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Language and the development of Kenya

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Abstract

This paper looks at the negative exploitation of Kenya's linguistic diversity and its impact on her development. It aims at making advocacy for the use of her multilingual situation as a resource for positive development. It also advocates for equal provision of the preferred language of education by the Kenyan nation in order to fully benefit from her linguistic situation. The study is based on the social psychology theory of frustration, aggression and displacement as proposed by Dollard *et al.* (1939) and Bernstein's (1973) theory of language advantage and disadvantage. Data was provided by 20 High school teachers and 15 ordinary Kenyan citizens. Findings show that negative use of Kenya's linguistic diversity is detrimental to her social, cultural, economic and political development. Likewise, inequitable provision of the language of education has left a majority dissatisfied; hence creating a society that is stratified based on linguistic affiliation. The findings of this study are meant to influence Kenya into using her linguistic diversity for positive development.

Keywords: Education, development, language policy and practice, conflict, multilingualism

1. Introduction

There is a relationship between the linguistic situation of a nation and its social, economic and political development. For Kenya, the transformation that has taken place in the past and in the present is partly attributed to her language situation, policy and practice. This is evident in her social, economic and political performance, which is wanting. According to Colmas (1992: 26) [2], "Multilingualism usually coincides with a low level of economic development...there is a correlation between linguistic multiplicity and economic poverty".

Colman's view is not a constant; it all depends on how a nation handles its linguistic multiplicity. It is possible for a nation to use its linguistic diversity for positive transformation, just as it can be used for negative transformation. The opposite is also true, as much as it is believed that linguistic homogeneity triggers development, it does not follow automatically without a deliberate move; and the best example to give is that of Rwanda; which has only two languages and yet it is not as developed as other nations with the same linguistic composition. In other words, it is not so much about what is on the ground in terms of linguistic situation but so much about how the existing linguistic situation is handled.

Over the years, multilingual nations have sought to establish a common language for efficient administrative purpose. This at one time was the desire for the pre-independent government in Kenya; and it has been the desire for independent Kenya. To achieve this, the colonial government championed their own linguistic code; that is, English, over the various indigenous languages. It was assumed that this language could be used for integration. Interestingly, this was carried over by independent Kenya, where English is the preferred language. This is despite the undertones of diversity that have kept creeping onto the surface, demanding for space and recognition. The outcome of this has been the creation of a society with skewed social, economic and political development (which has resulted from unequal provision of the preferred code) as well as recurrent ethnic conflicts.

It is true that the 21st C has seen Kenya improve her education system, other social services as well as the economic front (KNBS 2016) [4]. However, the fact that the code behind this transformation has been foreign and not indigenous has had negative implication. Similarly, it is true that the use of English, together with Kiswahili has transformed Kenya into a

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'nation state'. However, the reality on the ground cannot be underscored as there are competing languages seeking for recognition and power. Consequently, there is perpetual conflict among speakers of different languages. Furthermore, Kiswahili as Kenya's language of integration has done little to unite Kenyans who constantly compete for dominance and for the few available resources. Thus in practice, the preferred languages have not served the intended purpose.

Given the existing ethnic animosity among Kenyans, proposing one indigenous language out of the many as the language of integration, national cohesion as well as social-economic ascendancy is next to impossible. Currently in the Kenyan context, it is easier to disintegrate further based on ethnic affiliation than to integrate. This is because most Kenyans treasure in their ethnicity rather than in nationality.

In almost all institutions of learning in Kenya, focus has been on reviewing the curricular in order to address the daily social, economic and political challenges that are facing the nation. Specifically, many community-based programs have been integrated into the curricular. The ultimate objective has been to prepare the product of the Kenyan education system that is able to deal with the prevailing challenges. However, despite the presumed advantage that comes with such a move, there is a contradiction in that the language policy encourages the use of English against the indigenous Kenyan languages that are more suited for the implementation of that which is stipulated in the curricular, especially at the grass root level. This explains why most Kenyan learners gain so much knowledge but they are unable to disseminate; that is, there is disconnect between the two. The same is observed at the national level, where good policies are formulated but very little is implemented because of either non-communication or total communication handicap. There is need for policy makers to think of how such policies can be fully implemented for the good of the nation. Part of the solution lies in the use of the 'right' linguistic code that is understood by all, especially the masses.

