The Contribution of the Use of English in Africa to Dependency in Mission and Development

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Abstract

This article looks at the use of English in mission in the Third World, especially Africa. The original attempt to limit the spread of English in British colonies has failed. The West's perception that use of its languages internationally does away with troublesome cultural differences is shown to be deceptive; African nations' governing themselves using English are troubled by dependency, incompetence and corruption of their people and institutions. The attraction to African nations of the use of English in formal contexts ignores its negative consequences, including creation of dependency. Unfamiliar categories in English undermine native sensibilities, while implicitly suggesting that native-English speaking nations hold the key to African prosperity. The church — a body that serves primarily neither political nor economic interests — could lead the way to empowering the 'poor' in Africa by encouraging the use of indigenous languages.

Keywords

mission, Africa, English, dependency, linguistics, African languages, development, language policy

> English is learned by those who go to school and one has to pay for it heavily. Mother tongue is learned freely. Kiswahili is learned freely on the streets and even the homes.[1]

1. Introduction

This article contributes to the debate about dependency in the African church. It points out that linguistic policies based on European languages in Africa are a major aggravation to the dependency situation in Africa. It concludes by

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[1] Richard Odinga Maina, 'Which languages should be used in the Church in East Africa?', Student Project at Kima International School of Theology, Elders Counsel course, May to July 2009.

suggesting that Western missionaries can help the African church to become an indigenous institution by engaging in their ministries using indigenous languages.

2. Language and Colonialism

Language issues are not new; they were of concern in colonial days in Africa. Missionaries in those days worked closely in hand with the colonial powers. One view of the language policy of the time is that the British practiced 'linguistic imperialism'.[2] This suggests that colonial policy was to spread European languages as a means of dominating subjects. But, actually, says Brutt-Griffler: 'the empirical data suggest that the British language policy (in the colonies) is perhaps best characterised as reactive in its quest to *limit access to English*' (my emphasis).[3]

Colonialists attempted to limit the spread of English when they perceived that 'Asians and Africans . . . transformed English . . . into a means of resistance . . . in the anti-colonial struggle'.[4] British officials ended up chiding themselves for having over-promoted English in the colonies once they perceived that those who learned English preferred white collar jobs to manual work and other less prestigious empire building tasks.[5] To use today's terminology — they found that many nationals of African (and other colonial) countries preferred dependency on the infrastructures set up by the West, to independently focusing their efforts on providing *for* the colonial system, or improving their own communities' situation on their own initiative. That is, tapping into the colonial system (West) and economy was seen as preferable to developing or maintaining an alternative or even parallel system. Getting a fish that was already caught was preferable to learning how to fish.

It has become fashionable to chide 'colonial' practices. 'Colonialists' are those terrible, exploitive, cruel, and inhuman people who were only ever interested in British imperial interests and in oppressing their subjects; so we are told. But is that entirely true? Surely colonial officers, for all their failings, had hearts like the rest of us? Surely also — in those days before email, television and almost universal schooling — many learned local languages and got to

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[2] Janina Brutt-Griffler, *World English: A Study of its Development*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters 2002, viii.

[3] Brutt-Griffler, x.

[4] Brutt-Griffler, 65.

[5] Brutt-Griffler, 76.

know a lot about their 'subjects'. Was their reluctance for their subject people's to learn English entirely 'selfish'?

Balcomb comments from South Africa, one place in which English use is very widespread: 'I am continually amazed at the extent to which people who speak to each other across [cultural, religious, racial, and other] divides assume that the words each use are understood in the same way by the other, as if different worldviews didn't exist'.[6] Could this have been at root of the reluctance of colonialists to spread their language more widely? Coming from very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, did they realise that their colonial subjects would be bound to understand differently — that is to misunderstand — English? Would this result in ongoing dependence on what they could not understand? Is this what was being turned against the empire? Can the same still be turned against 'development' today? English is in Kenya and elsewhere seen as the means to a white-collar job.[7] These jobs are almost invariably based on links with outside communities and societies, and not the development of indigenous capacity. Is it good to encourage people to use a language that will spread dependency and leave their own communities neglected and, perhaps worse, in confusion?

