

## **LANGUAGE PLANNING IN ZIMBABWE: THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AS INTANGIBLE HERITAGE**

### **Advice VIRIRI\*, Zimbabwe**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Our generation has inherited a wealth of tangible and intangible cultural resources that embody the collective memory of communities across the world and it buttresses a people's sense of identity. Language is as much a resource as any other national resource that needs to be planned. This seeks to improve the language situation in Zimbabwe. Why should English be Zimbabwe's lingua franca? It was an underlying agenda of the civilising mission of colonialism to prepare the ground for economic exploitation and since indigenous cultures, including our languages, posed as obstacles, preventing colonial subjects from readily accepting colonial manoeuvres, they had to go. Missionaries played an important role here since they aggressively condemned African cultural values as barbaric and sinful. Our languages were looked down upon as inferior to English and this meant to destroy the unity and humanity of the African people. This left people uneasy, without their common denominator through which they expressed themselves. Commenting on Cabral, Patrick Chabal (1983) states that:

*For Cabral, therefore, it was inevitable that imperial and colonial rule should seek to obliterate the cultural identity of the colonised people. This... was one of the hidden aims of the colonial ideology of assimilation. (Chabal, 1983: 183)*

The missionaries' interest in ensuring that as many children as possible learned to read and write their own mother tongue meant that promotion of colonial agendas by preaching the gospel would be easier. These resources are essentially non-renewable. An awareness of the enormous responsibility for this fragile wealth has crystallised mainly around the built environment -historic monuments and sites. Traditional African cultures knew that the various layers of reality from the material to the spiritual plane coincide. Governing authorities, in defining trends of cultural policy, need to:

*Draw up a national cultural charter guaranteeing the respect, the dignity, the equality and the enhancement of the languages and culture of all their ethnic communities, and specifying how these principles will be enforced (Sow et al, 1979: 26)*

Separating the sacred from the real world is a mental distortion. There has been a parallel sense of responsibility for museum construction and our indigenous languages as shared perceptions, attitudes and predisposition that allow people to organise experiences in certain ways. This was and still is central to any Afro-centric interpretation of cultural social reality.

#### **THEORETICAL CULTURAL FRAMEWORK.**

During colonialism, the West made a grievous error by underestimating the cultural strength of African peoples. The emergence of an essentially cultural movement in the mid-1930's, the famous *Negritude Movement*, characterised by the most passionate assertions and affirmations of black peoples' beauty and value of their cultural heritage, was inevitable. This theory aroused strong feelings that enhanced specific identity traits of black people at grips with the socio-cultural violence of slavery and colonialism. This most intense attempt was to counter the false theories advanced by colonial social Darwinism to justify its exploitation of the black race. It also helped to shape the socio-cultural identity of black peoples into a weapon for achieving emancipation and a programme of cultural rebirth. It rejected acculturation, assimilation and alienation by presenting

*itself as the emotional reaction of the exploited and humiliated black man. (Sow et al, ibid : 13)*

It sought to restore people's national pride and helped to link them to their history, their cultural traditions and their languages. It is the strength of the ideological foundations, contents and historical development of the Negritude Movement that shapes my analysis of the conservation and management of indigenous languages as intangible heritage to be assessed within the context of cultural rebirth of black peoples. This theoretical framework is necessary here because it is

*a very appropriate starting point in any analysis of the cultural and literary responses of the African to European colonialism. (Ngara, 1990 :22)*

What is surprising today is that most debates about who we are and thoughts about traditional African cultures are being done by non-Africans. The first Pan-African Festival of Algiers had a *Cultural Manifesto* that defined itself as an alternative to Negritude.

This was followed by the World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture that was held in Dakar in 1965, where Alioune Diop clearly defined its scope and purpose as follows;

*The idea is essentially to give an opportunity to black communities throughout the world to consult together in order to revitalise their culture, their creativity so as to balance and expand the International Society, because it is up to peoples to share with the other peoples around the world, the responsibility of managing the world which is our common weal. (Sow et al, *ibid*: 15)*

After a lengthy period of direct colonial domination where the values of its cultural heritage were denied, derided and distorted, Black Africa should vigorously assert the right to be different by resisting western cultural imperialism and urge for a return to the original sources rooted in its history. This yields to a cultural renaissance which gives Africans a chance to regain, not only their erstwhile threatened and introverted personality, but also restore its own cultural values and languages. Cultural enhancement, therefore, becomes the main idea to inspire movements and theories of contemporary African renaissance.