Kenya's language practice can be traced back to the colonial era. The colonial government in Kenya emphasized the theory of one state, one language; and this perfectly worked for them. To them, multilingualism and the freedom that comes with it was seen as a threat to the integrity of the state. Consequently, they sought to establish one language for unification purpose. Given the dispensation, that was a good idea. However, after independence, Kenya should have made an effort to acknowledge multilingualism by allowing indigenous languages to function freely and in all domains; especially those that matter most. Contrary, this has never happened because of fear of ethnic conflict that is seen as a threat to unity among the diverse ethnic groups. This however was an assumption that has been disapproved over time. Thus, as it is, ethnicity in Kenya is rife and Kenyan citizens are just as sensitive to their ethnicity as they were few years just after independence.

2. Research Objectives

This paper seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i) Make explicit the impact of negative exploitation of Kenya's linguistic situation on her development.
- ii) Advocate for the use of Kenya's linguistic diversity as a resource for development.

- iii) Advocate for equal provision of the preferred language of education by the Kenyan nation for sustained development

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper is based on two theories; the social psychology theory of frustration, aggression and displacement as proposed by Dollard *et al* (1939) ^[3] and Bernstein's theory of language advantage and disadvantage.

The social psychology theory of frustration, aggression and displacement attempts to explain why people scapegoat and cause violence. According to Dollard *et al*. (1939) ^[3], the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and on the other hand, the existence of frustrations always leads to some form of aggression. For illustration, these scholars give examples of:

- i) The many denials of gratifications which suffered during childhood that accumulates to intense juvenile frustration.
- ii) The struggle of the working class that builds up to levels at which it incites revolution and
- iii) In the disadvantaged minorities, the instigation to aggression grows with every frustration, which ultimately leads to violence.

In this theory, it is believed that aggression is a result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal. Thus, when one feels that their goal is not being met, they turn aggressive because their expectation is not met. It is argued in the theory that frustration is caused by either i) people not having enough or ii) people having enough to survive but have less than those around them. For Dollard *et al*. (1939) ^[3], there is a relationship between frustration and aggression. Further, these scholars suggest that sometimes aggression is displaced from the source of frustration to someone else. Such displaced aggression is said to occur when the person provoked is unable to retaliate and instead aggresses against an innocent target; the most vulnerable, who is unable to retaliate. Vasquez, *et al* (2010) ^[6] discusses three factors that inhibit aggression against the original instigator and these are:

- i) The unavailability of the provoking individual.
- ii) Intangible instigator.
- iii) Fear of retaliation from the instigator.

In this paper, the theory of frustration, aggression and displacement is used to show how Kenyans use their ethnic differences as a scapegoat to rise against each other in violence because of hidden frustrations whose basis is in the unmet social, economic and political expectations. Because of such frustrations, they become aggressive to wrong targets just because they are not able to hit back to those that are responsible for their frustration. More often than not, it is the innocent and the most vulnerable that suffers the consequences of such frustrations. Displaced anger is directed to innocent groups because for one, the aggressors are unable to reach the instigator; two, the targeted groups are considered as being beneficiaries of the existing system; and three, they are seen as the 'other'/ the 'out-group'. Consequently, Kenya's linguistic diversity is used as a tool for aggression against those that are perceived as not being 'one of us'/ the 'a part of syndrome', as much as the real issues that cause frustration have nothing to do with their linguistic background. Such displaced frustration has

negatively affected the development of the nation because so much time, energy and resources are spent on mitigation. Bernstein's theory on the other hand is exemplified through restricted and elaborated codes. According to Bernstein, the working class has access to the restricted language code alone, while middle class has access to an elaborated code. In the restricted code "The meanings are likely to be concrete, descriptive or narrative rather than analytical or abstract" (Bernstein, 1971: 128) ^[1]. Bernstein claims that the school is based on the elaborated code, in that it transmits "de-contextualized" and "universalistic" meanings. This requirement puts working class students at a disadvantage because of the gap between their code and that of the school. To Bernstein, the reason why this happens is because one who uses the elaborated code has a wide range to choose from as compared to one who makes use of the restricted code. For the later, they conceptualize less; thus, they have difficulty in dealing with abstract concepts, they do not perform well in languages as well as in the other subjects. This is mainly because of the fact that the type of code that is used in school differs from the one that is used at home. This situation, coupled with the inadequacies (in terms of resources) as well as the overcrowded classes makes it difficult for such children to succeed in education.

