Rajmund Ohly concentrates on the part of Article Three of the 1990 constitution of Namibia that fosters the use of languages other than English. The question for these languages centers on lexical elaboration. Ohly's paper looks at Herero, as a case in point, showing examples of synonyms causing confusion when words have different associations in different languages. One situation involves the Herero-English dictionary (Viljoen and Kamupingene 1983) using Latin terms for varieties of acacia trees for which English had no equivalents. One might ask why the Herero words wouldn't have been preferred?

Hans-Volker Gretschel investigates the ability of German to persist in Namibia after independence. German "has never lost its global status and prestige in the world of literature and in the world of science" (p. 305) and has an advantage over autochthonous languages when it comes to elaboration in wider domains. At the same time, Namibian German is undergoing a good deal of language mixing due to its use in such a multilingual context. Still, it is popularly studied as a foreign language. In Namibia, German has moved from being a first, second, or even third language to becoming a foreign language. "German as a mother tongue has become a language with which one can do less because it lost certain spheres of usage, but on the other hand it has become obvious that German as a foreign language is busy conquering lost terrain" (p. 311).

With German, in a sense, reinventing itself, where does this leave Afrikaans? Kotie Fourie sees Afrikaans as an unwanted lingua franca. "In Afrikaans—the Unwanted Lingua Franca," Afrikaans is seen as a language used for downward communication while people communicate "up" the sociocultural ladder in English. As English continues to be irrelevant in the mines, Afrikaans continues to function widely and with instrumental value in spheres where people lack the time or motivation to learn English.

Scholars of language policy, planning, and contact, as well as Africanist sociolinguists, will value this edited collection, marred as it is only by some lack of cohesion among selections, and an inappropriate title.

References


Language Attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Sociolinguistic Overview.


Reviewed by William J. Samarin, University of Toronto

A book to be written. Africa! What a wonderful continent to use for the exposition of attitudes toward language! And one would be justified in limiting the study to what has come to be called sub-Saharan Africa. For our purposes, obviously, a distinction would have to be made between literate and preliterate Africa. Muslims were literate in Arabic before the rest of the peoples of Africa, and Muslim literacy in Swahili on the eastern coast, while sub-Saharan and quite ancient, makes a purely geographical division of Africa untenable sociolinguistically.
The map of Africa we would start with would be white, or gray, or black—whatever best iconized a “clean slate.” A continent without languages. Yes, a continent without “languages.” Of course, Africans used language in a linguistic sense to communicate with each other, and we have learned that these are beautifully complex and awesomely elegant means of verbal expression, not the primitive jabberings that they were first taken to be. But they were not “languages” in the socio-cultural sense. There is little in our knowledge of Africa to suggest ethnonilingualistic self-consciousness. Thus we can say that before literacy there were no “languages.”

So the study of language attitudes in Africa would begin with the emergence of “languages” as phenomena that could be named and identified with certain groups of people. Naming languages began with foreigners literate in Arabic and European languages: traders, explorers, and colonizers wanted to know whom—that is, what “people”—they were dealing with. Africans were therefore given names that were acquired in one way or another and then compared and grouped for practical reasons or for the pleasure of “knowing” the natives and talking about them. For example, in what was once called Ouabangu Chari—one of the four territories of French Equatorial Africa, now the Central African Republic (CAR)—all official personal papers identified an individual by race, not by tribu ‘tribe.’ Yet in the northwestern part of the country, for reasons we will probably never know, people who spoke mutually intelligible varieties of a language in the Mbum family were called Kanre (or Karre) or Pana or Tali.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many mistakes were made. When the Belgians and French arrived in the Ubangi River basin at the end of the nineteenth century, they found people speaking a language that is, by all reports, surprisingly uniform throughout the area. Nonetheless, its local varieties are called Sango (the vernacular, not the pidgin of the same name), Yakoma, Dendi, Ngbandi, Mboangi, and Mongwandi. Overdifferentiation and underdifferentiation shredded African languages haphazardly.

Out of this void, so to speak, sprung “languages.” But they did not acquire social meaning (and therefore did not have attitudes linked with them) until, as far as we know, they began to be written down. The collection of vocabularies, whether systematic or dilettantish, did not make a difference; rather, it was the use of certain varieties in literacy and instruction. Missionaries, Protestant more than Catholic, played a significant role in the emergence of “languages” in Africa, as in other parts of the world. This was not always appreciated by other Europeans. In fact, some were hostile to missionaries’ “giving the natives a language,” as it was put in the nineteenth century. At this point in the exposition of the history of language attitudes in Africa we would be dealing with the topic of language and colonization, but this cannot be avoided; everything relevant has to be brought into the discussion. The study of language in Africa from this point of view is long overdue, although Johannes Fabian (1986) has made a significant beginning.

