DECLARATION

I, DAVID MORGAN ASSOGBA METONDJI, hereby declare that apart from the sources cited in this work and which are duly acknowledged, this study is the result of an original research conducted under the supervision of Dr. Juliana Appiah, and that this research has not been presented either in part or in whole for any other purposes.

DAVID MORGAN ASSOGBA METONDJI
(STUDENT)

DR. JULIANA APPIAH
(SUPERVISOR)

DATE..............................................

DATE.............................................
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, my friends and my students for their unflinching support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express a profound gratitude to the Almighty God for granting me the ability to complete this research. I express my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Juliana Appiah for her valuable guidance and advice. Finally, I thank all the faculty members of the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy, University of Ghana, and my colleagues of the LECIAD class of 2014/2015 for making our class a very interesting one.
### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACALAN</td>
<td>African Academy of Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARNCSA</td>
<td>African Renaissance and the Native Club of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARDP</td>
<td>South Africa’s Reconstruction and Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION........................................................................................................................................ i
DEDICATION........................................................................................................................................... ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.......................................................................................................................... iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS................................................................................................................ iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS ...................................................................................................................... v
ABSTRACT.............................................................................................................................................. viii
CHAPTER ONE........................................................................................................................................ 1
RESEARCH DESIGN............................................................................................................................. 1
1.1 Background to the study .................................................................................................................. 1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem .............................................................................................. 5
1.3 Research Questions ...................................................................................................................... 6
1.4 Objectives of the Research .......................................................................................................... 7
1.5 Hypothesis ...................................................................................................................................... 7
1.6 Scope of the Research ................................................................................................................. 7
1.7 Rationale of the Research ........................................................................................................... 7
1.8 Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................................ 8
1.9 Literature Review ....................................................................................................................... 11
1.10 Sources of Data ......................................................................................................................... 14
1.11 Arrangement of Chapters ........................................................................................................... 15

Endnotes ................................................................................................................................................ 16

CHAPTER TWO..................................................................................................................................... 17
THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION ................................................................ 17
2.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 17
2.1 Language and regional integration .............................................................................................. 18
2.1.1 Cross-border languages ......................................................................................................... 18
2.1.2 Official languages .................................................................................................................. 20
2.2 The Effect of Languages on Regional Integration ................................................................... 21
2.2.1 Conflicts Prevention ............................................................................................................. 21
2.2.2 Economic Integration ............................................................................................................ 23
2.2.3 Community social cohesion ................................................................................................. 24
2.2.4 Political integration ............................................................................................................... 25
2.3 The role of language in regional integration: Case Studies ...................................................... 25
## Table of Contents

2.3.1 The East African Community (EAC) ................................................................. 25
2.3.2 The European Union (EU) .............................................................................. 27

2.4 Language in the ECOWAS integration process ................................................. 28
2.4.1 The ECOWAS’ structure and objectives ......................................................... 28
2.4.2 The cross-border languages ........................................................................... 29
2.4.3 The official languages .................................................................................... 30
2.4.4 The ECOWAS’ agenda 2020 ......................................................................... 31

Endnotes .............................................................................................................. 33

CHAPTER THREE ........................................................................................................... 35

THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF LANGUAGE IN THE ECOWAS INTEGRATION PROCESS ......................................................................................................................... 35

3.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 35
3.1 Language policies in the ECOWAS zone .............................................................. 35
3.1.1 Individual States ........................................................................................... 36
3.1.2 Common strategies ....................................................................................... 38

3.2 Obstacles to policies implementation .................................................................. 40
3.2.1 Political reasons ............................................................................................ 41
3.2.2 Pedagogic issues .......................................................................................... 42
3.2.3 Economic factors .......................................................................................... 42
3.2.4 Social impediments ...................................................................................... 43

3.3 Development opportunities of languages policies .............................................. 44
3.3.1 Administrative .............................................................................................. 44
3.3.2 Judicial ......................................................................................................... 45
3.3.3 Educational .................................................................................................... 46
3.3.4 Agricultural and Commercial ....................................................................... 47

Endnotes ..................................................................................................................... 49

CHAPTER FOUR .............................................................................................................. 50

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .............................................. 50

4.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 50
4.1 Summary of findings .......................................................................................... 50

4.1.1 The linguistic struggle within the ECOWAS zone .......................................... 50
4.1.2 The lack of appropriate language planning .................................................... 52
4.1.3 The usefulness of language policy for regional integration process ............... 53

Endnotes ..................................................................................................................... 54
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Conclusions</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 The language policy at the national level</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 The language policy at the regional level</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 The achievement of the Agenda 2020</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Recommendations</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Conception and adoption of a formal regional language planning policy</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 The development of Multilinguism</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 The African languages approach to regional development programmes</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.4 Language planning and social cohesion body</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

The necessity to come together to solve major challenges inspired the creation of the Economic Community of West African States through the signing of the ECOWAS Treaty in Lagos on the 28th May 1975. Since its inception, the regional institution has taken several actions towards economic and political integration. Soon, the ECOWAS realized the need to have a Community of people instead of a community of States. This led to the elaboration of the ECOWAS’ Agenda 2020, with six strategic pillars that appear to not take into consideration the language aspect, which is the main vehicle of people’s culture. It is difficult to conceive a “community of people” without an appropriate strategy that will culturally integrate them and establish an effective system of communication between the elites and the majority of the people. The West African States language policies are focus on French, English and Portuguese, which are spoken by less than 20% of the population. This creates language barrier and makes the implementation of the development programmes and projects of the ECOWAS difficult. This study examines the role of language in the regional integration process, with a particular interest in the ECOWAS, based on its vision grounded in the agenda 2020. The research focuses on the language policies of the ECOWAS member States, the challenges faced by these policies, and the prospects of a regional language planning policy. This study identifies that there is a linguistic struggle in the ECOWAS sub-region, and a lack of appropriate regional language planning policy that hampers the regional integration process. The development of programs covering the ECOWAS working languages as much as the indigenous cross-border languages is needed.
CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 Background to the study

After the end of the second world war, the loss of human and natural resources faced by the world is one of the irrefutable facts that encouraged the world leaders to engage in a development strategy that involved many countries coming together to solve their common problems on a regional scale. Regional integration became very popular, and the region of West Africa adopted the said strategy on the 28th of May 1975 with the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). According to Margaret Lee,¹ regional integration is designed to enhance the political, economic, social, cultural, and security cooperation of member states, and so was the general aim of the ECOWAS at its inception.

Communication is a key factor in every development project that involves people, and regional integration involves people from different cultures with different languages. Being a principal component of culture, language is the greatest mediator that allows people to relate and understand each other; it can be considered as the form of speech peculiar to a particular nation. In West Africa, it is established that the Niger-Congo family of languages (the largest in the world with about 1436 languages) is dominant² and the sub region is home to native speakers of over five hundred (500) languages.³ Added to this variety of African languages are those inherited from the former colonial masters, namely French, English and Portuguese. Together, these languages constitute the linguistic atmosphere of the ECOWAS zone. Their effectiveness as communication tools depend on how the West African population have access to them on a daily basis. The
language policy adopted so far by the regional institution is one that focuses on French, English and Portuguese as working languages based on the revised ECOWAS Treaty of 1993. One must underline the fact that less than 10 to 20% of the West African population have access to these languages.\textsuperscript{4} Therefore, it is extremely difficult for the regional population to participate in the public life and to facilitate the implementation of regional projects and programmes. This is captured by the Regional Integration Strategy Paper for West Africa 2011-2015 which says that: “although member states strive to transcend the linguistic and geopolitical divides in the region, these differences still present challenges for the integration process.” \textsuperscript{5} The latter is a study conducted by the African Development Bank and the African Development Fund.

The language barrier so shaped is a big challenge to integration; it refers to a misunderstanding and a deficit of communication between the elites and the people in West Africa. In other words, there is a gap of knowledge and familiarity between the regional elites and their populations that hamper the effectiveness of the regional integration process. This situation does not fit neither in the vision of the Cultural Charter for Africa of 1976 accepted by the ECOWAS member states, nor in the ECOWAS Agenda 2020.

The West African states have incorporated “de facto” the importance of culture which is expressed clearly in the Cultural Charter for Africa of 1976.\textsuperscript{6} Sections “b, e, and h” of the Charter’s aims are: “the rehabilitation, restoration, preservation and promotion of the African cultural heritage; the encouragement of cultural co-operation among states with a view to the strengthening of African Unity; and the development of all dynamic values in the African cultural heritage and rejection of any element which is an impediment to progress.”\textsuperscript{7} It appears clearer with the driven
force of the ECOWAS Agenda 2020 which is to “move from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of people”.

Such a goal is not achievable without giving particular attention to language policies in order to bring together the needed social capital. Within this framework, language appears to be earnestly relevant to the integration process in the region.

A language barrier can be simply defined as the inability to communicate in a language easily and to be well understood by the people. In the case of ECOWAS, taking out the various indigenous languages, the foreign language barrier has, to a large extent, slowed down the integration process. French, English and Portuguese are the working languages adopted by the community of fifteen (15) countries that compose the ECOWAS: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo for French; Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone for English; Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau for Portuguese. The basic observation is that within the ECOWAS, countries are also organized in small groups according to the foreign language shared. That is why organizations such as the Francophonie and the Commonwealth exist and obviously affect the regional integration process engaged in by ECOWAS. Also, most of the regional integration projects are conceived and released for implementation in these three foreign languages which are not accessible to the majority of the people in the region. As a result of this situation, one can indicate the slowdown of the whole integration process, especially, when the establishment of a “Community of people” is concerned in West Africa.

For this study, two main concepts need to be clarified: language and regional integration. Some scholars understand the concept of regional integration under the appellation of “Regionalism”. This understanding involves according to Margaret Lee “the adoption of a regional project by a
formal regional economic organization designed to enhance the political, economic, social, cultural, and security integration or cooperation of member states.” In others words, integration under Regionalism relate to a defined social area determined not only by the geography but also the intensity and organization of the interactions among the states involved, to which can be added the work of non-state actors.