Bernstein's theory of language codes is used in this paper to show how academic performance in the Kenyan situation is linked to the distribution, quality and the use of the language of instruction. The theory is used to explain the prevailing situation in schools (Primary and Secondary), where stratification in Kenyan education system is partly attributed to the language of instruction. Most children, especially from poor rural homes in Kenya are disadvantaged in school because of the 'type' of code that is used as the medium of instruction. Since teaching is a social event that is carried out in a social context, the environment in which it is done has implications on the teacher's knowledge (that is context bound) in terms of what they disseminate and how they do this. In the Kenyan situation, though teachers undergo the same training, the way they apply the knowledge and skill which they possess is determined by the characteristics of the learners they encounter. This explains why poor students in 'poor schools' (those that have insufficient resources; that is, human, capital and infrastructure) underperform not only in languages but also in other subjects (despite the fact that they are taught by teachers who have undergone the same training), since competence in the language of instruction has implications on the learner's overall academic performance.

Bernstein's theory helps to explain how English as the medium of instruction in Kenya is 'not offered in the same way' in the sense that the quality of this code differs depending on where and to whom it is offered. Unlike in National and Private schools, where the 'right' code is used, in an effective manner and in an appropriate learning environment, the opposite happens in Public rural schools. Such deficiency is reflected in the learners' performance. Since such learners do not succeed in their academics, most of them end up not making it in life. This being the case, active participation of such disadvantaged groups (who are the majority) in national development is curtailed. This is indication that Kenya's language policy favors the privileged few but to the majority, it is to their disadvantage. So, the language situation, policy and practice in Kenya have worked against her development.

4. Methodology

This paper adopts a descriptive design. Data is drawn from 35 informants, 20 of them being High school teachers, while the remaining 15 are ordinary Kenyan citizens. For the 20 teachers, 10 of them are drawn from two secondary schools, a Private and a National school (from Nakuru and Nairobi county respectively), while the remaining 10 teachers are from two rural secondary schools (from Trans-Nzoia and West Pokot County). The other 15 informants are ordinary citizens from Uasin Gishu County, who are in two categories, 8 of them are literate while the other 7 are illiterate. This literacy is from the Western perspective; where being literate means having received Western education and in English. This contrasts with the traditional definition of literacy, where "...literacy is the ability to read and write simple sentences of everyday life in any language" (MoEST, 2015: 107) ^[5].

The reason as to why two groups (the literate and the illiterate) of informants were used was to get their views on the language of education and also to get the general view on language policy and practice in Kenya. These informants were asked about what they thought about the Kenyan language situation, policy and practice; they were also asked about the advantages and the disadvantages that arise from Kenya's language policy and practice and what they thought Kenya needed to do.

With regard to teachers, questions asked include: the type of students that they admit to Form One; that is, their performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE); how the language curriculum was offered, the students' attitude towards English which is a taught subject as well as the language of instruction, the students' general performance, not just in English language but also in the other subjects, the challenges that both students and teachers encountered in using English as the language of instruction and finally, their views on the language of instruction in Kenya. The analysis of the information provided by the teachers is given in the section that follows.

From the information provided by the two groups; that is, the teachers in the two different learning environments, it is evident that the language policy and practice (and specifically, the language of education) in Kenya favors a few but for the majority, it is a disadvantage. The disadvantaged group ends up not making it in life. This happens to be a cycle that runs through generations. Data from the second group; that is, the literate and the illiterate citizens showed how multilingualism is used as a tool for conflict and animosity in Kenya and how language practices favors a few in the society. This is discussed in the section that follows.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Implication of Kenya's Language Policy and Practice on Development

The language situation and the policy that a nation adapts determine the direction that it takes with regard to its development. Looking at nations the world over, one is able to link the linguistic situation, the policy put in place and the far that the nation has gone in terms of development. To a big extent, it is true that those nations that have embraced their own mother tongues have made noticeable strides in development. This is more so if their languages are 'powerful' or 'developed' (in the sense that they are written, they are used generally and they are associated with social

and economic power). The reverse seems true for those nations that depend on foreign languages for their socio-economic development. This is the case with Kenya, where reliance on English (as the language of socio-economic development), which is offered 'selectively' has not significantly contributed to her development. Likewise, the negative exploitation of her linguistic diversity has had negative implication on her transformation; that is, it has contributed to the current underdevelopment of the nation.