Scholars may argue that the use of English opens new areas of knowledge and interaction to African people. Of course it may, but it may nevertheless be misleading to conclude on this basis that English should displace mother tongue for use in formal contexts. This is for at least two reasons:

1. Research has shown that students who engage in their early primary education using mother-tongue end up with a better knowledge of English than do those who are from the beginning taught using English. As in many countries around the world — such as Germany, Holland, etc., English being extremely widely known and used does not mean that it has displaced mother tongue. My point in this article is not that English not be learned, but that it be learned as a second language and not the language either of education, of dominating the church, or of formal governance.
2. It may not be possible for African people to take advantage of new areas of knowledge and interaction that English provides if they do not first have a

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[6] Anthony Balcomb, 'Mission as Biography — Case Studies from the Eastern Cape Frontier', *Missionalia* 36/1 (2008), 29-45, 43.
[7] Kanyoro R.A. Musimbi, 'The Politics of the English Language in Kenya and Tanzania', in: Jenny Cheshire (ed.), *English Around the World: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, 403-404.

firm foundation in a language that is true to their own culture and context. International English itself is after all no more than "a thin wash, marvelously fluid, but without adequate base."[8]

Colonial reticence to spread knowledge of English did not prevent English's post-colonial spread. In much of Africa in post-colonial times it seems people have compensated for the above reticence by falling over one another in their eagerness to acquire English, so strong has been the association between the language and assumed intelligence, progress, success and wealth.

What motivated, and motivates, this rush for English, one may ask? Is it a desire to understand, and thus to improve one's life? Or is it primarily a desire to draw from an evident pool of wealth? Doing the latter may not be 'wrong', but it may add to dependency. If the understanding acquired is effective only when used to draw from English's originators, then it may be useless in their absence.

3. Is There a Correct Native-Speaker Version of English?

Is there a 'correct' version of English, Brutt-Griffler asks? She does not give a clear answer. Should mother-tongue speakers 'dictate terms of use' of English, she asks?[9] How can they, given the vast numbers of people these days learning English as a second language? But if they cannot, this means that English will be 'used' in ever more diverse ways. Referring back to Balcomb above — this means less and less certainty that anyone can accurately understand what they read or hear in English outside of mother-tongue English regions. If what is said in English cannot be understood by a fellow English-speaker, then why call it English in the first place? Perhaps the deception that one has understood can be even more harmful than the ignorance associated with not knowing?[10] Perhaps the definition of the category 'language' should be redefined, to include understanding acquired in the more recent field of pragmatics, which recognises the dependence of meaning on the context of language use?[11]

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[8] George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition 1998, 494.

[9] Brutt-Griffler, 5.

[10] That arises if people use a language you simply do not understand.

[11] Many scholars have written on this. A good example would be: Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd edition 1995.

McKay argues that to suggest that international English should be linked to native English is a serious fallacy; the 'native speaker fallacy'.[12] She proceeds to build a case for a strategy of English teaching on the basis that native English speakers should be given no advantage over other (non-native) English speaking teachers[13] — this despite the fact that popular wisdom clearly gives a preference to native speakers.[14]

The debate amongst socio-linguists regarding the need or otherwise for native-type fluency in international English is classically rooted in an exchange between Quirk and Kachru. Key parts of this exchange are recorded by Seidlhofer.[15] Quirk argues that the international standard of English must always be based on native speakers' proficiency, whereas Kachru insists that it need not be.

Interestingly, Quirk is a native English speaker, whereas Kachru is not. Apart from anything else, there are clearly vested interests at stake. Native English speakers' privileged international status is at stake on one side[16] and Kachru's (Indian) people's 'independence' on the other. Quirk finds it ridiculous that an English teacher should accept that it is OK to say '*informations*',[17] while Kachru considers it impractical to attempt to impose an 'international codification' on a language that has over 700 million users.[18]

A key as to on which side to fall in this debate is, or at least should be, clearly — the envisaged role of English. Kachru points out that conventions in the use of English in India (as elsewhere) are different from those in the native English speaking world, but are perfectly well understood amongst their communities of use.[19] The key question then — is whether international English contains a code that may be variously adjusted for use by many different people or nations, or whether one of its important roles is to bring mutual understanding internationally? Connected to this is the question of the extent to which a language being appropriated to and adapted by a particular people for

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[12] Sandra Lee McKay, *Teaching English as an International Language: rethinking goals and approaches*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, 44.