Language is a principal component of culture. Many definitions of language have been proposed. For William Rice-Johnston, it is a process or set of processes used to ensure there is agreement between the sender and receiver for meanings assigned to the symbols and the schema for combining them used for each communication. The American linguists Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager formulated the following definition: “a language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates.” What all the definitions of language have in common appears to be as the linguist Sapir pointed out, that humans are very much at the mercy of language concerning what constitutes "social reality." In others words “language integration” is a key factor is the achievement of any “community of people”. Aimed at the purpose of this study, language is considered as not only the set of processes that includes words and symbols used to communicate in a social group, but also the artistic part of it which involves music as suggested by Ernest Boyer.10

Every individual at childhood acquires the ability to make use of a system of communication that comprises a circumscribed set of symbols (e.g., sounds, gestures, or written or typed characters). In spoken language, this symbol set consists of noises resulting from movements of certain organs within the throat and mouth. In signed languages, these symbols are body movements, gestures,
or facial expressions. With these symbols, people are able to impart information, to express feelings and emotions, to influence the activities of others, and to comport themselves with degrees of friendliness or hostility toward persons who make use of substantially the same set of symbols. Language interacts with every aspect of human life in society, and it can be understood only if it is considered in relation to society. In short, it is the forms of speech, or the methods of expressing ideas, peculiar to a particular nation. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on the forms of speech peculiar to the ECOWAS zone countries as medium of communication.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Conscious of the importance of language for the integration process, one must acknowledge the concern of the ECOWAS in its efforts to improve communication within the community and to bring people together. The revision of the ECOWAS treaty in 1993 has allowed the addition of Portuguese as working language; this has enhanced the cooperation with the elites of the West African countries that adopted Portuguese as an official language. Also, there is an increment in the interaction between the West African populations due to the ECOWAS framework, in particular, the implementation of the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, and the Right of Residence and Establishment. However, more need to be done to achieve the ECOWAS’ Agenda 2020: the gap of communication between the regional elites and the populations has to be filled and the majority of the West African populations need to be thoroughly involved in the regional integration process. This is unachievable without particular attention to a regional language policy. Currently, among the main organs used by the ECOWAS to achieve its objectives, none appears to be specifically dedicated to language planning policy or to the social cohesion. The six strategic
pillars of the ECOWAS vision 2020, on which is based the Agenda 2020, does not seem to make room for the language aspect.

It appears that the linguistic barrier is not really comprehended and constitutes a major issue that still prevents the ECOWAS framework from being thoroughly useful to the West African vision of a “Community of people”. The structure of the ECOWAS looks less equipped to deal with the communication difficulties and misunderstanding that exist in the region. It appears important to appreciate the effectiveness of the language policies existing in order to help in the region’s integration process to achieve the ECOWAS’ agenda 2020. The questions that arise from this is what role languages play in the regional integration process? What are the language policies existing in the ECOWAS zone? And how can the language gap be narrowed in order to help achieve the agenda 2020?

1.3 Research Questions

The questions for this study are:

- What is the role of language in regional integration and how does this apply to the ECOWAS sub-region?
- What are the measures taken by ECOWAS to break down linguistic barriers in the sub-region in order to achieve the “Community of people” of its Agenda 2020?
- What are the challenges faced by ECOWAS in dealing with language, and how could the regional institution’s actions be improved?
1.4 Objectives of the Research

The main objectives of this research are:

- To identify the role of language in regional integration and link it to the ECOWAS’ sub-region;
- To bring out what is being done by ECOWAS to break down linguistic barriers in the sub-region in order to achieve its agenda 2020 of a “Community of people”
- To establish the challenges faced by ECOWAS in dealing with language and suggest probable ways to improve the effectiveness of ECOWAS’ actions.

1.5 Hypothesis

The hypothesis sustaining this research is: the lack of adequate regional language policy hampers the achievement of the ECOWAS’ Agenda 2020 and the whole regional integration process.

1.6 Scope of the Research

The work covers the involvement of language in regional integration within the ECOWAS areas. It focuses on the challenges faced by ECOWAS in the conception and implementation of its language policies in order to deal with the linguistic barriers in the region. This work, further examines how the breaking down of language barriers can effectively help ECOWAS to move from a “community of states to a community of people”

1.7 Rationale of the Research

This study set out to bring to the fore the relevance of language in the regional integration process of ECOWAS, and to highlight the challenges faced by the ECOWAS in its quest to break down
the language barriers in the sub-region. It is projected that this research will add to earlier scholarly attempts to emphasize the need to improve the measures taken by ECOWAS in dealing with language barriers for an effective “community of people” as targeted by the regional institution’s agenda 2020.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The cultural theory of international relations whose lead proponent is Richard Ned Lebow is the theory to guide this study. It is a constructivist school of thought of international relations based on theories of motives and identity formation drawn from the ancient Greeks. Lebow stresses how the human need of self-esteem influences the political behavior at every level of social aggregation. In other words, this theory scrutinizes the influence of culture and identity on the development of the international political order. Lebow’s analysis reveals how changes in norms, beliefs and values, which are motivated by irrational factors such as appetite, spirit, fear and reason, dominate political decision making in societies. The direct outcome, according to him, is that the construction of identity is essential in determining interactions between an international system and actors operating within it. Therefore, language which is a factor of identity due to its huge cultural character becomes essential to the kind of interactions that exist within an international system.11

Jacques E.C. Hymans12 called Lebow’s theory “psychological constructivism that draws on ancient and modern insights into the psychology of identity to produce a radical break from our conventional understandings of the dynamics of international politics”.13 In his criticism of Lebow’s theory, he first discussed the realist position which denies the need to consider human
psychology at the center of international theory. The realists believe ‘psychology can only contribute to a theory of foreign policy, not to a theory of international relations’. In response to this general statement, Lebow argued that ‘A theory of International Relations embedded in a theory of society is also a theory of foreign policy. There can be no meaningful theory of international relations just at the system level’. This means there is a mutual dependence between society and politics which also exist between micro and macro society. It clarifies that international politics is only possible in the context of society as much as ‘psychological constructivism’ which fits in therefore, as an international theory.  

For rational choice model scholars, ‘psychology can only explain deviations from the behavior prescribed by rationality’. On the contrary, it is established by Lebow that human behavior is inexplicable without reference to the basic psychological need such as security, appetite, self-esteem. This is well captured in his book and he says: “we are emotional beings, not computers”. The second criticism by the rationalists is that ‘individuals may be affected by psychological factors, but states are rational’. To the realist, it is clear that states are hierarchically organized groups of emotional people; an attempt to calculate the national interest objectively practically hopeless in the face of the scary complexities of politics at the highest level of social aggregation.

To the critic that ‘human psychology is too variable to serve as a useful foundation for social-scientific analysis’ Lebow explained the relevance of putting together individuals’ cognitive and emotional tendencies to obtain collective identities used by psychological constructivism, in order to provide solid patterns of international behavior at a precise time. He proved across a vast historical panorama where the example of Nazism movement led by Adolf Hitler kept in mind.
Hymans critique to Lebow is made when the latter argued that realism and the psychological constructivism were natural allies because realism is a fear based theory that evolved around the security dilemma created. Hymans explained that the social identity theory used by Lebow to formulate its argument does not often lead to the use of force or war as considered by realists. As a matter of fact, it has been proven to be highly rare by Hymans. First of all, he believes that such comparison should not be made because a cultural theory of international relations or psychological constructivism is a pure spirit-based ideal type. It does not fall within all the basic human need motives of Plato, but it focuses on values, culture and practices of the people.

The conclusion of his book *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* is that culture plays an important role in understanding international behavior. As tenets of the theory, it is established that standing and prestige are considered as an end and as means to an end. The aim of the theory is to broaden the understanding of human motives and their implications on international relations. It shows how values and practices evolved in a specific group of people can be used as tool in understanding international relations. It focuses more on human societies than the state, thus falls within the frame of the ECOWAS’ agenda 2020. This research is grounded on the principle that language is a relevant factor in the regional integration process of ECOWAS towards a “Community of people”, in as much that, language is a major component of culture.

In other words, the linguistic barriers existing within the ECOWAS zone can be used to explain the lethargic progress of the agenda 2020 and the whole regional integration process. The interest of this study is directed towards the mobilization of the social capital needed by the ECOWAS to achieve its target of a “community of people” in West Africa. This seems achievable only by using
an adequate language policy at the regional level to foster communication and create the social cohesion targeted. The approach is people-centric instead of state-centric, it emphasises the necessity to guide people in their language practices and values in order to enhance the ECOWAS regional integration process through the realization of its agenda 2020.

1.9 Literature Review

The regional and sub-regional integration process has received much attention, especially in dealing with economic, political and security aspects; but very little interest has been given to the specific aspect on the role of language and, its effects on regionalism, despite the wide range of literature on integration in Africa. The literature reviewed for this research involves peer-reviewed articles by renowned writers on language and regional integration in Africa with a focus on ECOWAS.

Finex Ndhlovu accepts as truth that language is pivotal to our understanding of conceptions of economics, politics, democracy and human rights in Africa. This he argues concerns not only the official languages on the continent, but also and foremost, the local languages.¹⁷ Language is perceived as the carrier of a people’s culture which embodies their system of ethics and aesthetics, and represents a medium for producing and consuming knowledge, a granary of their memories and imaginations”¹⁸. Therefore, the relevance of language in any integration process is of grand interest when the goal appears to be the establishment of a “community of people”. The article actually exposes two schools of thought on the question of languages in the regional integration process: one school conceives that “the multiplicity of African languages is often seen as a bane to African unity, whether at the national, regional or continental level”; the other school, which is
the post-modernist human rights discourses, suggests that every language in a multilingual society has the right to exist and to be given equal opportunity to develop legal and other technological limbs to flourish. Instead of being a costly obstacle to development, nation building, national unity, political integration and social cohesion, multilingualism is considered to be an asset. The article also treats the question of how language contributes to regional integration by bringing in the conclusions of the Asmara Declaration on African languages and literatures (2000). This is done in the article without hiding the place of the ex-colonial languages as languages of African political liberation and economic emancipation. This Declaration discloses the necessity to take into consideration languages for the development of the African continent especially the African languages, which are very important for this study.