During the pre-independence period, the best strategy used for administration and control was the divide and rule. This strategy ensured that different speech communities were kept apart. Specifically, speech communities were classified through the creation of tribal boundaries, which fueled constant conflict because of the scramble over resources, which they all assumed were theirs. Consequently, the seeds of discontent were planted then and the same, as illustrated by the informants has been carried over by independent Kenya; where each speech community has what it calls 'home' and 'our own'. In other words, in independent Kenya, languages are named, counted and identified with specific groups of people who inhabit specific regions and anybody who does not 'belong' to the same is seen as an outsider, who is looked at differently and/or treated with suspicion. This has had negative implications on the nation as a whole. For instance, there is constant waste of energy that is spent on trivial matters, waste of time that is spent on resolving conflicts amongst speech communities, loss of lives that is triggered by social, economic and political conflicts that usually take a linguistic angle; and non-corporation amongst speech communities, which is a setback to national development. This has also contributed to skewed development, where members from different speech communities work to benefit those of their own and not necessarily for the benefit of the entire nation.

The pre-independent government in Kenya didn't value much the indigenous languages and as such they did very little to promote them. Contrary, they promoted their own language and used it as a means of social, economic and political control. With the dawn of independence, the post colonial governments in Kenya should have taken a different approach to language policy and practice. However, the same trend has continued over the years with the few privileged using the same tool (English) as the vehicle for social, economic and political control. It is the few who have access to this linguistic system that enjoy the social, economic and political benefits of independent Kenya. Just as did her predecessor, Independent Kenya has done very little to promote the indigenous languages. There seem to be two main reasons for this; first, these languages lack social, economic and political power (a situation that is within their powers to ensure that they do have) and second, there is fear of conflict arising amongst speakers of competing linguistic systems if any or a few of them are promoted. This has not helped either as the existing diversified linguistic situation has perpetually been used as the basis for conflict, even when the root of the problem is non-linguistic in nature. Displaced frustration by the victims causes anger, which manifests itself through ethnic violence. This has continually worked against the development of the nation.

As argued by the informants, the need for security has also contributed to the current state, where individuals seek to identify more with their speech communities in which they

feel safe. In other words, there is 'perceived security' that is offered by individual speech communities. This perception has negatively affected the development of the nation as people are not ready to come out and co-operate for the sake of national building. Thus, language is used as a means of individual and communal security against the wholesome development of the nation.

Although it is appreciated that modernization and urbanization have accelerated social, economic and political development in the 21st Century, from the information gathered, there are a few exceptions. This is observed in the domain of language, which is central to development. The unequal and selective provision (of the preferred linguistic code especially in education) that has been adapted in Kenya since independence, where as much as the 'same' code is offered, the 'same' is 'different' in many ways (especially with regard to quantity and quality) has had negative implications on national development. This is seen in increased social segregation amongst citizens (as those that are in possession of the preferred linguistic form belong to a class different from the rest), which is partly as a result of what language has done and what has been done by the use of language. The same is reflected in development; both at individual and national level; where it is skewed towards one direction, with those whose literacy level is high (literacy in the sense that they have received an education not just in English but the right quality and quantity of the same) being more advantaged than those whose literacy level is either low or is missing all the same. Likewise, when it comes to involvement in national development, it is the same group (the advantaged) that largely participates and yet for a nation to have sustained development, all citizens must be involved. Currently, a high percentage of the citizens do not actively take part in national development mainly because they have not had 'opportunity', the opportunity that comes through education in the 'right' code. 'Selective provision' (this is despite the fact that primary education in Kenya is 'free' for all) of English in education has contributed to marginal social-economic development in the nation.