[13] McKay, 45.

[14] McKay, 41-42.

[15] Barbara Seidlhofer (ed.), *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003.

[16] Seidlhofer, 18.

[17] Seidlhofer, 17.

[18] Seidlhofer, 30.

[19] Seidlhofer, 23-26.

their own use reduces mutual comprehension between them and another people?

It has often been said that Western approaches to Africa tend to assume the existence of a *tableau rasa*. That is — those advocating Western education for Africa assume that prior knowledge extant in Africa will not interfere with what is introduced, or at least not to the degree that it may undermine the utility of what is introduced from the outside. Whether it is a theology, instructions in how to repair a bicycle, run an economy, bake a cake or love your husband — it is assumed that Western instructions in English to do the above will be as effective in bringing the desired result in Africa as they are in England.

It is perhaps ironic, but not as a result less true that indeed this is the position taken by many in the non-native English speaking world. Many will accept the legitimacy of the transfer of texts in English from the West to Africa, with little or no editing or alteration. I suggest that this occurs for at least three reasons:

1. To concede that one does not understand native-speakers' English is in Anglophone Africa tantamount to conceding that one is uneducated or foolish.

2. English texts generally come with some subsidy, and often the value of the subsidy is greater in the short term than any loss in utility that arises from limited comprehension of the language: Should an American donor's proposal not be clearly understood by African person A, it will usually be in the interests of A to attempt to conceal his limited comprehension, rather than to admit ignorance. An admission of ignorance can cause the donor to go to African person B who *will* conceal his ignorance. This is well illustrated by Makokha:

   > . . . a Luo would never admit ignorance of what he didn't know; such that when asked by a White (potential employer) if he knew ABC the Luo would say 'yes' to get employed. When during the employment he appeared not to know what he said he knew, he would say he had forgotten; & consequently his employer would tell him what to do or how to do it. Thus most Luos got employed and learned more from the Whites . . .[20]

3. A non-native English speaker may 'perfectly' understand the native speaker, according to their own thinking — even if this is different from the native-

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[20] Byrum Makokha, Personal communication, 10 August 2005. 'The Luo' are a Western Kenyan tribe.

English speaker's understanding. 'Why, then, is the African perception of the West so different from what is arguably the American reality' asks Maranz?[21]

But we cannot agree with McKay that English learners' preference for a native-speaking teacher is a fallacy, if the reason for learners' preference is a realisation (whether implicit or explicit) that a language is linked to a 'culture'/worldview or way of life. Many people who learn English around the world, at least in Africa, clearly see it as a means of access to the West, and not primarily a means of understanding themselves or their own contexts.[22] Allowing their English to adapt to local conditions would limit its utility in international communication.

4. Crossing Cultural Gaps Using Language

Of course gaps between 'cultures' are not physical gaps such as those between England and France, or between one person's home and that of another. To go from England to France, or to speak to one's neighbour down the road requires an interim step of movement from one place to another. If we extend this analogy to the 'gap' between cultures, then we should no longer expect one use of one language to cross cultural divides without some difficulty arising. It is actually a folly not to realise this — albeit perhaps a widespread, well meaning and 'much loved' folly. Gaps must be crossed. They do not just disappear.

As physical gaps cannot be crossed without movement (even if it is someone's voice that moves in the case of a loudspeaker or phone), neither can cultural gaps disappear as if by magic through the use of a so-called 'common language'. Lamin Sanneh, tells us that 'the matter of the overlap between the Christian revival and the revitalisation of indigenous culture remains one of the most undervalued themes in the study of Christian expansion, although in Africa and elsewhere it stares us in the face at almost every turn of the road.'[23] Sanneh ascribes this 'revitalisation of culture' in part at least to the fact that

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[21] David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa*, Dallas: SIL International 2001, 105.

[22] A case in point, according to Bambgose, '. . . all Kenyans were to speak *Kiswahili* at all times with fellow Kenyans.' The use of English in Kenya was to be reserved for communication with foreigners. (Bambgose, Ayo, *Language and the Nation: The Language Quest in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1991, 113.)

[23] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1989, 185.