#### THE POST-COLONIAL LANGUAGE SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE.

Zimbabwe has attained independence more than two decades ago but there is no clear language policy. There has been no language planning debate as yet, but we have merely inherited British linguistic policies that derive from a colonial policy, "which emphasised separate development for the different races, with a political counterpart in the theory and practice of indirect rule." (Mkanganwi, 1992:9) English continues to dominate our social, economic and political life. Our first task soon after independence could have been to determine which language(s) fulfilled the role of national language. Almost all other Southern African independent countries have gone through this process of language selection except us. National language and official language are often confused and end up being used interchangeably. The UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa defines these terms as follows:

*Official language: a language that is used for government, business and other formal purposes within a country, whether this is an international language such as French, English or Portuguese, or an African language like Kiswahili... National language: either (a) an African language that is also an official language, or (b) a language that has been decreed to be a national language of a country (Mkanganwi, *ibid* :10).*

South Africa, a country that got its independence yesterday, has got a sound language policy. In our country, English continues to dominate, not only as the language of business, administration, politics and the media, but also as the language of instruction in the entire education system, "while African languages continue to be downgraded in the schools and vernacularised outside in the wider community". (Chimhundu, 1993: 57). To worsen the whole situation, our African languages at "O" level, "A" level and tertiary levels are being taught in English. Zimbabwe is a multilingual country with Shona and Ndebele being clearly the dominant languages in their respective areas. McNamara cited in Chiwome and Thondhlana (1989) observes in his study of bilingualism that learning in foreign languages would take longer than in a mother tongue. His argument implies that our indigenous languages, Shona and Ndebele inclusive, are the right medium of instruction that ensure understanding and transfer of knowledge. (Chiwome and Thondhlana, 1989:160). Shona is by far

*the biggest language group and is technically the most viable choice for a national language if the choice were to be reduced to one... (Chimhundu et al, 1998:2)*

There is no country in history that has managed to develop while it despises its own language and culture. Through language, which is a cultural asset, we transmit knowledge and information; we articulate values, beliefs, and traditions and even past achievements. The relationship between language and culture is inseparably entwined and therefore plays a crucial role in the erection of religious, political, economic, educational, literary, media and other institutions in outlining their developmental programmes of action. Since language is a carrier of a nation's culture it has to "carry the content of our people's anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control... to control the wealth they produce..." (Ngugi, 1981:29). This paper on language as intangible heritage seeks to promote the indigenous languages of Zimbabwe. This would enable their usage in every sphere of public life. Besides Shona and Ndebele, Hachipola (1996) argues that Zimbabwe has sixteen African languages that are predominantly Bantu, except Tshawo, which is Khoisan. Shona is by far the most largely spoken by at least 75% of Zimbabwe's total population, followed by Ndebele, spoken by up to 16.5%. It could have been fairly simple to deal with the language situation in Zimbabwe because Shona and Ndebele are clearly dominant in their respective areas, Ndebele in the two western provinces and Shona in all other six. The larger minority languages that are officially recognised for use in education and on the radio are Kalanga, Changana, Chewa (Nyanja), Venda, Tonga (Zambia) and Nambya. These six language groups account for approximately 6% of the country's population. The table below shows how each corresponds to a significant population of its own.

Table Showing Districts in which Minority Languages are Predominant.

District	Predominant Language	Other Languages	Designated National Language	Province
Binga	Tonga	Ndebele	Ndebele	Matebeleland North
Hwange	Nambya/ Dombe	Ndebele, Shona Nyanja, Lozi	Ndebele	Matebeleland North
Gokwe	Tonga	Shona, Ndebele	Shona	Midlands
Plumtree	Kalanga	Ndebele Tswana	Ndebele	Matebeleland South
Beitbridge	Venda	Ndebele Changana Sotho Shona, Lemba Pfumbi	Ndebele	Matebeleland South
Chiredzi	Changana	Shona Ndebele	Shona	Masvingo