Neville Alexander’s article “a linguistic renaissance for the continent” exposed the creation of an instrument for the development of our languages, likely to facilitate and reinforce linguistic cooperation between African states and, moreover, to promote the harmonization and the actual implementation of language policies that conform to the aspirations of our working populations.” The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) takes up the challenge to put in place a pan-African institution capable of helping African states and their peoples to conceive and develop a language policy, relevant and efficient enough to quickly contribute to the Renaissance and the Unity of Africa. This initiative of the African Union is based on the fact that linguistic human rights, political democracy, economic development, successful educational systems, national and continental cohesion, are matters that are integrally related to the language question. The author covers the measures put in place by the institution in dealing with the language question, how they affect the integration process of the region and its sub-regions, and what is expected as long term
result. The ACALAN does not focus only on the African originated languages, but also on the official languages left in Africa by the former colonial masters.

In the article *Language Barrier as the Bane of Development in Africa*, Akeem Ayofe Akinwale elaborates on how the language barrier hampers development in Africa. He explains how the imposition of several foreign languages in Africa has contributed to the division of the continent into different zones: Anglophone Africa, francophone Africa, Lusophone Africa, and Arabic Africa. The article focuses more on the marginalization of African languages by regional integration institutions such as ECOWAS, South Africa’s Reconstruction and Development Programme (SARDP), the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the African Renaissance and the Native Club of South Africa (ARNCSA) and the explicit lack of political commitment in the use of African official languages. The article clarifies the influence of French, English, Portuguese and Arabic on the development of African states. Based on his studies the author considers that the African versions of French, English and Portuguese should be promoted alongside indigenous African languages to stimulate development. African organizations such as the AU, the ECOWAS, and the NEPAD should reconsider their policies on official languages in Africa to renew the continent’s development.

The article *Law, Language and International Organization in Africa: The Case of ECOWAS* of S. B Ajulo explain the language policy problem faced by the ECOWAS, due to the provision of the article 58 of the ECOWAS Treaty. That provision created a problematic situation by referring to English and French as the two European languages prescribed, living aside the Portuguese. Also, he elaborates on the question of the authentic character of the law. Based on the article 65 of the
ECOWAS Treaty, only French and English are considered to authentic languages as far as the law is concerned in the region. This situation creates the issue of legal interpretation for the regional jurists, which falls within the framework of this study.

In the article *Alternative Contexts of Language Policy and Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Tope Omoniyi gives insights on the policies of macro-language planning and micro-language planning, and how the African States can take advantage of the implementation of these policies. He stresses particularly on the use of micro-language planning because it involves the non-governmental organizations and the individuals. He gives an interesting critique of the nation-State framework and the macro-language planning policy in the West African region. This contributes in understanding the dynamics of language policies in the region.

The book *language planning and language policies in some selected West African countries* of Ouedraogo Rakisouiligri permits to understand the language policies in most of the West African States at the national level and also at the regional level. The book provides information on the language situation in the West African region, the obstacles to the promotion of African languages, and the strategies for promoting African languages. The particular interest in the West African region of this book makes it especially relevant for this study.

### 1.10 Sources of Data

The study employed data obtained from secondary sources related to regional integration, the ECOWAS integration process and linguistic barriers. Data from the books, articles, and official
and unofficial documents were subjected to content analysis, geared towards attaining the objectives set for this dissertation.

1.11 Arrangement of Chapters

The chapters’ arrangement for this study is as follow:

- Chapter one is the research design;
- Chapter two covers the role of languages in regional integration;
- Chapter three assesses ECOWAS’ challenges in breaking down language barrier and its prospects;
- Chapter four is the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.
Endnotes

7 Ibid., p. 4.
9 Lee, Margaret, op. cit.
13 Ibid., p. 1.
14 Ibid., p. 2.
16 Ibid., p. 442.
21 Ibid., p. 56.
CHAPTER TWO
THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

2.0 Introduction

This chapter aims at bringing out the role of language in the regional integration process and how it applies to the ECOWAS sub-region, in perfect harmony with the ECOWAS’ Agenda 2020.

Language plays an undeniable pivotal role in the personal and social communication process is uncontestable, just as it plays a significant role in regional integration. The main aim of regional integration is to bring people of a specific region together to achieve certain set out goals. In order to achieve them, it is important that common policies are adopted. This cannot be done without an effective and efficient means of communication understood by all the parties involved. A critical look at the history of the world shows that the evolution and spread of languages came through rise of empires, conquest, trade, religion. In modern times, however, technology and entertainment have been responsible for this evolution.¹ Owing to the rise of new challenges through the evolution of nation-states, the adoption of a regional integration strategy became more relevant than ever. Almost all the states were interested in regional groupings.

The observation of regional strategies’ implementation reveals the intrinsic link that exists between language and regional integration, the capital effects of language on regional integration. Thus, it is appropriate to look at practical cases where regional languages policy has been applied; and how effective is the language planning policy in the ECOWAS’ member States. Particular attention is given to cross-border languages and official languages in order to
establish the link between language and regional integration. Concerning the effects of languages on regional integration, the focus is on conflict prevention, economic integration, community social cohesion, and political integration. The cases of the European Union and the East African Community are used to illustrate the advantages of an effective regional language policy.

2. 1 Language and regional integration

In the regional integration process, two categories of languages appear to be of capital interest. They are cross-border languages and official languages. These two categories of language have proven to considerably affect any regional integration strategy, as they have power on the formation and legitimation of identities within a region.²

2. 1. 1. Cross-border languages

The argument considered here is that the acknowledgment and mainstreaming of cross-border languages promises to provide a basis for a regional integration framework that accommodates all stakeholders including people involved in formal and informal cross-border activities.³ Regional integration as a socially constructed idea cannot take proper form without the almost thorough involvement of the social capital (people), especially, those carrying on cross-border activities every day. It is important to mention here that Chumbow observed in 2008 that ‘a number of development agenda have not been realized because the language aspect has not been fully integrated’.⁴ This he said at the African Academy of Languages’s (ACALAN) synthesis conference on national policies on the role of cross-border languages in February 2009, at the African Union headquarters.
According to the African Academy of Languages, cross-border languages are languages common to two or more states and domains straddling various usages. This type of language exist because many African borders were haphazardly demarcated and people speaking the same languages, sometime with very small nuances, are found on both sides of the border. Therefore, they adopt their common languages in cross-border activities. It is apparent that most of these activities contribute highly to the commercial life of their countries, and are mostly considered as informal in the African countries. The use of such languages promotes the culture of each party and creates a sentiment of belonging that enhances spontaneously any type of relationship engaged in by the countries involved, simply because there is less hindrance to communication and understanding between the parties. Even though cross-border languages are de facto pivotal facilitators for cross-border business and cultural integration, they have remained least documented and not really understood in the regional integration process in Africa, especially West Africa.

It is established in the literature that cross-border language plays the role of facilitating cross-border economic activities, opening avenues for access to alternative centers of political power, trans-border political mobilization and strategic cooperation by communities across national borders. Also, there is room for facilitating access to citizenship, refugee status, social services and related benefits tied to citizenship. It will be inappropriate to silence the fact that the role of cross-border languages in the regional integration process lies on the social capital created in the region. In other words, the more they are used and taken into consideration in the integration process, the more effectively they contribute to the mobilization of the people in the region. According to Print and Coleman, the social capital has a trust building effect that progressively boost networks and cooperation. When cross-border languages are considered, the regional integration process is not dominated only by political elites, it equally involves the
ordinary men and women involved in cross-border activities. From the view of Lesser and Moisés-Leeman, sub-Saharan countries earnestly cherish cross-border activities because trade taxes still represent a substantial source of revenue for many of them. Moreover, they posit that economic and political grounds of regional integration appear meaningless outside the context of cross-border activities whose improvement highly depends on cross-border languages.

2.1.2 Official languages

An official language can be described as the language recognized formally by the government of a country as being the one which is used for its official activities within or out of its landmass. It is also called working language. The existence of official language is relevant for the communication and the policy making process at the level of the elites. In the African context, the official languages are generally the native tongues of the ex-colonial masters. Thus there is French, English and Portuguese. The choice to use European languages can be seen as both useful and questionable in Africa. It is questionable because the languages used are not spoken by the majority and uneducated people of most African countries concerned. This generally makes the provision of service by governing authorities and regional integration institutions inaccessible to most Africans; and, it fails to foster a sense of African identity. Nevertheless, this choice is understandable, taking into consideration the fact that three foreign languages are adopted as official languages by almost all the African countries (including the totality of the ECOWAS member states), and through these languages, the African region can be linked to the rest of the world.

The African academics and professionals that need to be consulted for regional integration process mostly acquired their training and education in English, French and Portuguese. If it is not all the three, at least two of these languages are considered to be the working languages of
all the international institutions in the world that can be useful for the regional integration process. The adoption of international languages as official ones gives to the citizens of a specific country or region the means of interactions with the outer world. Furthermore, it appears that some other specific reasons might have favoured the choice of foreign languages as official for African countries. For instance, they could be used right away because of the already standardized orthographies; their literacy materials were adequate, and they were giving the opportunity of a unifying force in the multilingual and multicultural setting of most African countries.¹¹

Underlining the necessity to combine the use of the foreign languages that represent African states’ official languages in general, to the African languages in regional integration process is well captured by Chebanne.¹² He argues that European languages are useful for globalization or linking the African region to other parts of the world, but African languages are essential for regionalization of the African culture because they communicate what is important to the cultural lives of the people.¹³

2. 2. The Effect of Languages on Regional Integration

The consideration of languages in the regional integration process has numerous effects which can be rooted in four main aspects: conflicts prevention, economic integration, political integration and social cohesion.

2.2.1 Conflicts Prevention

Conflicts are generally the outcomes of misunderstandings or incompatibility of goals which is mostly due to lack of communication. Therefore, the notion of conflict prevention can be understood here as the built-in capacities of societies to deal with conflicting interests without
resorting to violence. In other words, it focuses on the prevention of harmful violent means in dealing with inevitable diverging interests to extend in all societies.  