Christianity is *translated*. Then, once translated, the people to whom it has been translated re-appropriate it for themselves. Thus God comes to speak 'their' language, and to do so of course in respect to *their* culture.

Someone speaking one language in one way[24] and making out that people of a vastly different background can clearly understand him, is comparable to someone standing talking in London UK, who assumes (without use of communication technology) that they are being heard in Toronto in Canada. As Americans are wrong to assume Brits to know the rules of American football, and the Brits wrong to assume Americans to know the rules of cricket, so it is wrong to assume one language to be mutually comprehensible across cultural divides. Rather, it may be much more helpful for comprehension for different contexts/cultures to have different languages.

One can add that because there are vast numbers of native English speakers in the globe, and they are some of the wealthiest and most powerful people the world has ever known (Americans, Brits etc.) — it is hard to deny them ownership of their language. Certainly in East Africa — English is modelled on the British version.[25]

It must be asked, because much that is found in meaning in language is culturally related, how can non-native English speakers from regions like Asia and Africa be expected to comprehend how English is used in the United Kingdom or America? As long as they cannot comprehend it, it seems that miscommunication (at depth) will continue to be the norm on the international scene.

Spontaneous translation is a widespread practice in many churches in East Africa and beyond. My reader may wonder — what is happening when such spontaneous translation is between an African language and English? Is this not promoting integration and the closing of cultural gaps? I have addressed this question in more detail elsewhere. The use by someone of a language that is rooted in a culture very different from their own will only be of limited help to hearers of that language because translation will be, let us say, imprecise. While certainly the gist of what is being said could be picked up, this kind of practice can be unhelpful if for example it results in listeners having a low valuation of the church or message concerned because of the translated form in which they received it, or their concluding that then they really do not need to make efforts to learn that language. Certainly in the case of Africa, and Kenya is a case in point, the strength and wide spread of English can discourage

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[24] I.e. someone who has only ever used their language amongst their own people.
[25] Musimbi, 403-404.

foreigners from learning African languages to such an extent that they as a result remain excluded from local insights that they would otherwise have acquired and that would in the long term enable closer relationship rather than rejection of what seems to be senseless or incomprehensible. Hence the wide spread of English can hinder sensible international mutual comprehension and appreciation and replace it with a lop-sided largely one-way communication which can (and I believe is) resulting in the isolation of many African communities through their not being 'comprehendible' by outsiders.

In East Africa English usually has to be learned by people in fee-charging formal educational institutions, at a financial cost. Indigenous languages, on the other hand, are learned for free.[26] This is because if English were not taught in a formal way with reference to 'correct' foreign meanings, grammar etc., contextual factors such as the presence of indigenous languages, a very un-English way of life, and very different religious traditions than those of native English speakers, would be bound to skew it away from it's standard international usages. The development of *Sheng* (a mixture of Kenyan languages and English used especially by youth in urban areas) is a case in point in Kenya. English must be learned as closely as possible to the way it is used in England or other native-English speaking regions of the world in order for it to give access to much coveted foreign benefits, such as western education. To maintain the 'purity' of English requires constant inputs from the native English speaking world including books, study in foreign (native-English speaking) universities, native-English teachers coming on visits, and so on. If, as in much of Africa, European languages are also official languages and the languages of education, then the very languages used by African governments to run their affairs can only be sustained with a great deal of foreign finance. Expensive foreign products, such as time spent in Western universities and books written outside of the region, must constantly be spread liberally around the national educational and government system just to maintain mutual comprehensibility within one's country (and of course with the outside). In fact the very purpose of the educational system almost from beginning to end in many African states can be said to be to acquire knowledge of English, which as far as possible is aligned to that of the native English speaking world. This is a difficult project to achieve. One wonders whether such enormous efforts might not be better expended at enhancing self-understanding and indigenous development — of church and of country.

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[26] See quote above by Maina.

Few people would completely deny that cultural differences limit mutual comprehension even if the language used is 'common'. But perhaps the difficulties in inter-cultural communication in practice arise because it is often not wise for recipients of donor funds to concede that understanding is limited. (See above.) This affects all levels of society — from casual acquaintances and meetings to advanced institutions like universities using English outside of the Western world.[27] The language problem is one of economics, or even survival. That is — it may be beneficial in the interests of economic advance or survival for non-Western countries to stupefy[28] their people and rely on Western economies, rather than enlighten them in their own languages, but at the same time impoverish them.