In addition to these, there are eight other smaller language groups, namely Sotho, Chikenda, Sena, Xhosa, Tonga (Mudzi), Barwe, Hwesa and Tshawo (the only non-Bantu African languages spoken in Zimbabwe), all for populations of less than 1% each. Priority must therefore be given to developing indigenous languages, minority languages inclusive, because they are more fragile works and cultural values, just like oral traditions whose masters and chief repositories are dying out. All our indigenous languages need to be rescued from neglect and anonymity. Each language reflects a unique view of the world, pattern of thought and culture. Minority languages in Zimbabwe are in danger of disappearing. They should be used in academia, in the media and in society as a whole. The marginalisation of these minority languages and cultures in this country dates back to the early period of colonialism and the situation has not changed even more than two decades after Zimbabwe achieved political independence. Every language represents a special way of viewing human experience and the world itself. Language planning and policy should be a deterrent factor in preventing the disappearance of indigenous languages in the course of human history. The recognition of a language's potential entirely depends on the opportunities that it is given.

*A people's spoken and written language is perhaps its most important cultural attribute...Language policy, like other policies, has been used as an instrument of domination, fragmentation and reintegration into the ruling political structure. Linguistic diversity is thus a precious asset of humanity, and the disappearance of any language means an impoverishment of the reservoir of knowledge and tools for intra-cultural and inter-cultural communication (Perez de Cuellar, 1994 :179)*

Some medicinal plants are known only to people in traditional cultures, with the languages of such people having specific names for them. The loss of their languages and cultures means their knowledge of such plants and their healing properties are also lost. A language is "endangered" when it is not learnt by children anymore. Language also serves as a powerful means of group identification. In the legal field, English is entrenched by references to language requirements in Articles 82 and 87 of the Constitution.

To be eligible for appointment as a Judge of the High Court or the Supreme Court or for appointment to a tribunal, a legal practitioner must have been qualified for at least seven years and practising

*in a country in which the common law is Roman-Dutch or English and English is the official language. (Chimhundu et al, Ibid :25)*

Why English?, we are bound to ask. The opposite should be true that professions like law, medicine and others should have our indigenous languages as their admission qualification. It is the indigenous African people they would represent in courts of law and to whom doctors would administer drugs. Shona and Ndebele should be official languages as well as national languages of Zimbabwe in the true sense of the words. Our indigenous languages are the voice of the socio-cultural identity, the heart and content of an African child's first language. If Japan's socio-economic development is rooted in its language and culture, why cant Zimbabwe be the Japan in Africa that bubbles with confidence and has its work ethics enhanced through cultural identity?

#### THE CULTURAL IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGES.

The promotion of indigenous languages will contribute significantly to a people's culture. Culture's role in solving problems within society cannot take place without reference to their language. Indigenous languages constitute the quest for truth in the Afro-centric enterprise. They exist in a community of people who use a set of agreed-upon symbols to express concepts, ideas and psychological needs. The building of living sites like Great Zimbabwe was a process based on the crystallization of the acts and beliefs of human beings in time and space, resulting from the investment of creative imagination, social interaction, and responses to environmental conditions, through the medium of their mother tongue. That is why language is not only viewed as a means of communication, but also as a carrier of culture. Black communities are determined to enhance this cultural heritage because my belief is that:

*Africa as a whole constitutes a single cultural family and that there was no need to create a dichotomy which would be an obstacle to African unity. (Sow et al, Ibid :16)*

African people do not only share a rich common cultural heritage, but they are also linked by a sense of solidarity that is shaped by the experience of anti-colonial struggles, and they have a common determination to unite against the ever-present threat of imperialism. Through language, the continuous presence of creative forces should be admitted so that the past remains alive while the seeds of the future germinate. The fear is that our cultural heritage can be swallowed up and replaced by other western cultures. Amadou Hampate Ba's observation cited in Alpha I. Sow is very valid:

*The first great problem for modern Africans is to recognize this traditional culture themselves in order to take stock of it and so to define its nature and essential value. And the next problem is to create an intelligible language so that this culture can be brought within the reach of people who have broken with the hermetic practices of the initiation centres. (Ibid, 26)*

