the Europeans up to the middle of the 20th century; thus the European languages dominated the continent and remained as the main languages of almost all the African countries. Some countries up till now. Those languages are mainly:

French, English, and Portuguese. The National languages in most cases come second to the European ones.

French language is spoken widely in Africa, about 14% of the people (1996), this is in central Afrique, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Guinea, male, Niger, Cot devote, Gabon, Togo, Cameron, Morushuous, Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Madagascar, Burkina Faso and others.

The English language is spoken by 21 African countries mainly: Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leon, Liberia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, and some others.

Portuguese is spoken in a number of African countries as a first and second language, this is mainly in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Equatorial Guinea.

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Those three European Languages are almost the official languages in most of the mentioned African countries. They are the means of communication, education and they are there for radio and television casting besides the daily news-papers.

Two out of the three languages used in the occasions of the Africa countries Union; they are French and English languages.

*** Refer to map No (11).**

The Native African languages;

The people of Africa, in their daily life, use their indigenous languages; this is in their daily communication, selling, buying, and celebrating different occasions and the likes. Those languages together with some major dialects are (1250-2100) native language in Africa being of four families' according to the classification of J.Greenberg, namely the Afro –Asiatic family, the Niger – Kurdofofan family, the Nilo-Saharan family and the Khoisan family (the click family).

*** refer to map No (7).**

The main native languages in West Africa are: Hausa, Mandingo, Fulani, Wolof, Yoruba, Kanuri, and songhe language.

In North Africa Arabic is the dominant language in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya, and Sudan.

At mid Africa the major languages are Lingala, Sango, Bantu, and Zandi. Africana and Zulu are the main language in South Africa. In East Africa there we find mainly Swahili, then Somali, Amharic, and Oromo languages.

Those native languages are used as mother tongues for daily life communication within the groups of their speakers. They are also used in some cases as second languages for communication between one group and another living together, just like Fulani's speaking Hausa language where the two group live together, this is in Nigeria, the native languages in Africa languages are used widely on the cultural

occasions are mostly reflected in the native language (2) few of those native languages are used for Education at primary level schools and University level as optional subjects. This is very true with Hausa, Swahili, Amharic and some others, but the situation with Arabic language is different. This is what is going on within Africa up till now.

The top major native languages in Africa as the situation of now are three languages. Those are Arabic, Swahili, and Hausa languages. They are top in term of geographical distribution and number of speakers in Africa.

*** refer to map No (9).**

١- Arabic language:

The top of the three languages is Arabic. Some people are of the opinion that Arabic language is a foreign language in Africa, In fact it is an indigenous one in Africa, by the fact that all the western Linguists who classified the native African languages included Arabic language as one of the indigenous language of Africa. Top of those Western Linguists are:

J.Greenberg an American one, Westerman, Menihof, both are German linguists', Molar and some others. More over them are seven countries in Africa, the majority of whose people speak Arabic language as a mother tongue and first language.

The people of those Arab-African countries form more than 60% of the total Arab world people. The speakers of Arabic language as a first language in Africa are 23% of the total people of Africa, besides 10% of the Africans speak it as a second language^r. Thus 33% of the people of Africa communicate in Arabic in one way or another

especially within the community of Muslims who form a majority out the people of the continent of Africa.

In North Africa, within the seven Arab African countries Arabic language is the official language, it is the langue Franca; all communication are conducted through this language: educational, economical, political and social ones. The Jews have become citizens in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab African countries; although they are few, Arabic is their first and mother language. There is also a good number of Christians as citizens of Arab African countries, mainly in Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

Arabic language is their first and mother tongue, thus they conduct their prayers on Sundays or Saturdays in Arabic language. The Arabic language is spreading in Africa as a means of communication and education especially among Muslims in Africa.

The language is spreading year after year in Africa as a means of communication and education especially among Muslims in Africa.

At the level of the African Union Arabic language is the only African native language; this is when the members hold their meetings and conferences. Recently some voices are calling for Swahili language to be added to those languages of the Union. It is a fact now Swahili language is going more ground in east and mid Africa, not only that but spreading is towards South Africa.

Arabic language is widely used in Quranic schools, primary schools up to the level of universities in most of the African countries. It is number six among the major languages of the world⁴.

2- Swahili Language:

It is the language that came out to exist due to the interaction between the groups of Arabs who lived in East Africa with the groups

of Africans who speak Bantu Language. This is beside some other few speakers of English Language.

All mixed together and brought about the Swahili Language. The language is related to the Niger-Congo group. It is very rich with Arabic words and Arabic culture.

Swahili is widely spoken in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and the Republic of Congo⁵; in fact Swahili now has spread widely that it covers almost the whole of East Africa from Somalia to Mozambique.

Swahili is a means of communication and trading in East Africa generally, and then it goes deep in the middle of Africa South of the Equator to cover Congo, Malawi and Burundi. It is an official language in Tanzania and used as a second language in Uganda and Kenya. One study goes to say: "Swahili is spoken by an estimated 50 million people, and after Arabic it is the most widely understood language in Africa⁶." And the study explained more stating that: "Swahili is number 12 among the major languages of the world⁷."

During the golden period of Islam in Africa, Swahili language used to be written in Arabic script, then after the colonization of African countries by the Europeans has been written in Latin script which continues up to now.

The countries of East Africa were very keen on the Swahili language. Thus they continue to use it in communication in general and publishing some newspapers in Swahili language. Furthermore the University of Dar-al-Salam in Tanzania established an institute for Swahili research.

As for Kenya the government introduced Swahili Language as one of the subjects for study at the various levels of education up to

the University level. This is besides publishing some newspapers in Swahili language.

Uganda established a society for the propagation of Swahili language. It is second to English language in Uganda and a lingua Franca in most cases in Uganda. In short Swahili language is a language used in many fields of life right from Somalia in the north to Mozambique in the south of Africa.

It is a fact now that Swahili language is gaining more ground in east and mid Africa, not only that but also its spreading towards South Africa.

3- Hausa Language:

Hausa is the third Language among the top major native languages in Africa. Smirnova mentioned that:" Hausa is second only to Swahili in sub-Saharan Africa, being spoken by not less than 26 million people. But as regards the number of people whose mother tongue is not Hausa, it takes a prominent pride place among the languages of Africa⁸. In fact the number of Hausa language speakers stated by Smirnova is very humble; according to some sources⁹ the number of its speakers is (34) millions, where as Amin Abu Manga¹⁰ explained that the Hausa language speakers are more than (80) million people.

In West Africa one will not have any difficulty in communication, selling and buying so long as he speaks Hausa.

Hausa language had been written in Arabic script before the colonial period of the Europeans in Africa. In this connection Abdel-Kader says¹¹: " the contact between Arabic and Hausa must have taken place early in two different ways : through the dialectical and

classical Arabic". Furthermore Smiranova¹² says:" Before the Europeans arrived in the Hausa Land, Hausa already possessed an indigenous system of writing based on Arabic script called Ajami" .

After the arrival of English colonization to Nigeria, Hausa language, started to be written in Latin script and this went on until now. Hausa people are there almost west Africa, besides being there in central Africa, and in Sudan. They are mainly traders; thus their language is spreading easily among others, which means the speakers of Hausa language are always in increase in Africa.

To wind up Arabic, Swahili and Hausa Languages form the top major native languages in Africa. They are spreading in Africa more and more, year after year. They cover most of the regions of Africa in a good geographical way that make the three languages quite suitable, in my opinion for the Africans as lingua franca.

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