Looking at the fact that most African states are multilingual with many cross-border languages, allowing and encouraging people to use their mother-tongue will avoid conflict among communities whose languages are not widely used. This alleviates any sense of inferiority among the people whose languages are not chosen to be spoken on a regional scale, because they are equally given the opportunities to develop their language. When such a situation is not properly addressed it evolves in a case where many languages are endangered. A language is endangered when a critical number of its owners refrain from using it and fail to take steps to reverse the neglect. Language owners may inadvertently refrain from speaking their language because it is not accorded prestige value and roles. For instance, Godwin Aondona conducted an interesting research on the Middle Belt ethnic tensions in Nigeria as a microcosm of the African context. The facts revealed that these conflicts resulted from the actions taken by ethnic groups in an attempt to restore their identities in a geopolitical space. Statistics of many ethnic violence have been given within the state of Nigeria; the atrocities of the Tutsi and Hutu conflict that took place in Central Africa Region were based on similar events. Language appears to be the compendium of the overall ethnic existence. There is therefore, a need to take into consideration the linguistic anxieties of all groups because language is not just the expression of identity, but mostly the foundation of identity.

Additionally, in the application of peacebuilding and conflicts prevention strategies, it has been proven that differences in terminologies not understood, planning cultures and approaches between various actors working in conflict area, the difficulty of understanding each other and the assignment of attribution constitute a major challenge. This situation is largely linked to
the language barriers. It is equally explained that the lack of consensus on vocabulary can create
confusion and forms a barrier to harmonized or coordinated approaches.\(^{19}\) An appropriate
regional languages policy is an anticipated panacea in prevention for such situations in the sense
that, the fluidity of the communication pre-established in the region will reflect on the human
resources engaged for these conflicts prevention and peacebuilding operations.

2.2.2 Economic Integration

Economic integration in a regional context aims to increase competition, reduce private
transaction costs, thus enabling firms to exploit economies of scale, encourage inward foreign
investment, and facilitate macroeconomic policy coordination.\(^{20}\) Based on a research conducted
by the commission of the European Union on regional trading arrangements, one of the two
specific criteria to meet in order to maximize the gains of trade agreements is ‘optimal proximity
between partners’. This involves, according to the commission, not merely geographical
proximity but also economic, regulatory and cultural proximity.\(^{21}\) Actually, the aspect
concerning cultural proximity underlines the relevance of languages in creating any economic
ties within a region. This is because language is identified to be an important vehicle of people’s
cultures.\(^{22}\) In other words, countries that see themselves as sharing a common history and
interests through the intensity of communication established by their linguistic practices are
inclined to enhance the coordination of their policies which results in a stronger trade
relationship than others. The practical aspect of this argument can be related, for instance, to
the application of the idea of ‘free movement of goods and services in a region. The probability
to trade without considering cross-border languages to communicate does not really exist. In
developed countries, the labelling of foodstuff for regional scale has been quite problematic
since there are many languages. This situation was only dealt with when legal measures were
taken.\(^{23}\) This falls under Bruno De witte’s argument that national language policies are
susceptible to be scrutinized “whenever they constitute a barrier to economic integration” because the “connection between language use and economic integration arises with regard to each of the central principles of economic integration: the free movement of goods, the free movement of services and the free movement of persons”. Such conclusions emphasizes the pivotal role of languages in regional economic integration process.

2.2.3 Community social cohesion

Scholarly insights given by Hulse and Stone explain community cohesion as an instance that stands for a common vision and sense of belonging, the appreciation and value for diversity and difference. To this is added the idea that similar chances should be provided, irrespective of people’s background. The objective is the development of the relationship between diverse groups. In other words it involves bringing people’s life styles together in a community made of different social groups. It also refers to a symphonic coexistence of individuals of all cultural backgrounds within a community. Taking into account the role of languages in regional planning for school and family education brings about an enhancement of community cohesion in the regional integration process. There is no doubt about the fact that education is a key factor in the promotion of social cohesion. Heyneman established in a genius manner the aspects in which education contributes to social cohesion: ‘education establishes public knowledge about social contracts among and between individuals and schools are the place where students are provided with the context in which they learn about the appropriate behavior for upholding social contracts’. Also, in the African context, the use of some African languages for administrative purposes and as medium of instruction in education has proven its effect in facilitating horizontal integration across a large geographical area.
2.2.4 Political integration

The observations show that political leaders use local languages for mobilization during political campaigns. Mass literacy and education in local languages widely spoken in a region will help in the mobilization of the population in order to foster regional development. For instance, in Kenya, the ruling elites tried to mislead the people about the content of the draft constitution which was written in English. This happened during the referendum campaigns, and many FM stations broadcasted in Kiswahili and other Kenyan vernaculars enough information to prevent the ruling elites from achieving their plan. Therefore, people voted against the wish of the elites, showing the power of a language in bringing the people of a nation together. This really shows how a language can mobilize a population of a nation towards economic and political advancement and one can imagine the probable effects at a regional scale.

2.3 The role of language in regional integration: Case Studies

There are language issues wherever a regional integration process is ongoing, however, the European Union (EU) and the East African Community (EAC) are two regional integration institutions which seem to have more or less tackled in a brilliant manner the language aspect of integration.

2.3.1 The East African Community (EAC)

The EAC was established by a treaty signed on the 30th of November 1999 and entered into force on the 7th July 2000. Its member states are Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Republic of Uganda. The institution’s headquarters is in Arusha, Tanzania. To have a successful integration process, the community’s political integration is indicated by cultural and social assimilation before the community achieves economic amalgamation. In other words, the priority for the EAC was to find a way to bring people together in the region.
The strategy used evolved around Kiswahili as a common language (lingua franca) for the East African region.\textsuperscript{30} Therefore, it is appropriate to mention that Kiswahili has played an important developmental role in the regional integration, especially by contributing to the elimination of the cultural and social obstacles that stand in the way of a fast tracked regional integration.

It is important to underline the fact that the Kiswahili positive effect on the region started long before the recent re-activation of the EAC in 1999. Actually, the first attempt to have an East African Community was with the signing of the 1967 Treaty of cooperation by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda\textsuperscript{31}. Unfortunately, this ended ten years later in 1977 due to many events, of which the decision to end the common monetary unit and establish separate currencies in 1966; the replacement of the University of East Africa by the national institutions in 1970; the cessation of operations related to the East African Income tax Department; and the collapse of East African Airways in 1977.\textsuperscript{32} However, this failure is also linked to the fact that the Community established was not able to reduce the inherited inequalities, and Kenya’s economic growth has outpaced those of its partners since then.

The language has contributed in uniting the people of Tanzania under president Nyerere, who put up a certain number of government structures that absolutely required the Kiswahili language qualification. According to Arthur Haelwood, the EAC had the widest proposal, dealing with a number of activities in a highly organized manner.\textsuperscript{33} The unitary African language strategy adopted has fostered a more cohesive community by creating deeper interactions among citizens of the EAC member states. This has led the community to considerable progress: the establishment of Customs Union that came into effect in 2005 in order to create an economic liberalization and promote intra-regional trade and efficacy in production; the common external tariff and the EAC Customs Management Act are some of the
achievements. Also, the regional competition Act, the promotion of a single investment area and the initiation of a common trade policy framework are not to be ignored. This has resulted in a diversification of products range, an improvement of the market access and the growth of small and medium enterprises in the region.

The intra-regional trade increased from US$1,979.2 million to US$3,339.4 million between 2006 and 2008. Exports increased from US$1,084.9 million to US$1,902.9 million whilst imports increased from US$874.3 million to US$1,436.5 million, over the same period.\textsuperscript{34} The most astounding development of this community that will surely be a first if it comes to pass is their objective of a political integration leading to the establishment of a federal government.\textsuperscript{35} This appears to be an idea of how far language involvement can lead to benefits for the regional integration process.

\textbf{2.3.2 The European Union (EU)}

The regional integration process of the EU adopted the languages existing in the community through the principle of “unity in diversity”. This principle is encoded in the article 22 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights adopted in 2002. It expresses the noble intention to respect the languages diversity in the region. However, it has been made necessary for all the community citizens to have language skills. In specific terms, the Union has set the goal of making each citizen speak at least two other European languages other than his or her mother tongue.\textsuperscript{36} The increment of polylinguism is the target and education is the key to achieving this feat. In other words, the institution aims to create conditions that will enable the free use of every language. This will bring about respect for identity and cultural diversity, better access to information, more intensive personal interaction, improvement of work relations and deeper
mutual understanding. Such target involves a specific accurate education strategy that takes into consideration children and adults.

Also, one must highlight, for instance, that economic relations have a linguistic dimension in the sense that they involve communication exchanges. The language diversity that seems to constitute barriers to the free flow of exchanges received a legal panaceas from the European Commission based on the European court of justice’s case of the Geffroy judgment. This means that Member States’ legislation can prescribe the use of a specific language for the labelling of foodstuff, but cannot preclude the possibility that “another language easily understood” be used as an alternative to the language prescribed. Otherwise, they are held to be in breach of internal market rules because they constitute a barrier to the free movement of goods. It is obvious that the EU has taken great interest in the role of languages in it integration process, and this has contributed to the efficiency of its economic, cultural and political integration considered as one of the best in the world.

2. 4 Language in the ECOWAS integration process

The ECOWAS zone is the main focus of this research based on the specific objective contained in its agenda 2020: moving from a community of states to a community of people. It is, therefore relevant to identify the structure and objectives of ECOWAS, the languages involve in the region and finally to understand the ECOWAS’ agenda 2020.

2.4.1 The ECOWAS’ structure and objectives

Following the signing of a treaty, the ECOWAS was established on the 28th May 1975. The institution covers a geographical and political area of 15 countries which are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. In 1993 the Treaty was revised to accelerate
the regional integration process. According to the provisions of the Treaty establishing the ECOWAS, its objectives are the economic integration, the adoption of the principle of supranationality, the designation of ECOWAS as the sole economic community for regional integration in West Africa, and the adoption of mechanisms for regional peace, stability and security\textsuperscript{39}. The organs used by the ECOWAS to achieve its objectives are mainly the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS parliament, the Community Court of Justice, and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development.