Any serious attempts to define culture must include the following indices: material culture; the social relations and communication aspect; the ideological component and the aesthetic component of a group of people. Ngora's (1991) seminar paper on *Cultural Awareness*, clearly avers that by material culture is meant a society's tools of work, their clothing, their dwellings and related characteristics; by social relations and communication is meant the society's class structure and the interactions of the various social groups within that society; by ideology is meant the world view of that society and this includes philosophies and religions, and finally, by the aesthetic element of culture is meant the artistic tradition of that society which manifests itself in various forms such as literature, music, dance, sculpture, painting and crafts like carving, weaving and pottery. The analysis of these indices in relation to our indigenous languages, in their organic unity, will show that culture is

*the expression of a people's social activities in relation to their struggle with their environment, with the elements and with human forces that threaten their survival or their way of life. Culture is born in the struggle to survive and to conquer nature and human fetters. (Ngora, 1991: 2)*

In considering the above, it would be correct to conclude that any group of people possesses a culture at any given point in time and that culture is not static but is in continuous transformation alongside changes in production forces. Indigenous knowledge that is embedded in culture is conveyed through the language of the people who possess such knowledge. A people's culture is determined by way of interaction with its environment. Every group of people is involved in a struggle for survival with its environment, both human and physical. This fact goes contrary to the colonialists' assumption that before they came to "civilise Africa" Africans had no culture, that "the darkest night of humanity lay over [the] pre-colonial history of Africa." (Fanon, 1968: 170). It shows the fraudulence and hypocrisy of their "civilising mission" to Africa, the false premise upon which were based the various strands of colonial ideology. Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the whole African colonial experience was the attempted denial to African peoples of their own cultural heritage, of which the attribution of Great Zimbabwe to outside influence, without a shred of evidence, must be the classical example. There was never any doubt about its indigenous African origins.

The colonial models introduced to us did not aim to improve on and promote the existing foundations of African culture, but aimed at destroying them. The very first step towards nation building in Zimbabwe is to develop and promote mother tongues, community languages and national languages.

The purpose of this paper is to build a national outlook and unity in diversity and also take English out of dominance thereby upgrading and improving the use of our indigenous languages. Chimhundu's observation that "as elsewhere in the post-colonial world, we have in Zimbabwe an unbalanced bicultural and bilingual situation in which the H or high status language is the official language of the former colonial power, while the indigenous languages are the L or low status language", (Chimhundu, 1993:58) means that our African languages are looked down upon as less important socially and culturally. This is a result of, as Chimhundu would put it,

*partly the lack of attention that is paid to the indigenous languages by officialdom, ...encourage the thinking that all African languages are vernaculars...[and should therefore]continue to be downgraded, in the education system and in public life. (Ibid, 59)*

In most African countries, a European language was used as official language. The main reason is the difficulty in selecting indigenous languages that most members of the societies would accept. This choice of the European language was a language-planning decision. The government's choice of a language for official purposes should consider issues of language loyalty and empowerment. Also, language choice brings in conceptions of nation building and an attempt to forge national unity and national integration. This would open avenues for access to the often scarce resources and services that the government has to offer to the people in sectors like health, education, employment, positions, facilities, etc. This would enable the majority of the populations who were once relegated to the margins of society to be able to participate, not only in the economic development of the country but also in their own economic buttressing. This is why Fafunwa's (1990) thought cited in Roy-Campbell and Gwete (1997) is conclusive when he says:

*we impart knowledge and skills almost exclusively in these foreign languages while the majority of our people, farmers and craftsmen, perform their daily tasks in Yoruba, Hausa, Ga, Igbo, Bambara, Kiswahili, etc...The question is: why not help them to improve their social, economic and political activities via the mother tongue? Why insist on their learning English or French first before modern technology could be introduced to them? In most developing countries, a few towns and cities operate in English, French, etc... while many rural villagers and hamlets operate in the mother tongue. (Roy-Campbell and Gwete, 1997:107).*

It is language that gives uniqueness to the various forms of art and humanism. We can borrow notions and concepts but the apperception which governs the formulation of these concepts within a culture and the analysis which that culture employs is not transferable. It is language that characterises man and makes him original.