To a majority of the teachers interviewed, illiteracy was never a problem before independence since most Kenyans were 'illiterate' (illiterate in the Western sense) and as such, equality was never an issue. The traditional African education was provided equitably, all had access to knowledge and as such, all participated in the development of the nation (though not development in the Western sense). Presently, the model of development that exists in Kenya has come mainly from the West (and to a lesser extent, from the East). With the birth of the new era of science and technology, development in the traditional African sense has been ignored and instead, development is now defined in terms of industrialization, whose basis is the 'English form of education', where being educated means receiving an education in English language. This is contrary to the indigenous definition of development that was based on indigenous knowledge, language and culture that cut across the board. In other words, the problem of inequality only came during the colonial and post-colonial period, when part of the society became 'literate'. Those that are 'literate', with the right linguistic code take their children to better schools, where they have access to the best academic tool (English) that is not accessible to the less fortunate. Language is therefore used to 'place' people where they

'ought' to belong; it is of advantage to some and a disadvantage to others. The prevailing scenario has negatively impacted on the development of the nation.

Despite the fact that most Kenyans have embraced English language because of its social and economic value, (the value that they do not see in their indigenous languages since they cannot use them in the same capacity as English), the truth is that Kenya's indigenous languages are just as important and they have the capacity to function positively for the development of the nation. All that needs to be done is for the users to give their languages value because this 'value' is not linguistic; that is, it is not inherent in the language. What makes a language to be considered as valuable or not depends on what their users do to it and with it, which is non-linguistic. This paper proposes that instead of Kenyans using their linguistic diversity destructively (for separatism and conflict with perceived foes), they need to take advantage of the existing linguistic situation for positive development of the nation. To be effective in this, the starting point is in making their languages 'valuable' as others are.

Similarly, the choice by Kenya to impress English has had a negative impact on the nation's indigenous culture. As it is, some of Kenya's indigenous languages (and cultures) are on the verge of disappearing. This, as observed has been caused by the shift of a majority of the native speakers of these languages to either Kiswahili or English, which are perceived as being more prestigious as they offer social-economic advantage. This is particularly so among the young generation, whose acquisition and use of their native languages is quite poor. Majority of the young people translanguage in their daily communicative practices. Given the trend, it is less likely that indigenous languages would be supported even if they are given a place in education. To a majority, they are not worth of investment. With the prevailing scenario, what has been left for Kenya's indigenous languages is their negative use as means of solidarity (amongst its users) against those that are perceived as being different.

The use of English as the language of instruction in pre-independent Kenya was seen as a means through which the colonial government could establish control as well as disseminate their culture. For independent Kenya, advocacy and supremacy of English has not only helped Kenya to 'develop' but rather it has also been used as a tool for exploitation, control and maintenance of status quo. By adapting English and giving it supremacy, Kenya has continued to disseminate foreign culture and not her own indigenous culture. Those modeled in this culture are hesitant to be assimilated into the traditional socio-cultural life. This is evident with most Kenyan youths; who do not understand their culture as it has never been passed on to them. Given that traditional structures are no longer observed, many have been disjointed from their cultures. The collapse of the indigenous social, economic and political structures of the Kenyan people during the colonial period may be justified but not in independent Kenya. Kenyans have the opportunity and the mandate to revive these structures, including their language status, which is very important in contributing to positive national development.

One of the important functions of language is that of identifying individuals with regard to who they are, their ethnic background, their socio-economic status etc. From a

sociolinguistic point of view, that is exactly what language is meant to do. However, in most multilingual nations, besides identifying, language also places and categorizes speakers. In so doing, members of a given group feel that they belong and that they are different from others who are not of their group and as such, they treat them differently. This is evident in independent Kenya as attested by those interviewed, whereby on the one hand, English as the preferred language places and categorizes citizens into different social classes; the privileged and the disadvantaged; with the former having the privilege of contributing to national development as they benefit from it, while the later stand on the periphery, unassimilated and left to watch. This has been a setback to the development of the nation. Still on the other hand, the indigenous Kenyan languages also place and categorize citizens into different ethnic groups that are based on the languages that they speak; and with this, the various entities end up treating those of their group as the 'apart of', while those that are outside their bracket 'the other'. Based on this theory, members of a given ethnic group always look out for those of their own as they segregate those that belong to the 'other' group. This theory has killed the spirit of meritocracy, equity and oneness. The best example to give is in the public service, where at times the unqualified end up occupying prestigious positions, instead of those ones that merit just because of their ethnic affiliation. This practice is detrimental to the development of the nation as some of those who occupy positions of responsibility are unable to deliver. Thus, language is used as a tool for negative transformation.

