We are, therefore, particularly grateful that two of our colleagues have generously consented to allow us to publish their papers in our current bulletin and we should like to thank them most cordially. They are Professor Krista Varantola, Finland who is already well known to our readers and Professor Mania Tsitsa, Greece, Vice-President of GALA, both of whom are specialists in the field of language for special purposes.

The importance of international meetings such as the AILA conferences is underlined, in our opinion, by the exceptional document which has reached us from Senegal edited specially for us by Professor Fyle, the UNESCO expert in African languages. The picture painted by Professor Fyle of the linguistic situation in the African countries should excite the interest of the many specialists in applied linguistics. It is true that languages for special purposes only represent one side of the problem but by no means the least important aspect. The author stresses, among other things, the necessity for the exchange of information. We should like to think that our bulletin is making its contribution to the rapid diffusion of research findings.

It is precisely in this spirit of increasing the effectiveness of the action of the UNESCO Alsed-LSP Network that we take the liberty of enclosing a preliminary questionnaire with the current issue of the Bulletin. We ask our readers to please fill in our questionnaire and return it to us as soon as possible. We thank you in advance.

The Editorial Committee.

ARTICLES:

CLIFFORD N. FYLE: LANGUAGE FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES IN AFRICA - AN OVERVIEW

1. Categories of Languages in Africa

There are 45 countries in SubSaharan Africa, 46 if one includes the Sudan. In these countries, three general categories of languages are in use as follows.

a) The Mother Tongue Languages

These include both the indigenous African languages as well as the English, French and Portuguese oriented Creole languages (Krio and Pidgin of Sierra Leone and Nigeria, Kreol of Mauritius and Seychelles, Crioulo of Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea and Mozambique), which have also become mother tongues on the continent. Depending on whether or not one classes all those languages so closely related as Spanish and Portuguese, there are between 1250 and 2500 mother tongue languages in Africa. These mother tongue languages, till today, primarily serve the purposes of oral communication among their speakers, and many of them will still have to be linguistically described; but increasingly more use is being made of them as languages of literacy everywhere; some 160 of them are currently being used in 34 countries as instructional media in formal education at least for the first three or four years at the primary level, as well as at the secondary level in Burundi, Madagascar, Rwanda and Somalia. Also, in some 23 of the countries some major mother tongues are taught as compulsory subjects at secondary school and university, but mostly at the latter level.

Some use in radio and television broadcasts, more or less limited, is common in the countries. Also in at least one country the mother tongue press using the major language (Kiswahili in Tanzania) is reasonably well developed; but elsewhere the publication of newspapers and periodicals is much more restricted, numbering some 135 dailies, weeklies etc. in no more than some 40 languages with — circulation-wise — one quarter of a single newspaper, bulletin or journal per head per year of the total African population.

Except for the notable examples of Kenya, Nigeria and perhaps Tanzania, the book publishing in these languages is mainly restricted to the production of texts and readers for literacy and formal education at first level, produced by small literature bureaus or Curriculum Development Centres/Institutes of Education, and in specific languages which have been designated for use in literacy and education. In this respect it should be noted that by and large, especially in the heavily multilingual countries, the languages used for literacy purposes are restricted in number. The restriction is much more severe — as regards the languages used — in primary education, and even more so for languages used in tertiary education.

b) The Arabic Language

The use of this language is widespread wherever there is a dominant Muslim population, mostly in Chad, the Sudan and some countries of Western Africa (mainly the Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Northern Nigeria). In these countries the language as such is a
language of religion; but not much use is made of it outside this religious register, except for some limited education in Koranic schools. Also little or no literature in Arabic is visible, except for the Koran and some other religious texts. The position is different only in the Sudan, in which country Arabic is used from the primary to the tertiary level as a medium of instruction in formal education.

However, for the other countries, a move has started for the more widespread use of the Arabic script and consequently of the language, in a bid to further exploit its possibilities as a language of literacy and other education. But this move has yet to gather momentum.

c) Adopted International Languages of the African Countries

The colonial languages of the pre-independence era have by and large survived as adopted international languages of the African countries. The languages in question are mainly English and French, depending on whether England or France was the coloniser. Also Portuguese is the language of adoption in the Crioulo speaking countries, together with Spanish in one country, Equatorial Guinea.

These languages are used as follows:
- As languages for international communication, for the conduct of business and commercial transactions with other countries, not only outside Africa but also within Africa itself;
- As national official languages, for the conduct of all national business and national activities above the lowest levels, the sole exceptions being Ethiopia, Somalia and Tanzania, which countries now use their indigenous Amharic, Somali and Kiswahili languages respectively as national official languages. In a few countries also, however, notably with Kiswahili in Kenya and Uganda, another and an indigenous language now functions as national official language, side by side with the adopted international language.

d) Foreign Languages in Secondary and Tertiary Education

The most used languages in this connection are English (in the countries of French adoption) and French (in the countries of English, Portuguese or Spanish adoption). Teaching is mainly at the secondary level, and here the courses are more or less obligatory for all students. At the tertiary level, courses are optional and are given within special Foreign Languages or French/English university departments.