### 2.4.2 The cross-border languages

Oueadraogo identifies some cross-border or trans-national African languages found in selected Anglophone and Francophone West African countries.\textsuperscript{40} The languages identified are Hausa, Fulfulde or Pulaar, Yoruba, Bambara or Jula, Senoufo, Ewe, Gurmancéma, Mandinka and Dangara just to name a few. A summary of languages spoken and the countries where they are spoken is presented in the table below:

**Table of cross-border languages in the ECOWAS zone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Names of countries where spoken</th>
<th>Number of countries where spoken (x/15)</th>
<th>Percentage of countries speaking the language (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfulde</td>
<td>Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Togo</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>Benin, Niger, Nigeria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bambara</td>
<td>Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senoufo</td>
<td>Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewe</td>
<td>Benin, Ghana, Togo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurmancéma</td>
<td>Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagara</td>
<td>Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandinka</td>
<td>Senegal, Mali, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows how linguistically integrated the West African region is with so many cross-border and trans-national languages, which are obviously spoken on a daily basis in the many cross-border activities. It similarly shows that Hausa, Fulfulde, and Mandinka are the most widely spread in the region, but it does not mean that they are the most spoken. Also, the percentage of how widely spread cross-border languages are reveals more or less how effective they can be for the community social cohesion if they are effectively considered in the regional integration process.

### 2.4.3 The official languages

The official languages existing in the ECOWAS zone are nothing else than the languages of the former colonial master of the region. Thus, the region is divided into three linguistic areas based on the three official languages adopted: French, English, and Portuguese. Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia adopted English as official language; Guinea Bissau and Gambia adopted Portuguese, and the rest of the ECOWAS countries adopted French. This linguistic reality is the reason why the three languages have been adopted as working languages of the Economic Community of West African States. A closer look at the regional integration process indicates the tendency of each of the three groups to have a better understanding and social cohesion.
within their linguistic area than at the regional level. This can also be explained by the lack or ineffectiveness of regional languages planning to boost the integration process. This latent linguistic situation does not really fall within the ECOWAS agenda 2020.

2.4.4 The ECOWAS’ agenda 2020

The ECOWAS vision 2020 is stated as follow: “to create a borderless, peaceful, prosperous and cohesive region, built on good governance and where people have the capacity to access and harness its enormous resources through the creation of opportunities for sustainable development and environmental reservation”. This vision is based on the Agenda 2020 which is to “move from a Community of States to a Community of people”. The vision established is elaborated in five main themes:

- **Regional resources development;**
  This is oriented towards the commitment of the community to the effective delivery capacity of social services for good health, nutrition, education, professional and technical training, moral and cultural values and appropriate attention to issues of gender, youths and children.

- **Peace and security;**
  The ECOWAS of people conceived here must strive for peace and security in all spheres, meaning political, social, military, and environmental. A threat to security at any part of the region must be seen a menace for the entire region and the new vision.

- **Governance;**
  The theme is about the urgency to strengthen and deepen the institutions of democratic governance using appropriate standards. Thus the necessity to establish some codes of conduct for public officials in the region.
- **Economic and monetary integration;**
  
  It evolves around the need to achieve a region-wide functioning customs union through effective implementation of the ECOWAS common external tariff and complete removal of the remaining non-tariff impediments to intra-ECOWAS trade.\textsuperscript{44}

- **Private sector;**
  
  A vibrant regionally-oriented private sector appears to be a requirement. It has to be driven a strong ECOWAS Business Council led by the business community of the region in order to efficiently contribute to the West African integration process.\textsuperscript{45}

  This represents the basis of the framework in which the ECOWAS vision 2020 is grounded; hence the Agenda 2020. It seems that no particular attention is given to languages on the road map of the “ECOWAS of people” which is quite unfortunate. Therefore, it is relevant to shift the research attention to what is really the regional body’s languages strategy, its challenges and the potential prospects in order to contribute to effectively to the achievement of the Agenda 2020. The next chapter covers the language policies in the ECOWAS zone, the obstacles to policies implementation and the prospects of language in the ECOWAS integration process.
Endnotes

1 Macharia, James Maina, “The Role Of A Unitary Language And Communication In Enhancing Regional Integration In The East African Community (EAC)”, A Research Project Submitted To The Institute Of Diplomacy And International Studies In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For The Award Degree Of Master Of Arts In International Studies, October, 2013, p. 2.

2 Alexander, Neville, “a linguistic renaissance for the continent?”, The African Academy of Languages, storage.globalcitizen.net/data/topic/knowledge/.../2010042694220579, p. 56, accessed on 19th July 2015.


5 Ibid., p. 4.

6 Ndhlouv, Finex, op. cit., p. 21.


9 Ndhlouv, Finex, op. cit., p. 27.


11 Kanana, Fridah Erastus, Examining African Languages as Tools for National Development: The Case of Kiswahili, Department of English and Linguistics, Kenyatta University; Nairobi, Kenya

12 Bagwasi, Mompoloki Mmangaka, op. cit., p. 240.


15 Ibid., p. 449.

16 Ibid., p. 437.

17 Ibid., p. 440.


19 Ibid., p. 15.


23 Bernier, Julie, op.cit., p. 5.

24 Ibid., p. 6.

25 Ibid.


29 Macharia, James Maina, “The Role Of A Unitary Language And Communication In Enhancing Regional Integration In The East African Community (EAC)”, A research project submitted to the institute of diplomacy and interational studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award degree of master of arts in international studies, October 2013, p. V.


Ibid.


The 4th EAC Development Strategy.

Macharia, James Maina, op. cit., p. 67, 68.


Ibid., p. 457.

Bernier Julie, op., cit., p. 4.


Kanana, Fridah Erastus, op., cit., pp. 57, 58.


CHAPTER THREE

THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF LANGUAGE IN THE ECOWAS INTEGRATION PROCESS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is based on the fact that an appropriate flow of the communication is necessary to mobilize the needed social capital (the population) in every regional integration project. This is achievable only when the language barriers are overcome, as it is impossible for people to participate in their own development when they cannot understand and control the knowledge and skills essential for development. In view of this, it is important to identify the measures states within the ECOWAS zone have taken either individually or collectively, the challenges faced, and the development opportunities that can come out of better approaches to languages in the region. Therefore, this chapter entails the language policies existing in the ECOWAS zone, the obstacles to the policies’ implementation, and the development opportunities of a language policy well implemented.

3.1 Language policies in the ECOWAS zone

Language policy is synonymous to language planning which has been defined differently by scholars according to specific context. However, two key points are raised in the definition by Rubin and Jernudd. They posit that language planning is “the formulation and evaluation of alternatives for solving language problems to find the best (or optimal, most efficient) decision”\(^1\). Therefore, it involves a combination of a purely linguistic activity which requires technocrats of the field; and a purely administrative activity that belongs to the political administration\(^2\). The latter is the only one invested with the power to give the appropriate standing that can lead the technocrats work on language policies to be implemented. The accurate understanding of ‘language planning’ necessary for this study cannot be complete
without Tauli’s view, which defines language planning as “the methodical activity of regulating and improving existing languages or creating new common regional, national, or international languages.”³

However, it is relevant to mention the existence of macro-language planning and micro-language planning. Macro language planning is strictly carried on by nation-states in the region while micro language planning policy makes room for non-governmental organizations and private individuals’ involvement⁴. This part of the study aims to find out what West African states do in language planning and how it affect the regional integration process.

3.1.1 Individual States

The ECOWAS member-states language policies are examined here within the framework of economic, political and social integration at the national level. It is observed that as much as Francophone West African countries have almost the same language policies, the Anglophone countries also have almost identical language strategies; and so do the countries speaking Portuguese⁵. Therefore, this classification based on the historical fact that some countries have been colonized by France, some by Portugal and others by British is very useful in the understanding of each group’s policies. Based on Noss⁶ analysis, there are three types of language policy adopted by states in the region: official language policy, educational language policy and general languages policy. These policies, which fall under the category of public policy are always carried on by the minority elites in West African countries.

Official language policy refers to the languages recognized by governments as serving in their daily activities. The functions assumed by official language are statutory, working and symbolic. They are statutory because of the fact that states’ constitutions give them a
fundamental legal basis; their use in every administrative and official activity confers on them the working function; and the symbolic function relates to the cultural value that seems to be attached to countries that speak the same official languages. In West Africa, there are three official languages used for all political and educational activities. Among the fifteen states of the ECOWAS zone, nine adopted French, four adopted English and two adopted Portuguese. These three languages are the fruits of the continuation of the language policy inherited from the former colonial masters of the region which are France, Britain and Portugal. That is why Noss concludes that not much progress has been realized in this area.

As far as the educational language policy is concerned, the general observation is that many countries use their official languages as medium of instruction and study from primary level to the university level. However, certain developments have been observed in Anglophone countries such as Ghana and Nigeria which have adopted some African languages as subjects of study at the primary and secondary level of education. Actually, the language policy practices in these countries require that the first four years of schooling be taught in African languages. This appears to be a constitutional requirement and part of the educational policies. Lastly, the general language policy has to do with government tolerance of languages used for mass communication, business and contact with foreigners, such as cross-border languages. These languages often appear to be the most used by the majority of the regional population in their daily activities. This explain their ‘de facto’ recognition by government. They are widely spoken in public and private media of communication, especially for mass mobilization by political activists.
3.1.2 Common strategies

The term common strategies here refers to any language policy adopted at the regional level by ECOWAS member-states. It is of great importance in the sense that it seems to be an effective way to involve West Africans in the regional integration process, especially, with the great vision of Agenda 2020. The literature revealed how much language embodies the knowledge and culture of people, and this is an indispensable need to enable the people move forward as a whole. It appears that common strategies as regional language planning that covers the whole ECOWAS zone do not really exist, and if they do, they seem to be kept out of reach. However, attempts by some states within the region to promote their shared language through the binding of their educational systems is noticed. Thus, Francophone states integrate into their educational curriculum, practices suggested by the “Francophonie” and the “Conférence des Ministres de l’Education des Etats d’Expression Française” (Conference of Education Ministers of French-speaking Countries). Their common strategy is purely based on the use of French as the only medium of education and official activities. Also, their educational system is shaped according to the practices in the French educational system. This can be explained by the existence of accords and agreements between them.