An underlying assumption made by those who take English as being understood and used without difficulty outside of the native English speaking world, is that the 'culture'/way of life is much the same at both ends. Understanding and utilising English then is a matter of simply substituting one set of 'codes' for another, and life goes on. But what if instead the very foundations of social and intellectual life are vastly different, if there is no comparable structure on which introduced English can be pegged? Then there is no choice than either to use 'correct' English that hangs in the ether, or to transform English beyond the comprehension of its original native speakers.

5. English in the Globalising World

Ever advancing computer and communications capability is constantly increasing the capacity of Western countries to exert control beyond their borders and run and manage things on behalf of other nations. This raises questions of accountability and morality. The question of accountability is a political question. Democracy is far from being a proven political system outside of the West. 'Beneficiaries' of the international actions of the world's powerful democracies (Germany, USA, UK etc.) do not have a representation in those democracies. That is, nations like the UK can even in today's ever globalising world

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[27] While not all of the Western world is made up of native English language speakers, the cultural gaps between countries like Germany and Spain relative to England or America may be small enough to justify the use of English for them in a way that is not true for the Third World.

[28] See Birgit Brock-Utne, 'The Adoption of the Western Paradigm of Bilingual Teaching — Why Does it not Fit the African Situation?', in; Birgit Brock-Utne and Prah Kwesi Kwaa (eds.), *Multilingualism — An African Advantage. A Paradigm Shift in African Languages of Instruction Polices*, Cape Town: CASAS 2010, 18-51.

continue to run their policies in respect to their native populations with little consideration regarding the impact they may be having beyond their shores. Further discussion on issues such as that of 'world government' go beyond the scope of this article, but it should be clear that non-native English speaking countries who are in the businesses of importing languages and ways of thinking, do so with little influence over or say over what they are making themselves subject to.

The moral questions are often interpreted in the West as 'imperatives'. The bread and butter of charitable promotion at many levels are of this ilk. From the smallest charities, to government driven projects, the arguments are very similar, regarding a 'moral obligation in helping underdeveloped nations'.[29] Indeed the West *can* in the short term save lives and improve the quality of lives. But is this a sufficient motivation for action? What of the way doing such constantly empowers the donors . . . ? What of the long term? What of God's will? If donor policies are a great thing, why did Jesus not get involved in fundraising and making donations to poor nations? Surely he knew there were many poor, and surely he 'could' have done this had he wanted to?

A comparison with complex issues within Western societies might cloud the simplicity of the scene: Should alcohol be outlawed (in the West)? Should adulterers be considered criminals? Should people be forced to stop smoking? Should governments guarantee that lazy people have the same income as hardworking people? Should governments intervene in unhappy marriages? How should outsiders interfere in situations with 'sad' children? The complexity of these kinds of issues, are recognised by the West in its dealings with its own people. But are they recognised when it looks beyond its borders? How long can the West go on ignoring the complexity of the circumstances in which it involves itself, simply by invoking the 'moral imperative' argument mentioned above?

Certain approaches and issues brought by the West are, I think, particularly delicate. Promoting the use of condoms is one — that may be increasing and not reducing sexual immorality and thereby the risk of infection by venereal diseases such as AIDS; advocating certain types of sex education in schools similarly. Making credit available in a way that puts people into a debt and can loose them their assets, introduces risk. Using the threat of cutting donor funds should corporal punishment in schools continue can result in riots in schools

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[29] Itchybrains, 'Lowering Mortality Rates in Third-World Countries', website *Itchy Brains Central*, http://www.itchybrainscentral.com/mortality-rates-third-world.html, accessed 7 October 2009.

as occurred in Kenya in 2001.[30] Promoting the use of artificial fertilisers if they result in reduced soil fertility when there are no fertilisers available can be damaging to productivity in the long term. Forcing schools to use English forestalls the possibility of local education systems developing on the basis of indigenous languages and wisdom. Providing subsidised computers and education in their use, makes businesses dependent on outside infrastructure for their basic book-keeping. Offering to subsidise the care of needy children using outside money challenges parental discipline, and so on.