#### THE NECESSITY OF LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY IN ZIMBABWE.

Language planning is a concept that is used to define both the process and study of language activities. Weinstein (1983) defines language planning as a

*“government-authorised, long-term sustained conscious effort to alter a language itself or to change a language’s function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems.” (Weinstein, 1983; 37).*

Government support for indigenous languages is linked to the importance of language as a vehicle of culture. The crucial issue in language planning and policy in African countries is a definition of the role of indigenous languages in relationship to foreign languages. In order to solve this language problem, Kennedy (1983) defines language planning as a:

*Problem-solving activity concerned with deliberate language change for specific aims, which may be social, political or educational (or a mixture of all three) (Kennedy cited in Roy-Campbell and Gwete, 1983: 208).*

It is quite clear from the above definitions that language planning involves choosing a suitable language or languages as the language of the government or the development of a particular language so that it can perform certain functions in an effort to solve the communication problems within a community. The legal status of languages in Zimbabwe is stipulated in the 1987 Education Act. It states that *“English is the official language, and Shona and Ndebele are national languages with restricted official use.” (Roy-Campbell and Gwete, 1983:208).* The piece of legislation acts as if as if minority languages did not exist. My thesis, therefore, is that the disappearance of a language can be slowed down or halted by an enlightened language policy.

Any language should enhance communication and necessitates the interaction of people. Language planning is viewed as an institutionally organised activity. There is a thin line of distinction between language planning and language policy, so much so that the two are often used interchangeably. In fact, language policy often refers to both the process and the end result. Language policy is therefore often used to refer to an outcome of language planning. Our government effort should be to try and consciously change the generality of the Zimbabwean people’s linguistic behaviours. This involves influencing people’s attitudes towards the realisation that our indigenous languages are even superior to the foreign language of the elitist minority - English. This is why Cooper’s (1989) definition is satisfactory when he refers to language planning as the

*“deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language orders.” (Cooper, 1989:45).*

This effort should be directed towards convincing people of the necessity to change their linguistic behaviour and also as a way of removing colonial hang-over.

Language planning in this country started in the 1960s as an activity consciously tailor-made by the missionaries who embarked on translating the Bible into African languages, in order *“to reach the souls of Africans in the most effective way possible”.* (Roy-Campbell and Gwete, 1997:22) After the choice of the language to use, they worked in a more formal language planning by developing the language’s orthographies. The decision on when to introduce English as a foreign language and to whom, was also part of the language planning process during the colonial era. The colonial administration, however, introduced their language as the linguistic tool of administration and power. African languages were considered inadequate for administrative purposes. An elite group of Africans was created to act as intermediaries between the colonial administration and the African people. So the British language policy was two-pronged: a policy of indigenous languages for the masses and English for the selected few. It is this that should give rise to the need to plan our languages as a conservation and management measure. Fishman’s (1974) definition of language planning as *“the organised pursuit of solutions to a language problem” (Fishman, 1974:79)* sensitises us to the need to develop strategies for solving language problems. Some of these problems are a choice of linguistic medium, development or reform of the writing system, expansion of vocabulary, compilation of dictionaries, writing grammars and preparing textbooks. The wide scope of language planning activities can be grouped under two types of decisions: *language status* (the position of a language in society) and *language corpus* (the body of the language, e.g. alphabet, words, sounds, spelling, grammar, etc).

#### LANGUAGE STATUS PLANNING.

Language status activities deal with giving a language the status of an official language, national language, language of religion or medium of instruction (language of education). This language status embraces other activities including whether or not the range or use of a language for particular functions should be maintained, expanded or restricted. It also examines which dialect or dialects to standardize or develop as a norm for the language in question. Usually, language status planners are government officials, politicians or government bodies, since these are policy decisions. The choice of a language as an official or national language in a multilingual situation is motivated by political, economic and cultural issues, hence the involvement of government officials in this type of language planning.

Language status planning is not looked at in isolation but it goes hand in hand with the overall planning of social policies of the state. The context in which the language operates defines the status of a language. This paper’s line of argument is that it is by virtue of the communicative strength or expressive power that is inherent in our indigenous languages that they perform qualitative functions in any social structure. Shona and Ndebele should be declared official so that they assume the functions of the language of education, government, commerce and the courts of law, instead of the lower status in terms of the functions that they are performing in society today.