On the other hand, the Anglophone countries have the commonwealth which equally influence their choice of language policy. They adopted English language as the medium of education and communication. It is important to note that they have all decided to integrate African languages into the curriculum in primary and secondary levels of education, and Ghana and Nigeria are making considerable efforts in this process. The Portuguese language policy adopted by the two ECOWAS member-states that are former colonies of Portugal cannot be overlooked. On their side, the harmonization of their educational systems around their shared
language, Portuguese, is effective in the sense that this is the language used as a medium of education and daily interactions in both countries.

Language planning at the regional level within the ECOWAS zone gives the following picture: vertical language integration which refers to the cohesion between elites of different ethnic groups. Francophone elites can read and write French, Anglophone elites can read and write English, and the lusophone elites can read and write Portuguese. This explains the adoption of French, English, and Portuguese as working languages of the ECOWAS. Actually, the Article 58 of the ECOWAS Treaty states: "The official languages of the Community shall be such African languages declared official by the Authority and English and French". In other words, only French and English were adopted as official language of the regional institution. It was later, after the revision of the Treaty in July 1993 that Portuguese was added. The practice has shown today that the three languages are the one effectively use by the regional institution, with a dominance of French and English. Vertical integration limits participation in the regional integration process to very few people by excluding the masses who do not have the same language framework with the Governments. Nonetheless, one must recognized that vertical integration make governing easy at the regional and national levels. There is no unanimous adoption of the use of African languages as medium of initial literacy and as subject matters at the primary and secondary levels of education. Only the Anglophone countries are making the efforts. However, there is a widespread use of African languages in non-formal education programmes and cross-border activities. It will be unfortunate to end the analysis of the regional language strategies without taking a look at the ECOWAS strategic pillars for its Agenda 2020: “move from a community of states to a community of people.”

In order to achieve its vision 2020, the ECOWAS adopted six (06) strategic pillars on which to profile its activities. These pillars are: promote good governance and justice; strengthen the
mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution; promote infrastructure development to support a competitive business environment, sustained development and cooperation in the region; deepen economic and monetary integration; reinforce institutional capacity; and strengthen mechanism for integration. The observation of these pillars reveals that the issue of language has been thrown aside in the strategy to achieve the agenda 2020.

This situation is very critical in the sense that a “community of people” requires the involvement of the majority of the West Africans as social capital. Also, the literature has shown that it is impossible to mobilize people without the use of the appropriate language policy for the community. Therefore, the ECOWAS needs to put in much more efforts to ensure that the language aspect is integrated into the agenda 2020.

What is usually observed is that macro language planning is given all the attention in West Africa and better formalized than micro language, instead of being complementary for a better community cohesion, they seem to be quite distant to each other. In general, there is a deficit of language planning policy in the ECOWAS zone, due to the low status of many African languages and the apparent lack of political will. One may ask, what then are the hindrances to language planning policies in the region?

3.2 Obstacles to policies implementation

The challenges faced by language policies in the ECOWAS region can be grouped into four categories. These are political reasons, economic factors, pedagogic issues and social impediments.
3.2.1 Political reasons

One of the political reasons that affect the adoption and effectiveness of language policies in Africa (West Africa particularly) is the type of regime. Whether it is a military or a civilian regime, a competitive or non-competitive party system, it obviously affects the type of language policy adopted. History gives the example of the decision made in Ethiopia and Somalia about the status of the African language Amhaeric, and how pivotal the promotion of African languages was for socialist governments of Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso during the period of Sékou Touré. Also, the position won by the Swahili in Tanzania during the socialist-oriented regime of Julius Nyerere is not to be ignored. This influence of language has evolved and is considerably helping the East African Community in achieving its integration objectives. One must point out the capital role played by the leaders’ idiosyncrasies in this contexts, because if the leader is not personally interested in a certain language policy framework, the type of regime will not automatically result in an adequate language policy. Therefore, the challenge here is that, it is much more the leaders’ personal idiosyncrasies which determines how much efforts is put in language policy planning. The swing from Greek to Latin during the rule of Romans over western and Mediterranean Europe, and later on the change from Latin to modern European language when European countries took control of their own destiny is a perfect example of how political power can affect the adoption of a language policy. Also, in Africa, it is an undeniable fact that Arabic became popular through the conquest of many territories by Islamic armies. The leaders of West African states do not express effective interest in language policy. This lack of political will constitute a serious obstacle to the use of language in ECOWAS, and it affect the relationship between the elites and the people.
3.2.2 Pedagogic issues

These factors have to do with the educational systems existing in the ECOWAS region; most parents and students are not willing to be taught African languages as subject in schools, and educational policy makers are extremely attentive to their demands. Therefore, these languages are not often taught. The commercial and high international characters of foreign languages such as English, French and Portuguese make them the most expected to be taught in West African countries. Other aspects such as how to acquire the appropriate knowledge to adapt to the rapid evolution of science and technology highly influence the language policy and the strategy adopted for education development in West Africa. These days, most of the necessary materials, if not all, are in these foreign languages. All these aspects constitute obstacles to an appropriate language policy implementation in ECOWAS.

3.2.3 Economic factors

The economic factors that constitute an impediment to language planning policy in the ECOWAS zone mainly lies in how to finance any eventual language policy. Most of the countries in the region already strive to deal with other issues such as poverty reduction, creation of jobs, agricultural projects, access to potable water and electricity. Therefore, the funding of a language policy does not really appear to be a priority. One must also underline the fact that all the ECOWAS member states are bound by international agreements and obligations with institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations System. Thus, these institutions influence the direction of all policies, including the language planning policy. One concrete example is the uncontestable influence of the Structural Adjustment Programmes in the elaboration and implementation of development policies in West Africa. The point here is that it seems unnecessary to establish a language planning policy when there is no fund to help it be implemented. The case in the ECOWAS zone is presented
such that the available budget does not allow the majority of member states to engage in the training and development of human resources, necessary materials, and evaluation systems for any other language than the ones inherited from the former colonial masters.

### 3.2.4 Social impediments

The social impediments refer to how the social features linked to ethnic groups sometimes constitute a challenge to the adoption of a language policy. The literature clarifies the fact that language policies are adopted by the community on attitudes and values based. The attachment to cultural values leads speakers of minority languages in West Africa to oppose the adoption of majority language in the perspective of an African language policy. For instance, in Mali it is not uncommon to witness Songhay or Dogon speakers turn off their radio or television because of the seeming monopoly of Bambara in the media. This sentiment spread somehow in the regional community seems to comfort the political leaders in their option to allow the colonial legacy to continue to shape and define post-colonial problems and practices, especially when education and language policies are concerned. This is why most West African countries decided to maintain the language in the region as it was before independence, not willing to create more conflicts in trying to change the role of African languages. This explains the status of French, English and Portuguese in the ECOWAS zone. In other words, social features that impede on the adoption of language policies are the huge inequality in development between regions inhabited by different ethnic groups; the survival strategy adopted by minority speakers which consists of opposing every policy that enhances the majority of languages in education and politics.

From the national perspective, it appears that many factors constitute challenges for the development of African languages policy in the sense that their implementation may endanger
the fragile peace and stability that exists in many West African states. Therefore, to maintain their power, the elites keep the inherited language policy and allow the informal development and practices of the African languages. This explains the ‘one nation one language fallacy’ which is considered as the failure of creating a national identity in each State; and also the existential paradox which means that in the process of acquiring English, French and Portuguese, young African grow up neither rooted in European values, nor in African values. For instance, this macro-language policy adopted by states (the exclusive use of foreign languages as national languages) has shown its limits in the region for the past three decade according to Bamgbose. He exposed the civil wars in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970, in Liberia from 1989 to 2003, in Sierra Leone from 1990 to 2000, and in Côte d’Ivoire from 2003 up to 2009, as a typical example of failure of such exclusive language policy. The regional perspective’s main challenge lies in the political will of West African leaders grounded in the financial support and the non-existence of an appropriate regional language policy.

3.3 Development opportunities of languages policies

The existence of an appropriate language policy well implemented in the ECOWAS zone will bring about an obvious improvement of the regional integration process. It will create a better community of people while enhancing each development aspect: administrative, judicial, educational, agricultural and commercial.

3.3.1 Administrative

The exclusive use of French, English and Portuguese in the administration and politics limits considerably the involvement of the West African people in the public life and decision making in each member states and at the regional level. Therefore, a regional language policy that includes African cross-border languages can alleviate the financial charge of each ECOWAS
member states. This will make the access to necessary materials and human resources easily available for the implementation of the language polices. Also, this will enhance social interactions among officials from different member states when working for the regional interests. Such informal cohesion of human resources will obviously influence the flow of information and indirectly regional and national ties.\textsuperscript{18} Due to the inextricable relation between language and culture, a regional language policy will be conceived with a special consideration to the cultural foundation. This will bring about the dreamed social cohesion contained in the ECOWAS Agenda 2020. Such language policies would have to be implemented within the global framework of each West African state’s cultural and educational development policies. It involves therefore a harmonization of policies, projects and programmes in the region.