Issues such as the above would be more straightforward if those deciding for or against were familiar with local conditions and languages. Locals, however, are generally faced with a largely predetermined choice: either go along with Western ideas and get funded, or don't and get nothing.[31] There are many incentives for local people to make decisions that may not be contextually appropriate.

As long as governments and educational systems in Africa operate using English which has to be constantly imported at great expense, it should be clear that the same countries' societies and economies remain grossly dependent on the native English speaking world. It cannot be otherwise. The money they receive from (say) the UK, they use to promote a system based on UK English, i.e. on perpetuating their dependency on the UK. Putting English at the helm is a means of drawing on Western charity, and not of encouraging indigenously rooted growth and change.

Maintaining European languages as 'official' languages in African states is clearly an expensive exercise in terms of both money and time. Children spend years and years acquiring European linguistic skills. In those years they are precluded from learning or doing other things (i.e. there is an opportunity cost to the acquisition of English). Once learned, the knowledge they have is of relatively little relevance to their own (African) context, as it is rooted in what is foreign. The vast majority of African people continue to rely on their own languages and customs for the purposes of day to day life. Could those years of expensively learning 'the foreign' be better utilised trying to understand and build upon one's own way of life? Education in Kenya is oriented to interaction with foreigners.[32] That is not for a small specialised corps — but for the whole

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[30]　Immediately after a media announcement that corporal punishment in schools was prohibited in 2001, school strikes started breaking out in different parts of Kenya.

[31]　A choice that is especially acute in a context of poverty.

[32]　Musimbi, 405.

population all round the country! This is the very nature of the African educational system; it is dependency generating.

Should African (or other) countries continue their use of English but allow it to differ more and more from that of the native-English speaking world? This will itself bring additional issues of mutual misunderstanding. It is almost unthinkable that this should or even could be encouraged in today's globalising world. McKay is wrong. Freeing English from its moorings in the native English speaking world is not viable. Popularly it meets much opposition in places like Singapore with *Singlish*[33] and East Africa with *Sheng*.[34] Globalisation confirms that the value of English is in knowing a version of English that resembles as closely as possible that of native speakers. Only thus can pragmatic rules of usage be appropriately acquired, if international exchanges are not going to simply be a cacophony of chaos. But this being the case leaves us with the problem that native English speaking peoples and countries will remain extraordinarily privileged if they are the ones holding the standard of communication for the rest of the globe; the rest of the globe will remain in a position of unhealthy dependence on them.

To suppose that the existence of an international language can in some simple way just enable smooth inter-cultural communication, is to suppose what is impossible by choosing to ignore differences that are very real. That is not to say that there should not be any international language(s). But it is to say — that it can be sheer folly for one country to attempt to adopt the language of another as its own language of instruction in education and/or as a means for conducting official internal communication.[35] Support rendered to such policies by international and other bodies should be recognised for what it is — immoral.

6. International English as Subversive

African people being required to learn European languages and cultures prevents them from developing their own — so that African people's own networks often remain rooted in 'poverty'. Their economies not being able to support their own educational systems, means that education has to be done using foreign aid. While African people *do* contribute to the international

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[33] McKay, 55.

[34] Clara Momanyi, "The Effects of 'Sheng' in the Teaching of Kiswahili in Kenyan Schools", *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2/8 (2009), 127-138.

[35] That many African countries are attempting to do.

system, their peculiar background (above) often limits the effectiveness of their contribution. Thus donor communities are locked into a constant cycle of funding that which ensures that every emerging generation of African people be as incompetent as the prior generation in managing their own affairs. That is dependency, with a capital D!

Missiologists often refer to the importance of the use of the 'heart language' in spreading the gospel.[36] When European languages have official status this results in a peculiar separation; key life functions occurring in English (the language used in mission schools and even theological colleges), but a select set of 'spiritual truths' being understood in the 'heart language'. I suggest that this can be an unhelpful dualism that denies the basic Biblical unity between body and soul. Yes, the heart language should be used in spreading the gospel, but why confine it to this purpose?