As earlier mentioned, the theory of 'apart of' has to some extent impacted negatively on the social, economic and political development of Kenya. In pre-independent Kenya, race was used to segregate individuals. However, in independent Kenya, race has been replaced by ethnicity, whereby one's linguistic identity determines what becomes of them. Issues of integrity have taken a back seat because of this theory. To many (as exemplified by the informants), what matters most is not so much about whether it is right or wrong but whether it benefits 'us', the in-group. Consequently, abuse in public office is no longer a big deal as long as one is 'apart of'. This explains why quite a number of Kenyans of 'integrity' participate in all forms of malpractice but no steps are taken against them just because they are 'apart of'; all they do is to take refuge in their ethnic groups. Likewise, this explains why many would come out strongly in defense of one of their own who is found guilty; this is despite the fact that the accused does not share the benefits with their in-group members. This practice has had serious implications on the development of the Kenyan nation. So many resources that would have been used in the development of the nation have been lost because of impunity that is based on a wrong theory that is ethnically motivated, where nobody sees anything wrong as long as one is of their own. This negative exploitation of the existing linguistic diversity for the benefit of a few has negatively impacted on the nation in the sense that the resources that the nation has, end up in the hands of a few who care about nobody else but themselves and those of 'their own'. This is contrary to the basic functions of language, which as a resource, is meant to function as a tool for positive identity that is used for the good of humanity and not the reverse.

From the informants' point of view and as observed time and again, Politics in Kenya is not necessarily driven by the social, economic or political issues that are pertinent to the daily lives of the citizens, neither is politics entirely based on ideologies or tangent principles that spearhead the agenda of the nation. To the contrary, politics is mainly ethnic based. Political parties rarely have a national outlook but rather they are associated with specific ethnic groups; and leaders are elected into political positions not because of the policies they stand for but rather because of their ethnicity. The assumption is that whenever 'one of our own' (the apart of) is in the office, then the other part of the in-group stands to benefit and they have a guarantee of advocacy on national matters. Consequently, leaders build their power base in their ethnic groups. This explains why Kenyans constantly enter into conflict prior to and after general elections. Conflicts do not occur haphazardly but rather they are ethnically marked and directed; this is especially so since the multiparty democracy came into existence in the nation. Ethnic conflicts have made it difficult to build Kenya into a steady nation state as there is a relationship between the occurrence of ethnic conflicts in a nation and its development. Recurrence of ethnic disharmony shifts focus from pertinent national issues of development. Thus, more often than not, allegiance to one's ethnic group causes many citizens to compromise leaders of integrity and with the capacity to deliver.

Land issue is also cited as being a major source of dissatisfaction and conflict amongst citizens in Kenya; especially in cases where some groups feel short-changed. Interestingly, when there is dissatisfaction and conflict, it takes the ethnic angle, where speech communities that perceive 'others' as not being 'a part of' the group rise against them. This is displaced frustration where the aggressed end up reacting against innocent targets; the out-group. The same applies to the control of major social and economic resources of the nation. This is mainly done by the urban elites, who do not have the backing of the masses, and if they do, then such backing is ethnically-motivated. Consequently, the quest for the control of national resources has also been a recipe for ethnic violence as the poor get frustrated because of not being able to access the available resources. By and large, linguistic affiliation has greatly influenced how the nation operates in almost all its domains; an aspect that has negatively impacted on her development. With regard to development, those that participated in the study expressed their concerns about the existing unequal development in the nation that has not been received well by those that feel sidelined. This has been particularly perpetuated by foreign domination and control in some urban centers. Furthermore, the educational policy in Kenya has contributed to this as it favors urban development more than it does to rural areas. This as well has perpetuated not only social stratification but also social and economic dependence of a section of the population on the privileged few. Ultimately, this behavior reflects language distribution and use, with English as the dominant language being used mainly in urban as compared to rural areas. The outcome of this has been the continuous underdevelopment of most rural areas as the elites relocate to urban areas. This has not only led to pressure on the available resources in urban areas but also alienation from the traditional social structures, where there was interdependency amongst members of different speech communities; regardless of one's ethnic