3.3.2 Judicial

In the ECOWAS judicial system it is a known fact that ‘no one is supposed to not know the law.’\textsuperscript{19} It is noticeable that the majority of the people are often not aware of the existence of most of the laws, and when they do, they have no understanding of the substance of these laws. This is generally due to the fact that the laws are written in foreign language (French, English, and Portuguese) and accessible to only the elites. For instance, the legal system in Burkina Faso, Benin, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Guinea, and Togo is largely inspired by and dependent on French law and procedures. Likewise the legal system in Anglophone countries in West Africa are inherited from the British colonial legacy.\textsuperscript{20} An African language policy will obviously help in making people aware of the law in the region, thereby increasing their participation and facilitating the work of each country’s judicial structure; especially the work of the ECOWAS court of justice.
There is a distinction between authentic and official texts as far as the judicial system is concerned in West Africa. The authentic text is usually in an official language and recognized as an authoritative text, since it is written in a language considered as the original one used by the judicial system. When translated in any other language (whether official or not) the system has to always refer to the text in the authentic language in order to avoid falling prey to the probable defective nature of the translation. The status of being authoritative or official is given by the agreement of states. In the case of West Africa for instance, the original ECOWAS treaty’s articles 58 and 65, English and French were considered as official and authentic languages\textsuperscript{21}. Therefore, they were absolutely authoritative and biding when a legal text was written in them, for the resolve of interpretation. This situation undermined the translation of the law in African languages that may be done to allow the West African people in majority to know and understand the law. Any translation will be just of persuasive authority. A regional language that will raise the status of some African languages as authentic languages and provide multilingual judicial system to the region, will obviously facilitate the work of the jurists and the participation of the whole community whilst reducing translation cost, as far as the multilingual skills are enhanced within the judicial human resources.

3.3.3 Educational

According to Rakissouiligri\textsuperscript{22} the existence of millions of illiterate adults in West Africa is due to the use of only French, English, and Portuguese as the only medium of education. Hence, the use of a language planning policy that will integrate African languages as medium of education, at least at the primary level, will increase the literacy rate in the region. Such initiative falls under the recommendation of UNESCO which advised that early education should be done in the mother tongue of the child, at the Teheran conference in 1965.
3.3.4 Agricultural and Commercial

It is established that the majority of the people in the ECOWAS zone populations that highly contribute to the development of agricultural and commercial activities do not have access in any proactive way to French, English, or Portuguese. They are mostly known as illiterates. A regional African language policy that will provide relevant information on efficient and safe use of fertilizers and pesticides, practical information on high-yield varieties of crops and cattle breeds, appropriate planting seasons, irrigation techniques, techniques for preserving and enriching the cultivated soils while protecting the environment, will obviously boost the regional economic system. This will increase the production and the regional intra-trade. Furthermore, the organization of the rural populations into productive units, groups and associations in order to make the expert knowledge to engage in professional trade activities will be facilitated, helping then in formalizing many cross border commercial activities. More specifically, this language will bring about a better understanding of the economic and political objectives pursued by the regional institutions to the populations; a more receptive attitude to the regional integration policies developed by ECOWAS; and a better availability of all relevant information on the usefulness of regional institutions to traders and merchants in the ECOWAS space. Taking the industrial field, the main benefits of the regional African language policy vary from a better respect and application of safety and security measures, passing by the ease in developing and implementing innovative practices including use of new technologies, and better understanding of regulations and management principles, to the improvement of productivity and quality of products. Generally, a language policy that shift from foreign official languages to African languages at least at the micro planning level will be of great use for the efficiency of the economic sector, especially in rural areas and town where the populations are skilled only in their native tongues.
There is actually no doubt according to the literature about the many benefits that will come out from a regional integration process that takes into consideration the planning of African languages policy in the ECOWAS zone, particularly vis a vis of the regional agenda 2020.
Endnotes

2 Ibid.
5 Ouedraogo, Rakissouiligri Mathieu, op., cit., p. 4.
6 Ibid., p. 55.
7 Ibid., p. 17.
9 Ouedraogo, Rakissouiligri Mathieu, op., cit., p. 4.
11 Omoniyi, Tope, op., cit., p. 534.
13 Ouedraogo, Rakissouiligri Mathieu, op., cit., p. 55.
14 Ibid., p. 20.
16 Ouedraogo, Rakissouiligri Mathieu, op., cit., p. 45.
17 Bamgbose, Ayo, op., cit.
19 Ouedraogo, Rakissouiligri Mathieu, op., cit., p. 63.
20 Ibid., p. 24.
22 Ouedraogo, Rakissouiligri Mathieu, op., cit., p. 73
CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This study sought to analyze the language planning policies in the ECOWAS and to highlight the challenges and prospects of languages in the West African region. This chapter seeks to summarize the findings of the study, draws conclusions and suggest recommendations.

4.1 Summary of findings

The findings of this study are centered on three main points: the linguistic struggle within the ECOWAS zone, the lack of appropriate regional language planning policy, the usefulness of language policy for regional integration process.

4.1.1 The linguistic struggle within the ECOWAS zone

The existence of linguistic struggle is a fact in the West African region. The struggle is effectively noticed after the independence of African countries, when the faith of their populations and lands was given back to them after a long period of western countries’ domination and imperialism. For purpose of administration, the imperial States have established the use of their language as the only medium of education for the African people. Also, they used their languages in daily administrative work, making therefore secondary African languages which are considered as having less importance for development. Immediately after the independence, the few people educated in the former colonizers language with the particular ability to understand and negotiate with them were called the African elites. They took the leadership of West African countries with the formal intention to maintain their position of elites by pursuing the same language policy inherited from the former colonizers. The use of
these foreign languages not understood and spoken by the majority of the West African populations created many frustrations and distance between the leaders and their people. This amplified the linguistic struggle which involves the cohabitation of the former colonizers languages with the African languages, and mostly the harm that comes out of it. The African languages are given a very low status in the region, and their use is typically restricted to domains that are not really important for the leadership, while French, English and Portuguese have maintained their high status. It confers to them (French, English, and Portuguese) the right to be used in “prestigious” domains as indicated by the leadership. This situation has drastically drawn back the involvement of the populations in capital projects of development such as those in the regional integration process. That situation has affected the development of African languages in the region, thus responsible of their low status. For instance, it seems that African languages lack written tradition, thus vocabulary, orthography, production of materials that can be used in schools, and new concepts that fits in the current world development of science and technology. Concerning the development of science and technology, the African leaders’ grand interests for modernization and economic development can justify their language choice, in the sense that these foreign languages were extensively used in science and technology, a situation that is adequate for the rapid transfer of knowledge.

The negative perception of multilinguism is another damage caused by the linguistic struggle in the region. The multiplicity of African languages in the region is assumed to be problematic for communication and development in comparison with a single language policy. This was an excuse for the elites who opted therefore, for French, English, and Portuguese as their official languages. Their choice is based on the belief that “one language unites and many languages divide.”¹ However, it appears that these imported languages are not widely spoken, they are used by about 10 to 20% of the African population, and quite less of the West African people.²
This negative perception of multilingualism constitute a real obstacle to the appreciation of the asset that represent African languages. It has led part of the West African populations to adopt negative language attitudes, especially the elites who prefer to educate their children in the imported language, not giving to them any chance to speak their native tongues, even at home. On the other hand, it is common to observe many of the speakers of African languages who depreciate deliberately the value of their languages anytime it has to be compared to the imported languages.

4.1.2 The lack of appropriate language planning

The chapter three of this study has provided the necessary information to realize that there is a lack of appropriate language planning policy at the national level and at the regional level in the ECOWAS zone. The relevance of an accurate language planning policy seems to not be really understood by the political leaders and the policy makers; even though, many scholars in the region are writing on how much effective the development will be if more attention is given to language policies in the ECOWAS zone.

At the national level, states are merely focused on the continuation of the former colonizers language policy. There is a recent exception with the Anglophone countries which started timidly the introduction of African languages as subjects matter in the primary and secondary level of education. Concerning the regional level, the policy is grounded in the adoption of French, English, and Portuguese as working languages, with an imperceptible attempt to introduce African languages in the system.
4.1.3 The usefulness of language policy for regional integration process

The uncontestable role played by language policy in regional integration process has been largely discussed in chapter two of this study with illustration of its relevance in the cases of the East African community and the European Union. It is important to remind that albeit the fact that all languages are important for social development, cross border languages and official languages are of great influence in regional integration process, especially in the case of the ECOWAS. This can be justified by the fact that cross border languages, which are African languages in general, are used in daily cross border activities. But, they are not much recognized by Governments; and these cross border activities are mostly informal and highly contribute to the economic development of the West African countries. On the other hand, the official languages are used in the administrative activities, the educational system, the judicial and most of the development programmes in the region.

The elaboration and implementation of a language planning policy at the regional level with repercussion on the national level in the ECOWAS zone will prevent conflicts, enhance economic integration, facilitate the social and political cohesion of the West African community, and obviously accelerate the achievement of the ECOWAS vision embedded in its Agenda 2020. The practical cases of the East African Community and the European Union give an idea of the feasibility of such language planning policy, with the many advantages that might come out from its implementation in the ECOWAS zone. Also, it will be unfair to silence the recent development achieved within a micro language policy framework such as the Konyin keyboard project in Nigeria. It resulted into the production computer software to enhance the creation of Yoruba language texts. Furthermore, the Government recognized the joint official language status of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, the three major languages in addition to English in Nigeria.³
4.2 Conclusions

The findings of the study show that conclusions can be structured around three points: the language policy at the national level, at the regional level and the achievement of the ECOWAS agenda 2020.

4.2.1 The language policy at the national level

The language planning policy at the national level in the West African region has to take into consideration the African languages in order to enhance the efficiency of the states’ institutions and increase the Governments legitimacy. These conclusions make sense because the current language planning situation in the West African states excludes the majority of their population from the public life. In such a context, democracy, justice and equity lose their full meaning in the sense that the majority of people do not take part really to the decision making process and to the management of public affairs, because of their inability to have access to French, English or Portuguese, depending on the official language used in the country where they find themselves in.⁴ Therefore, it is extremely important that the member states of ECOWAS adopt individually language planning policy that involve the use of African languages, especially in the field of education. It is important that African children develop enough confidence in their own languages before any transition into another language, in order to give them additive bilinguism instead of subtractive bilinguism which happen when the child start its education in the foreign language. Likewise, it has been proved from the cost point of view, according to Webb and Grin,⁴ that mother tongue based bilinguism is less expensive than imported language (English, French, and Portuguese) based medium of instruction.
4.2.2 The language policy at the regional level

At the regional level, the language planning policy does not really exist, it is high time for the ECOWAS to initiate and adopt a regional language planning policy that will guide the individual member states in the type of language policy they have to adopt. Also, the working language policy that exist has to be harmonized in order to allow the elites in charge of the regional leadership to improve their communication skills for a better understanding, without the need of translation. This involve the development of a multilinguism in French, English, and Portuguese. An introduction of African languages is necessary for a better implementation of the development programmes initiated by ECOWAS. It will allow the majority of the people concerned by these initiatives who do not have access to the three working languages to be involved. The major fact that actually drives the necessity for the West African regional institution to have a formal language planning policy that incorporate the use of African languages is that, it seems to be the only fast and less expensive way to have the majority of the community’s populace involved in the regional development strategy. This leads us to the famous regional Agenda 2020.