Other languages studied as foreign languages

are mostly German, Portuguese, Spanish and Russian, particularly in the countries of French adoption, but the courses in these languages are usually optional.
2. Trends in Language Usage in Africa

Following on the above description, one may indicate the trends, in language usage in Africa as follows:

a) Use in literacy and education, for reasons of culture and personality development, and as instruments for social and economic development.

It has been noted above that some 160 of the languages have been developed for use in formal education in the 45 countries. In all except the few monolingual countries, this development is continuing, even in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda which have opted for only one of their many indigenous languages as national language; and especially in those countries which are preparing for or in which there is a movement towards a turnaround in language usage policy in favour of their national mother tongues (e.g. Angola, Benin, Comoros, Mozambique). Thus the languages being used for educational purposes may soon number well over 200. The precise number of languages being used for literacy work is not known; but these far outnumber the languages being used in formal education, so that at a conservative estimate they may come to over 400. And this number is continually increasing, thanks to research work in basic language description and to the production of teaching texts and readers, work being undertaken by governmental and other national institutions often with the close cooperation of non-governmental agencies. Of course, with some 2000 languages to consider there is still a long way to go, and the general scarcity of resources for development in Africa does not help to lessen the magnitude of the undertaking.

b) African Languages for Purposes of National Communication

In this connection, the use of African languages emphasises the socio-economic development factor. Literacy in the mother tongue languages is seen as a tool for promoting better social organisation at grassroot level, for better community health, child welfare, home management, etc., even entertainment. It is also seen as a means for governments to reach their people with the necessary information, for skills training in agriculture and crafts, for their improved participation in commerce and in the lower levels of business and industry, and even for changes in the political organisation. Activities in this respect are mostly directed at the rural population but these activities are in their infancy, being mostly restricted to oral emissions and programmes for 30 minutes or less per week per language through radio and television, and to the limited mother tongue publishing activities as described earlier. Some other facilities have been known to exist for reaching the population in their own languages through the printed word, such as the Botswana Extension College which has i.a. produced
and disseminated material for skills training for farmers and other groups; but these initiatives have been few and far between.

The constraints in this respect are not merely the well-known ones of money and manpower. One foremost constraint is that, given the circumstances of heavy plurilingualism and multilingualism, information is required as to which languages are needed for what purposes and at what levels of usage. This calls for research and decision-making, and so far there has been little awareness of the problem.

c) The International Languages as National Official Languages

The use of a language such as English or French as the official language of an African country gives this language the status of a second language within that country. The trend in this respect is towards a reduction of such usage in favour of increased use of the mother tongues as instruments of national communication; but given the general lack of sufficient resources for language development, as well as the oppositions and confrontations between language groups even within the same country (a situation well known even in developed countries), the trend is a slow one, and the use of these languages as official and national languages is likely to persist for some time to come.

However, even in these cases, and especially where situations are changing, the precise needs for usage of even these languages as second languages have to be defined, so that the vocabularies and the structures of the languages as needed for use in a country’s special environment, both those as adopted from the country of origin and those that have been developed for use in the country of adoption, can be worked out. For example we need descriptions of the Englishes of Nigeria or of Tanzania, or of the French usages of and for Cote d’Ivoire or Senegal, depending on the purposes and the registers of English or French usages in those countries. Also methods of teaching need to be developed or modified, taking into account these descriptions, so as to suit the particular demands for usage in each country. But at the moment the descriptions themselves hardly exist, if at all.

d) Foreign Language Teaching

It has been said that foreign language teaching in the African context refers to the teaching of English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Russian. Other languages besides these six hardly ever feature at all, except that Arabic is taught in the Ghana Institute of Languages and possibly in some universities in the north of Nigeria.

The obvious needs for the teaching of foreign languages are first of all for diplomacy, in the training of a country’s official representatives in foreign countries. More generally, it is for in-
ternational business, in the training of business executives in the context of international trade, and also of bilingual secretaries and interpreters. Of the seven languages mentioned, the first four are the ones most commonly taught - understandably so since English, French, Spanish and Portuguese are also national official languages each in one or more of the African countries, so that there is a bonus for inter-African communication.

Reasonably high level training, a full secondary school programme as above, is required for these purposes. But there is another training need that is usually overlooked, namely the training for those classes of people particularly in the more urban centres who have to work with users of other languages - for example hotel workers and others in the tourist industry, city shopkeepers often with a tourist clientele, dockworkers at the ports who have to read the specifications of imported goods, and so on. The training requirement here is of course at a level that is lower than that required for diplomats, business men and bilingual secretaries and interpreters. But very little training of this kind is known to exist in Africa.

The provisions are few even for the higher level training. The Institute of Languages of Ghana as mentioned above is the only one of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa, running regular programmes of up to three years' duration for the training of bilingual secretaries and interpreters and above, as a matter of fact in the seven languages indicated above but in no other. Nigeria is reported to be starting a foreign language centre. Other than these, however, such training that is available is as given in the secondary schools (and often these may be described as merely "acquaintance" courses), or in a few cases for those who major from the foreign language departments of African universities. And those departments, to say the least, are not the best regarded or the best populated student-wise in the African universities, so that by and large they fall far short of meeting the real needs.