## LANGUAGE CORPUS PLANNING.

Corpus planning activities refer to steps taken to ensure that the language is modified to conform to the demands made by its new functions. This view is summed up by Haugen, (1966) who defines corpus planning as:

*...the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar and a dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community. (Haugen, 1966: 133)*

The activities of this language planning deal with the characteristics of language itself, for example, expanding vocabulary through the creation of terms and standardization of existing terms, spelling rules, simplifying language registers, developing orthographies, prescribing pronunciation rules, etc. The impossibility of developing languages independent of socio-political, cultural and economic variables is like making a mountain out of an anthill. This type of planning is difficult because it

*is often conducted within a tension system of changing and conflicted loyalties, convictions, interests, values and outlooks. (Fishman, 1974: 117)*

Once the planning is done and aims are set, implementation of those goals should be done to ensure that the plans for a language chosen are used for functions designated to it. In Zimbabwe, the government should allocate the necessary financial resources for the promotion of our indigenous languages. They should move a step further in providing manpower to facilitate the implementation of these aims such as publishing of books and dictionaries to make people aware of the changes advocated for these indigenous languages. This paper emphasizes the importance of our indigenous languages to the nation, hence the need to conserve and develop our linguistic resources.

## CONCLUSION

Though language planning is a complex process, it can only become beneficial to the people it attempts to serve through a variety of approaches. It humanises a dehumanised people by offering practical solutions to problems. The idea of language planning evolves from the premise that humanity advances and develops from a colonial epoch to ever-better living conditions. This almost amounts to evolution. It is worth noting here that Zimbabwean culture, as has been noted earlier, is dynamic just like any culture and so its indigenous languages convey culture to be utilised in all forms of development. The existence of a clear language policy would be progress that embraces an improvement and an increase in knowledge of our languages, thereby enhancing people's control over nature. It will stimulate people's improvement in their material living conditions. This is why this paper seeks to highlight the

use of African languages as the best way of ensuring active participation of the [Zimbabwean] populations in the activities of national life and in particular, in the planning and management of development projects. (Chimhundu et al, ibid :9)

If English continues to enjoy high status and to play a central role in Zimbabwean social, economic and political life, our indigenous languages are marginalized. Societal norms have assigned roles to local languages as low status while English is the high status language. Since language planning being a complex issue, if more energy is directed towards it, it becomes an easy solution to Zimbabwe. Because of its unique history, the history of slave trade and colonial rule, Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, did not only suffer serious cultural dislocations but racial inequality to which language policies "have been closely linked" (Satyo, 1992 :41) It is not a "totally explicit model" that the presenter is yearning for, but rather language planners with skills

*... similar to those of a successful chess player who does not only depend on his knowledge of the game, but needs to devise a sequence of moves that will suit his goals...and presumably win the game. (Ibid)*

This might heal the cultural wounds and restore the cultures of Africa, which colonialism has sought to obliterate in order to achieve its goals. Zimbabwe's indigenous languages, no doubt, constitute a rich linguistic and literacy heritage for all Zimbabweans. Our languages will provide ground for enhancing national understanding and national unity. Our African culture continues to bleed as foreigners upset the whole lifestyle and social fabric of the African peoples. Ngugi wa Thiongo states that

*The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. (Ngugi, 1981 :4)*

Our indigenous languages being a key aspect of communication, they help shape our worldview. Culture is assimilated through language. It unlocks the meaning and heritage of our African culture. Through these indigenous languages, we tap knowledge that is stored in our culture as part of intangible heritage that needs conservation and management so that we can pass it on to the generations for posterity. The paper presents indigenous languages as a dignified culture that respects the collective rules and promotes maximum creative interaction among Zimbabwean speakers. In showing the necessity of promoting African languages, the former Minister in the then *Ministry of Sport, Recreation and Culture*, in trying to coordinate and manage the formulation of a *National Cultural Policy* said

*Mr Speaker, Honourable members have expressed very valid concerns on the status, use and development of our indigenous languages, normally referred to as national languages both in terms of use and their teaching. There is no doubt, Mr Speaker, that the advancements of a nation depend on effective communication.*

*It has been proved that the mother tongue is the true basis for effective communication. Indeed, it is within the language that the values, beliefs and ideology of the people are embedded. Our National Cultural Policy recognises this critical role of languages in national development. This is why it states that our national languages must be developed to the point where they can be used in sciences and technology. (Chimhundu et al, ibid: 11)*