background. With alienation and marginalization, the disadvantaged resent; and when this happens, it goes ethnic. The disgruntled take advantage of any slight opportunity to indirectly hit back against the system through the 'other group', who are perceived to be 'beneficiaries' of the system. Such displaced aggression is motivated by the fact that the aggressors are unable to hit back to the rightful target. Thus, language has become the basis for division and conflict among citizens rather than functioning as a vehicle for positive social, economic and political transformation of the nation.

Language is tied up to our psyche, both as individuals and as a society; it is a component of our thought system. The way we think is influenced by the various languages that we speak and the world that we see and this is why the sociolinguist Whorf explains in his theory that human beings view the world differently because of the language(s) they speak, (Whorf (1956) [7]). The fact that people always think in terms of ethnicity, they end up acting ethnic and not national. This is reflected in the distribution of resources, where though Kenya as a nation is rich in terms of both human and natural resources, their exploitation and distribution is skewed. With regard to exploitation, there are many natural resources that are yet to be exploited in Kenya; most of which are found in marginal areas. The reason as to why these resources have not been exploited is either because they have not been 'seen'/'discovered' or there are no 'experts' with 'ability' from those regions to spearhead the process. Consequently, resources that would have contributed to the development of the nation have been left untapped; and if exploited, it is more likely that the product will benefit a few that are strategically placed and not necessarily the nation at large. The reverse would as well have been true; that is, if there were experts with ability from these regions, they too would have considered 'our own', the 'apart of syndrome' (before thinking about national development) in making use of the benefits that come with such resources. The reasoning in this case is that the resources are from 'our region', hence, we are 'the rightful' people entitled to benefit. This is a seed that was planted during the pre-independence period and it has persisted in independent Kenya only that it has camouflaged, with a new name. Just as with the exploitation of natural resources, their distribution is imbalanced, with a few benefiting depending on whom they are, either their ethnicity or having had literacy in the right and preferred linguistic code; hence better placed socially and economically. This practice that is ethnically driven has negatively affected the development of the nation.

6. Conclusion

This paper has looked at the linguistic situation in Kenya and how her diversity has been exploited negatively, instead of being harnessed for positive development. It has shown how Kenya's language policy and practice favors a few by giving them an opportunity to ascend socially, economically and politically; while the majority of the population is left disadvantaged. As a result of this, more often than not, the disadvantaged group capitalize on any window of opportunity to hit back to the established system through the innocent target that is perceived as being beneficiaries or sympathizers of the regime. This practice has had negative implications to the development of the nation.

Likewise, the paper has shown how Kenya's language policy and practice has contributed to the existing social stratification. The use of English as the preferred medium of instruction is a disadvantage to the majority who fail to access the 'right' code that is used in education. Such groups are relegated to failure not just in education but also in life as they miss out on opportunities that are hinged on the preferred linguistic code. This has denied the majority an opportunity to actively and positively participate in the development of the nation.

The paper argues for the use of Kenya's linguistic diversity as a resource for social, economic, political, cultural and educational development and integration; and not as a tool for conflict and animosity; that undermine development.

The paper also advocates for the equal provision (equal in terms of quality and quantity) of English in Kenyan education (since it is the preferred code) for the development of the entire nation and not a section of it. This will ensure that all the citizens not only participate in the development of the nation but also benefit from the same. As it is, Kenya has neither succeeded in embracing and promoting her indigenous languages nor has she done any better in embracing English (by offering the 'best quality' to all, regardless of their location, back and/ or social-economic status). Having settled for English as the preferred language, Kenya needs to offer it to all and in the same way; doing this will contribute to individual as well as national development; without segregation.

7. Recommendations for Further Research

A comparative study needs to be done on multilingual nations that have embraced their diversity as a resource for positive development.

8. Acknowledgement

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