One reason colonialists limited their subjects' access to English was because such access was often subversive to the wider colonial project. It was causing the setting up of 'dependencies' (like someone illegally tapping into an electrical system that would sap the strength of the mother-body). I suggest that the same applies to the development project today — although we have seen above that it can also supplement the prosperity of the mother body by means of dubious morality. Some of that subversion is known as corruption. The use of English in mission and development projects in much of Africa, results in projects being set up with major components of dependence on the West. This would *not* apply to anything like the same extent if English was used only for international communications, or if African countries could bend English to their own use. But they are not free to so change English, and less and less so in the globalising world. Almost universally — Western languages are not only used for international communication in Africa, they are the very basis of government, education and higher levels of business.

7. The Place of the Church with Respect to International Languages

The question now arises, of the position of the church in all this. Is it appropriate for the church to become, or to remain a part of the 'international' system described above? Or is the church to be of the people and for the people in a given locality?

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[36] Rick Brown, 'Language Matters like Bright Sunlight: The Benefit of Communicating in Heart Language', *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26/2 (2009), 85-88.

A widely observed reality in much of Africa today, is that of a church that is increasingly addicted to outside Western dependency. This is illustrated by enormous growth in a Pentecostal movement[37] that is also associated with the proclamation of a prosperity[38] that clearly is often not arising from within the means of the Africans themselves.[39] A student of Kima International School of Theology recently reported to me that Kisumu Pentecostal church services function entirely in English, but that indigenous languages including Swahili dominate informal talk after the service.[40] The use of English is not intended to assist people's understanding, but to communicate with a God whose character is European and whose generosity is expressed in gifts from Westerners. Such is in my experience widely the case today; Pentecostal churches with this kind of philosophy are burgeoning in size on the basis of 'promises' of blessing associated with gifts from outside of the African continent.

If the church is no different from other 'formal' networks in post-colonial Africa, then it will remain a means by which the West influences and controls the continent, and a means for Africans to acquire things from the West. This will mean that financially, linguistically, and in other ways the church will be more and more dependent on the West. As a reaction to such exploitive dependence, it will mean that the African church will tend to be corrupt. It will mean also that the African church will not be able to become truly 'indigenous'.

A missionary is not usually in a position to reverse an African country's linguistic policy. But, he or she may be able to provide support to an indigenous movement. For reasons mentioned above, and in addition for many reasons only eluded to above, it is important for a missionary to consider these language issues very seriously. A Western missionary who chooses to operate entirely using English (or other European languages) in communicating with African people, and who in the course of such relationship will amongst other

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[37] PewResearchCenter, 'Overview: Pentecostalism in Africa', website *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, http://pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Overview-Pentecostalism-in-Africa.aspx, accessed 1 September 2011.

[38] Allan Anderson, 'Evangelism and the Growth of Pentecostalism in Africa', website of the *University of Birmingham*, http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism_and_the_growth_of_pen.htm, accessed 1 September 2011.

[39] As Pentecostal churches in cities around the world people with 'set goals for themselves that are utterly unattainable by normal human standards [yet]...they often times attain these goals' (Timothy Sato, 'Outrageous Vision: a conversation with Donald Miller about global Pentecostalism', *Christianity Today* (November/December 2002), website http://www.christianityody.com/bc/2002/006/18.31.html, accessed 23 February 2003).

[40] Anonymous, personal communication, 2009.

things be dispensing resources from the West, ought to realise that he/she is encouraging a profound incompetence and perpetuating unhealthy dependency; much better to encourage people to excel in their own languages, *especially in the church*.

Brutt-Griffler tells us that in colonial times 'vernacular education was intentionally severely constricted in scope'.[41] It is in vernacular education that missionaries could do well to invest their efforts. Language development arises largely from language use. Western missionaries would do well to learn and use African languages in their ministries.

There are few other means to create dependence as effective as giving someone something on which they will become dependent for their very existence, the very perpetuation of which requires consistent expensive inputs from the original donor. Making others dependent on a language that they cannot own or control is a trap; and a trap that millions of African people find themselves in. I hope that Christian missionaries may help to spear-head a way out of this trap; at least for the work of the Gospel not to be so encumbered.

8. Conclusion

The continued use of European languages in governing African countries and the African church has here been found to contribute to dependency, and to preventing truly indigenous development from occurring. This article suggests that in order to attempt to alleviate this situation and to encourage the development of a truly Christian indigenous church, some (Western) missionaries make efforts to operate in indigenous languages.

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41 Brutt-Griffler, 78.