The need to consolidate Zimbabwe's political independence with linguistic independence has been widespread. The idea is enshrined in the claim by the Inter-African Bureau of Languages, a board accountable to the Organisation of African Unity, which conclusively puts it that "there are several advantages in using the mother-tongue as a medium of instruction: the development of critical powers, the fostering of effective communication, the enhancement of deeper cultural understanding and the increasing of national consciousness" (Walusimbi in Chiwome and Thondhlana, 1989:159) This line of thought has been reiterated by the definition in the National Cultural Policy adopted by Cabinet and Parliament in 1996 as follows:

*Zimbabwe's indigenous languages constitute a rich linguistic and cultural heritage for all Zimbabweans and should provide fertile ground for enhancing national understanding and national unity. Research will be carried out in indigenous languages so that dictionaries, orthographies, textbooks; literary works as well as scientific and technological works are available in these languages. Priority will be given to those projects which enable these languages to be developed to a stage where they can be utilised at the highest educational levels so that they are able to effectively deal with all development issues (Chimhundu et al, ibid: 40)*

In consonance with the above, language planning would be a desideratum for nation building, in order to develop and advance indigenous language for it to catch up with others in the modern world. Becoming a general knowledge text, it will serve as a reference book and take stock of the prevailing situation concerning use and status of African languages in general and the Zimbabwean in particular. This exercise would be a revival of the Zimbabwean culture and identity that define us as human beings. Aime Cesaire asserts the importance of African identity and civilisations:

*we lived in an atmosphere of rejection and we developed an inferiority complex. I have always thought that the black man was searching for his identity. And it has seemed to me that if what we wanted is to establish this identity then we must have a concrete consciousness of what we are – that is, of the first fact of our lives: that we are black; that we have a history, a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value; and that Negroes were not... born yesterday, because there have been beautiful and important civilisation... we asserted that our Negro heritage was worthy of respect, and that this heritage was not relegated to the past, that its values were values that could still make an important contribution to the world. (Nkosi, 1981:10)*

Here, Cesaire harps on the importance of the identity of the African, the beauty of African cultural values and the progressive historical path on which Africans treaded before colonial disruption. He boasts and emphasises early African civilisation. Civilisations are manifestations of man's intensified struggle to bring his environment under his control so as to make life easier for himself. The promotion of our indigenous languages is a typical example of this intensified struggle that would lead to the general improvements in people's material culture, while at the same time encouraging the growth of critical consciousness and general cultural refinement. Unlike Leopold Senghor, Cesaire does not boast about the obscure, idyllic past, but he prides himself on the Africa of potentially important contributions to future global developments.

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### ABSTRACT

*It is necessary to promote and enhance African languages as intangible cultural heritage. This heritage needs conservation and management in the form of language planning and policy making that would contribute towards the restoration of the indigenous speakers' humanity, identity and culture. Our indigenous languages seek to focus on African philosophy, aesthetics, art, performing arts, politics, sociology, sport and other subjects. These languages would explore ways in which the forms of African cultural life and expression will help to shape, inform and influence cultures and intellectual traditions across the globe. It is necessary to transcend colonial alienation as "part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of [Zimbabweans] and African peoples" whose indigenous languages "were associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment." (Ngugi, 1981:28). This paper will testify the superiority of our indigenous languages to English. The researcher believes in the maxim "free your mind": the mind must be liberated even from the confines of biased Afro-centric thought. These languages will convey the profound need for the Zimbabwean people to be re-located historically, economically, socially, linguistically, politically, and philosophically. For a number of years, Africans have been devoid of their cultural, economic, religious, political and social heritage. They have been living on the periphery of Europe. It is this "illusion of the fringes" that this paper seeks to eliminate and restore "the African person as an agent in human history..." (Asante, 2003:1) This will answer questions on how African cultural and intellectual traditions radically and indelibly shape the world. In demanding to know the total system of truth about the world, the first step is to know the reality of our own existence through our indigenous languages.*

### \*Advice VIRIRI

#### Qualifications

**1996- 1999** - University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. MA in African Languages: Title of thesis: The Depiction of the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle in Selected Shona War Novels.

**March -Dec 1994** - University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. BA 4<sup>th</sup> Year Special Honours in African Languages. Title of Dissertation: Realism in Sharai Mukonoweshuro's Novels.

**1989 -1991** - University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe BA General (Linguistics, Shona and Philosophy).