4.2.3 The achievement of the Agenda 2020

The main objective of this agenda is to move the regional institution from a ‘community of states to a community of people’. Yet, amongst the strategic pillars established for that purpose none seems to be specifically dedicated to bring people together, and this is not achievable without a particular attention given to language policy. It is proved that bringing people together request the integration of their cultures, and the most used and relevant vehicle of culture appears to be language. The West Africans are the people concerned by this agenda, and they speak in majority African languages. These languages are not taken effectively into consideration in the strategy adopted to bring the people together in the region. Therefore, it is
important for the ECOWAS’ leaders to integrate the African languages aspect as a pillar on its own, in order to achieve the agenda 2020. Otherwise, the agenda seems almost unachievable with the current strategy. The empowerment of African languages cannot be ignored if the ECOWAS has to move to a “community of people.”

Languages in general and African languages in particular have an important role to play in the West African integration process initiated by the ECOWAS, especially when the ECOWAS agenda 2020 is concerned. To move from a community of states to a community of people demands tremendous efforts in bringing people together by creating a strong social cohesion. This cannot be achieved without a high level of regional communication mixed with the strong feeling of belonging to a community. The fastest and accurate way of doing this seems to be the introduction of a bold and well elaborated language policy at the regional level with repercussion at the national level of each ECOWAS member states. The best way to put this in place in a region full of linguistic diversity is well captured by Okolocha and Yukat, who believe that West African countries have “to accommodate and tolerate their unity in diversity”. In other words, the solution is not about having a unitary language for the region, but rather the promotion of multilinguism by taking measures to give every language the formal opportunity to be developed, with a particular attention to the cross border languages and those qualified as language of wider communication. This does not mean that the imported languages (French, English, and Portuguese) should be neglected; on the contrary, they should be taken care of and highly integrated in the regional multilinguism process as far as the elites is concerned.

4.3 Recommendations

A meticulous observation and analysis of the information provided by this study and many others conducted by scholars of the areas of languages and regional integration process of the
ECOWAS inspired the following recommendations based on four main initiatives: the conception and adoption of a formal regional language planning policy, the development of multilinguism, the African languages approach to regional development programmes, and the creation of a regional language planning and social cohesion body.

4.3.1 Conception and adoption of a formal regional language planning policy

One of the first steps in order to solve the language issue in the regional integration process of West Africa should be the establishment and adoption of a regional language policy that will guide all the member states in the formulation of their respective language policies at the national level. It will be highly beneficial if such policy recommends the use of at least one African language in addition to the imported language considered as official language. The process in choosing the African languages that must be given that status will be left at the discretion of each member state. The policy will confer the status of language of wider communication to the main cross border languages in the West African region, encouraging therefore their use in cross border activities by a formalization. Concerning the communication between the elites of the region, the policy will be helpful by adopting one African working language per groups of states already constituted through the languages inherited from the former colonizers (francophone, Anglophone, and Lusophone). The adoption of such African language can also be determined by analyzing which of the cross border language are more spread in the region, and confer to two or three of them the status of regional working languages of the ECOWAS. It will be a disposition that falls in line with the 1986 ‘Language Plan of Actions for Africa’ of the Organization of the African Union, currently called African Union. The policy should make room for special training of the elites and equally the right of the people of the region to promote their languages, and also the mechanisms that can guide them in doing so. In other words, the African languages have to be used for literary and cultural purposes in
order to raise national and regional consciousness which can easily lead to the social cohesion needed to achieve the ECOWAS Agenda 2020.

4.3.2 The development of Multilinguism

Multilinguism is one the essential tool that can help earnestly in the regional integration process. It appears that naturally, the West African people are multilingual, they speak three or four African languages. This is so because of the trend of daily interactions among themselves and also the important history of migration that exist in West Africa. The history shows that West African people migrated a lot all over the region, and the slavery trade also created the migration movement towards the cost, some of the people were able to settle and perpetuate their languages practices with few alteration. One can say the same of the wars’ prisoners kept by African kings at that period. This created the high multilinguism in African languages that we have now. The regional institution will do well in taking actions, conceiving programmes that promote the multilinguism, not just in African languages, but also in the three foreign languages considered as working languages of the ECOWAS. These actions will obviously help the elites in the flowing of the communication when working for the region, reducing therefore any need of translator. This will highly contribute to the social cohesion at the regional level as much as at the national level. Also, there will be more efficiency in the regional integration process because of the probable high participation that will come from the populations. To achieve such level of multilinguism promotion, translations of literary works into African languages will be a good starting point. Then, the ECOWAS could get on the training of plurilingual jurists, economists, political scientists, and every other human resources used by the institution to achieve its community’s target. Efforts should be made to forge inter-disciplinary studies in the ECOWAS higher institutions. This involves the implementation of comparative legal studies, together with the corresponding languages in the faculties of law and social sciences in the
ECOWAS member states. It will favor linguistically competent community jurists who will replace the monolingual practitioners. The ECOWAS institution together with central governments of member states will do well in recognizing and regulating the contribution of private and small-scale initiatives which aimed specifically at small groups rather than the general population.

A particular attention has to be given to the educational system based on the 1953 UNESCO’s recommendation which states that the child education is best begun in his or her mother tongue. The ECOWAS educational policymakers have to encourage African languages as medium of instruction at the beginning of the child’s education, and as a subject matter in the curricula for the rest of the system. The main idea is to harmonize the educational policy concerning African languages in the region, because, most of the Anglophone countries have started timidly the African languages policy at the primary and part of the secondary level, while the French and Portuguese speaking countries seem to have not even effectively thought of it. Such situation is not in the regional interest. Pilot projects have been conducted by the UNESCO in West African countries such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Sierra Leone, with the following results. Introducing literacy in a child’s first language yields better results than having such literacy in an unfamiliar language; there is greater proficiency in the indigenous language and easier and deeper acquisition of concepts; there is greater prestige for the language concerned; there is increased language development, especially as shown in vocabulary expansion and terminology creation, curriculum development and improved materials. Therefore, moving from pilot projects to generalization of the experimentation into the regular school system can be highly beneficial for the ECOWAS zone.
4.3.3 The African languages approach to regional development programmes

This approach to development programmes refers to the fact that enough room should be made for African languages when development programmes are to be implemented to a certain part of the West African people. In other words, the ECOWAS and its member states will gain more in using the African languages to carry on their programmes. Also, actions should be taken to provide administrative support that will permit to speakers of African languages to use their languages for business, just like French, English and Portuguese are used. Thus, the regulatory acts such as constitutions, national charters, Bills of Rights, code of criminal procedures, electoral laws, commercial laws, travel documents, identity cards, registers of births, marriages, deaths, etc, should be available in these languages.\(^{11}\) This could result in cost reduction for the establishment of such documents, in as much the cost will be shared by the member states of the ECOWAS. Also, it will enable that the ECOWAS to initiate language programmes and projects which can contribute to sectorial objectives such as coordinating and standardizing production in cross border languages, subsidizing the production of learning materials in African languages, communicating agricultural development skills to the local populations in their languages.

The use of radio and television will be an asset to heighten the West African population awareness on the use of African languages. In this African languages campaign, priority should be given to cross border languages because of the pivotal role they can play in economic development and social cohesion in the region of West Africa.

The need to educate the elites on the appropriate language attitude to adopt Vis a Vis African languages should be added to this set of recommendations. The elites have to adopt a positive language attitude, by giving consideration to these languages as much as they give to foreign languages. The first step for this to be done is the formalization of the development of African
languages. It will give them a better status and encourage the people’s participation into public life. The survival strategy usually adopted by speakers of minority languages will be reduced as much they will be given the necessary platform and mechanisms to promote freely their own languages. Also, the ECOWAS will need a budget to finance the regional language planning policy, because this policy represents the driven force of any regional integration process. When language policy is achieved at the regional level, it favors drastically the achievement of all the other aspect of integration such as economic and political because of the better communication. Financing the regional language planning policy is therefore, an imperative for the realization of the ECOWAS’ ‘Community of people’.

The West African political leaders will also do well in paying a particular attention to language policy, because their personal idiosyncrasies has a lot to do with the effectiveness or not of the language planning policy adopted.

4.3.4 Language planning and social cohesion body

The existence of a language planning and social cohesion body within the ECOWAS system will be extremely useful for the coordination of the regional language policy. This body can be the fifth structure of the regional institution, or simply put under the authority of the ECOWAS’ Commission. Made of linguistic technocrats and professionals, the body will be in charge of the elaboration of a regional language policy, taking into consideration all the language specificity in the region. The body will have to collaborate with the experts of the African Languages Academy, in order to stay within the continental goals concerning language policy. Also, the language planning and social cohesion body of the ECOWAS will have to monitor the effective implementation of the regional language policy that will be adopted, with the duty to carry on any adjustment needed, based on the particularities of each West African country.
Endnotes

2 Ibid., p. 2.
4 Bamgbose, Ayo, op., cit., p. 8.
5 Ibid., p. 7.
8 Ibid., p. 23.
9 Omoniyi, Tope, op., cit., p. 547.
10 Bamgbose, Ayo, op., cit., p. 9.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Books


B. Journal Articles


C. Documents


The 4th EAC Development Strategy.


D. Unpublished Work
Macharia, James Maina, “The Role Of A Unitary Language And Communication In Enhancing Regional Integration In The East African Community (EAC)”, A Research Project Submitted To The Institute Of Diplomacy And International Studies In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For The Award Degree Of Master Of Arts In International Studies, October, 2013.


E. Internet Sources
Alexander, Neville, “a linguistic renaissance for the continent?”, The African Academy of Languages, storage.globalcitizen.net, accessed on 19th July 2015.

