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Language and Development in Africa

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Abstract

Development in Africa is often defined in technocratic terms that do not take language into account. This is most unfortunate for Africa is beset by problems of development that are language-related. This paper argues that real development is not possible in Africa without the integration of national languages and the full participation of all the forces of the nations concerned. Reliance and dependency on superimposed international languages to achieve development over the last three decades has proven to be a failure. Instead of leading to national unity, this attitude has significantly contributed to the socio-economic and political instability of most African countries. The people of Africa are the ones who will make it, or fail to make it, a developed continent. It would be most unwise to force upon them foreign linguistic and cultural models divorced from local realities that would betray their genius.

Area of study: Sociolinguistics (Language planning, functional literacy).

Language Groups in the Ivory Coast
(Niger-Kordofanian family)

Language Groups	Kwa (mideast/ southeast)	Kru (west/ southwest)	Mandé (northwest)	Gur (northeast)
Languages	Baulé	Bété	Dyula	Sénoufo
	Agni	Dida	Yakuba	Kulango
	Appollo	Guéré	Gouro	Teen
	Attié	Wobé	Malinké	Lobi
	Abbey	Nyabua	Maho	Other Gur
	Krobou	Vata	Other Mandé	
	Other Kwa	Other Kru		

Table 1: The Kwa Language Group

	Baoulé	Agni	Appollo/Nzema	Krobou
1	kùn	kʋn (ɛkʋn)	ɛkɔn	(ɛn)kɔn
2	nnyɔn	nnyuan	nnyuan	ɛ nnyɔn
3	nsàn	nsan	nsan	ɛ sán
4	nnán	nnan	nnan	ɛ nnán
5	nnún	nnun	nnun	ɛ nnùn
6	nsián	nsian	nsian	ɛ nsiɛn
7	nsô	nsʋ	nsun	ɛ nsó
8	nmɔɔwɛ	mɔɔvɛ	mɔɔvɛ	mɔkɔwɛ
9	ngwɔlàn	ngvanɔan	ngvanɔan	ngwɔrán
10	blú	bulu	bulu	bru

Tables 2 and 3: The Kru Language Group

	Guéré	Wobé	Nyabwa
1	doo	too	do
2	'sɔɔn	'sɔɔn	'sɔn
3	taan	taan	tan
4	nyɛ	nyɛn	nyɛ
5	mm"	mm"	muu
6	meo"-	melo"	mɛɛlo
7	mɛsɔn	mɛsɔn	mɛɛsɔn
8	mehan	mɛnan	mɛɛtan
9	mɛnyɛn	mɛnyɛn	mɛɛnyɛ
10	pue	pue	bue

	Bété	Dida	Vata
1	bhlv	bhlo	bhlö
2	"sɔ	'sɔ	'sɔ
3	'ta	taa	ta
4	mvana	mɔɔna	mvɔna
5	'gbɪ	gbɪ	gbɪ
6	'ngbuplv	gbeplo	gbɪflö
7	ngbisɔ	gbɔsɔ	gbvɔsɔ
8	gbvata	gbata	gbɔfɔta
9	ngbimvana	pɛɛna	ɛnv'gbienu
10	'kvgba	kogba	kvgba

Tables 4 and 5: The Mande Language Group

	Dyula/Malinke-Dyula	Mahou/Gyo
1	kélen	kéen
2	flà	fya
3	sàba	sawa
4	nàani	naani
5	looru	looru
6	wɔɔɔɔ	wɔɔɔɔ
7	wólónflà	woonvya
8	ségi	sěnyín
9	kɔnɔntɔ	kɔɔndɔn
10	tán	tan

	Yacouba	Toura
1	do	do
2	plɛ	pulɛ
3	yaaga	yàka
4	yiisie	yisɛ
5	"soodhu	sóólu
6	"soado	sâado
7	'sla-plɛ	sâapulɛ
8	"saaga	sâaka
9	'setsie	soisɛ
10	kɔng do	buu

Table 6: English versus German

	English	German
1	one	eins
2	two	zwei
3	three	drei
4	four	vier
5	five	fünf
6	six	sechs
7	seven	sieben
8	eight	acht
9	nine	neun
10	ten	zehn

Table 7: French versus Spanish versus Italian

	French	Spanish	Italian
1	un	uno	uno
2	deux	dos	due
3	trois	tres	tre
4	quatre	quatro	quattro
5	cing	cinquo	cinque
6	six	seis	sei
7	sept	siete	sette
8	huit	ocho	otto
9	neuf	nueve	nove
10	dix	diez	dieci

An Outline of the Kru Languages
(adapted from Marchese 1979)

I. Eastern Kru

1. Bété Complex
 - a. Western Bété
 - b. Eastern Bété
Kouya
 - c. ?Godié
2. Dida Complex
 - a. Western Dida
 - b. Eastern Dida
 - c. ?Neyo
3. Kwadia
4.
 - a. ?Bakwé
 - b. ?Wané

II. Western Kru

1. Grebo Complex
 - a. ?Ivorian
Tepo-Plapo
Pié
 - b. ?Liberian
Wedebo
Glebo
Jabo
Gedebo
Nitiabo
Fopo
Cedepo
 - c. ?Oubi-Glio
2. Guéré Complex (We)
 - a. Nyabua-Nyédebua
 - b. Wobé-Guéré-Krahn
 - c. *Daho-Doo*
3.
 - a. Bassa
 - b. Gbii
 - c. Dewoin
4. Klao

III Isolates

1. Kuwaa
2. Aizi
3. Seme