**Feb 1993--June 1994** - Intec College, Cape Town, South Africa. Certificate in Journalism (Distance Learning)

**Feb 1999--Dec 1999** - University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. Post-Graduate Certificate in Education.

**May 1999--Nov 1999** - University of Zimbabwe & African Virtual University, Harare, Zimbabwe. Computer Literacy.

**1987--1988** - Gutu Mission High School, Masvingo, Zimbabwe Cambridge "A" Level, English E, Shona C, Divinity B and General Paper B.

**1983--1986** - Nyashanu Mission High School, Manicaland, Zimbabwe. Cambridge "O" Level = Eight "O" Levels including English.

**1973--1976 and 1980--1982** - Vhiriri Primary School, Buhera, Zimbabwe (Between 1976 & 1980, schools closed during the war of National Liberation) Grade Seven Certificate.

#### Work experience

**November 2001 -- Present:** Lecturer and Chairperson Dept. of African Languages and Culture, Midlands State University

#### Courses Taught:

\* Speech Styles in their Social Contexts. \* Language, Culture and Development

\* Drama for Development\* Performing Arts in Africa\* Theories of Literature and Criticism \* Heritage and Culture Management

\* HIV/AIDS and Culture in Zimbabwe

**Jan 2000 - Nov 2001:** Part-Time Lecturer: Zimbabwe Open University, Manicaland Province, Mutare, Zimbabwe.

**Course Taught:** Post-Graduate Diploma in Education.

**Jan2002--Present:** Part-Time Lecturer: Zimbabwe Open University, Midlands Provincial Office, Gweru, Zimbabwe

**Course Taught:** BA English and Communication Studies.

**Jan 1992--Nov 2001:** Graduate Teacher: Nyashanu Mission High School, Buhera, Zimbabwe

#### Position of responsibility

#### At Midlands State University:

Chairperson of the Department of African Languages and Culture.

Faculty of Arts Representative to the Computer Committee (2002-3).

Faculty of Arts Representative to the Open Day Committee (2001- now)

Secretary to Division of Students' Affairs Committee on Food Relief.

Warden of RUFARO HOSTEL (Division of Students' Affairs)

Member of the University Senate

National Arts Merit Awards (NAMA) Midlands Provincial Monitor.



#### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Member - African Languages Association for Lexicography. (**AFRILEX**)  
Member-Terminology in Advanced Management Applications(**TAMA**)  
Member - Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa. (**OSSREA**).  
Organising Secretary- OSSREA Midlands Chapter, Gweru, Zimbabwe.  
Member- International Council of Monuments and Sites (**ICOMOS**)

#### PUBLICATIONS

Articles : "Missionary Influence on Shona Lexicography " published in **LEXICOS JOURNAL**.  
"The Depiction of Pungwe meetings 'night vigil' as theatre of Liberation in Selected Zimbabwean War Literature ". Paper to be published in the **DYKE**, journal of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Midlands State University.  
Viriri, A's abstract on "Language Planning in Zimbabwe" in Mahachi, G. (2003) **Place-Memory-Meaning: Preserving Intangible Values in Monuments and Sites**. (Pages 36-7) ICOMOS 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and Scientific Symposium: Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED AT CONFERENCES

"Missionary Influence on Shona Lexicography with Special Reference to Father Hannan's Problem of Translation" Paper presented at the **AFRILEX** Conference held at Rhodes University, South Africa on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2002.  
"The Necessity of a Shona Encyclopaedia in Zimbabwe". Paper presented at the **TAMA** Conference held at the University of Pretoria, South Africa on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2003.  
"The Impact of Social and Economic Development on Culture in Zimbabwe". Paper presented at an **OSSREA's** Midlands Chapter Workshop held at Midlands State University on September 20<sup>th</sup> 2003.  
"Language Planning in Zimbabwe; the Conservation and Management of Indigenous Languages in Zimbabwe". Paper presented at **ICOMOS** 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and Scientific Symposium at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2003.  
**Current Research:** Funded by the Midlands State University research Board. Title: "Theatre of the Oppressed: The Case of Pungwe Meetings in ZANLA Operational Areas in Zimbabwe".  
**Newspaper Article:** "Broadcasting Laws a milestone in quest for Cultural Revival" As I See It Column in **The Sunday Mail**.