As part of the teaching strategy and in conformity with practice elsewhere, students training in a foreign language at an African university are required to spend at least one year of their studies in a country in which that language is the mother tongue. This is especially the case with English and French, the languages most frequently taught. For example, a student in anglophone Nigeria training in French or a student from francophone Senegal studying English would need to spend a year in France or Britain, respectively.

However, for reasons of economy, such students are often instead sent to other African countries using the relevant language as a second language, so that the Nigerian student may find himself in Senegal or Cote d'Ivoire instead of France, and the Senegalese student may go to Nigeria or Ghana instead of Britain. To cut costs further, student exchange schemes are even arranged for the
purpose between anglophone and francophone African universities. This means, however, that the exposure at first hand to French or English culture, essential at this level of training and in fact the aim of the whole exercise, is lost — the implication is that a switch in general training practice has been made without taking into account the specific purposes of the students' foreign language training.

3. Needs and Strategies

So far this paper has to a large extent dwelt on the specific purposes for the use of particular categories of languages, (mother tongues, national languages, foreign languages, rather than on the specific purposes for the use of certain forms, vocabularies, and training methods of one or more individual languages. In the heavily plurilingual and multilingual situation of Sub-Saharan Africa, the former has to be considered before the latter. This is not, however, to deny the latter's crucial importance, because it is the definition and/or development of the vocabulary, forms, etc. within a language for particular purposes that, when put together, equip the language and give it authority as a worthwhile and effective means of communication. While this is true for the international languages in use in Africa, it is even more so for the mother tongue languages themselves. Learning to read and write in one's mother tongue is fine for purposes of culture and personality development, but besides these, what for? What are the practical purposes? In other words, how is that culture and personality development through language to be translated into action for national and community purposes and for a better quality of life?

So far, the programmes of language development have largely failed to provide answers. This is one reason why some African communities, and sometimes even some governmental authorities, have opposed the introduction of mother tongue teaching in their primary schools. Apart from national culture, they cannot see the specific purposes for the use of any mother tongue in the national setting. Adult literacy is all right for community and individual activities at rural and grassroot levels; but formal education equips for national life at a higher level; and the only language with defined purposes in this connection is the international and adopted English, or French, etc.

For Africa, the example of Tanzania proves the point. In its development of Kiswahili to take pride of place over English as the national language, Tanzania set up an Institute of Kiswahili Research. At the vocabulary level, one of the first tasks of this Institute was of course to produce a standard dictionary of Kiswahili; but the Institute concentrated its efforts on developing and publishing glossaries of words for use in different registers of the language — a Kiswahili glossary of agriculture; of medicine; of law; and so on.
Kenya, too, has been active in the development in this manner of the Kiswahili language which it shares with Tanzania. Nigeria, on the other hand, has done some work in the educational register in connection with its three major languages, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. In its promotion of the use of these languages as teaching media, it has produced guides to educational terminology as well as guides to metalinguistic terms for use in teaching in each of them.

Otherwise, however, efforts have been irregular and even rare in this kind of language development. One may mention for example a dictionary of legal terminology for the Ugunda language of Uganda, produced by individual effort. There is no lack of language development centres staffed by university level specialists even in the smallest African countries, but generally speaking these centres, have not paid attention to the development of language for special purposes with regard to their mother tongues.

The implications of LSP are therefore seen to be largely neglected in Africa. Of their importance there is no doubt, but there is a general lack of awareness of this importance, not only for the use of the mother tongue languages but also to meet the needs for second and foreign teaching.

The steps that may be followed for redressing the situation are as follows:

a) Create awareness as above, i.e., through the conduct of LSP meetings, workshops, symposia, etc. and through the dissemination of information as much as possible.

b) Promote the linguistic description and standardisation of the African languages. Much has been achieved and is going on in this connection, but there are many languages still to be described and their national status and purposes determined. And without information in these respects it is impossible to make the necessary provisions for their use in any aspect other than oral communication.

c) Mobilise African scholars in language into the field of LSP, both for the use of their mother tongue languages and for second and foreign language teaching. They are sure to respond. Groups of such scholars may be called upon to meet and consider the needs and to make recommendations for one or more programmes of action.

d) Once a global programme or a set of programmes has been prepared, proceed with activities not only at national level, but also through inter-country cooperation, as many of the languages cut across national boundaries.

e) Enlist the cooperation of regional and international agencies and organisations, so as to increase and maximise the use of manpower and resources. International cooperation for this
purpose will greatly assist the African nations. But this is not all. Such cooperation is important if the developed and other nations are properly to react with Africa, as is necessary even for their own very survival in a stable world. They will gain at least as much as they give.

Clifford N. Fyle
UNESCO Regional Office
12 Avenue Roume
B.P. 3311
DAKAR, Senegal