Implicit in what has just been said is the fact that language attitudes were brought to Africa by all those who came to the continent before language attitudes arose among preliterate Africans (Samarin 1986). If Europeans and Muslims considered these largely undressed peoples to be primitives, they consequently had little respect for their languages. There were exceptions, of course, and not all of these were missionaries. In fact, in many cases missionaries, like their secular contemporaries, believed that they could “pick up” African languages in a very short time, even while on the boat going to Africa! But one must be careful in generalizing about beliefs and stereotypes of attitudes concerning African languages. Whereas, for example, Catholic missionaries on the Congo (Zaire) River at what is now called Mankanza (formerly Bangala, and later Nouvelle Anvers) were using a newly born lingua franca—the forerunner of Lingala—by the end of the nineteenth century, Protestants avoided using this “barbarous” language for another ten years; they worked in the vernacular (Samarin 1986). By contrast,
since the 1920s, Pidgin Sango has been the only language used by members of Baptist
Mid-Missions in the CAR, whereas members of Grace Brethren Foreign Missions
(Mission Evangélique des Frères) had a policy of using vernaculars until after the
Second World War. Catholic missionaries, who established their first mission near
Bangui (Mission St. Paul des Rapides), also avoided Pidgin Sango, not concerning
themselves with it seriously also until after the war (Father Ghislain de Banville p.e.).

So that would be the first part of the book: "Language in Colonial Africa." And
much more than what I have sketched would need to be included, such as colonial
policies with respect to education, employment, and civil and social status. For
example, by the 1940s in both the Belgian and French Congos there had emerged
Africans whom the whites called évolués (those who had 'evolved' or had become
'civilized'), a special class, membership in which was determined in part by one's ability
to use the colonizers' language and in part by the work that one could do—based
ultimately on literacy in French. Indeed, these were the very conditions for becoming
one of this select group of assimilated Africans that were legally recognized on 29 July
1942 by the Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa, Félix Eboué, himself a
Martinican of African ancestry. (There was a club of such persons in Brazzaville in
1944; it had only thirty-four members [Samarin 1969:232].)

There would be much to say in this first part of the book of the social and psycholog-
al effect of a European language providing the only access to mobility during a
period when there were so few schools. Colonial governments did not have any interest
in creating a large body of educated and literate subordinates; in fact, such persons
were regarded with suspicion and distrust. Moreover, some missionaries opposed
education in European languages for fear that the young people would thereby become
"worldly" (see Yates 1980; and critique in Samarin 1989:221, n. 7).

Much, much more would be examined in the second part: "Language in Independ-
ent Africa." For example, how can the history of attitudes toward Swahili be ignored? A
tremendous amount of literature is available concerning this language, much of it
dealing with attitudes. The work of Myers-Scotton (1972), to mention only one source, is
rich in information, not only on Swahili, but also on language choice and codeswitching.
Much could also be said about attitudes with respect to borrowing in language contact
(e.g., Samarin 1966). Making a list of what should be covered, however, would be a task
beyond the constraints of a review or even a review essay; I therefore mention just two
topics.

**Sophistication in linguistics.** It was only in the late 1950s and early 1960s,
when modern linguistics began to take root in France at the same time that her
colonies opted for independence, that African languages began to be studied in a
scholarly manner. Free to espouse liberal views, linguists began to endorse the value
of African languages (e.g., Houis 1971, 1977). Americans got involved themselves largely
because of the National Defense Education Act and the establishment of centers for
African studies. And Africans began to go abroad as research assistants and for
education in linguistics. Some remained abroad, but others returned to teach in their
own countries. Inevitably, different attitudes and policies began to arise in Africa's new
countries.

In the CAR, for example, there are a number of linguistically trained citizens. As
employees of the Ministry of Education, they are playing a role in what is called the
"development" of Sango, which became "co-official" with French during the presidential
tenure of André Kolingba, himself of Yakoma ethnicity. (Sango was thus promoted from
being the "national language," and all indigenous languages are now considered
"national.") Attitudes toward Sango have changed dramatically among Central Afri-
cans, even the educated ones, in the last twenty years. No longer do civil servants, for
example, tout their competence in French; most of them, and some at rather high
levels, are perfectly at ease in talking Sango with foreigners, such as myself. On the other hand, Central Africans, even those who are linguistically trained, seem reluctant to admit that Sango is a pidgin in origin, and it is even referred to as sango standard in French.

The media and arts. The means of expression and the content of expression have much to do with language attitudes. The use of an international language in newspapers and on radio and television would naturally have an awesome effect on a nation's people. And if an indigenous language or local variety of the official language were similarly used, it would undoubtedly be in a different way and for different purposes. Numerous would be examples of Pidgin English, or what is called "rotten English" in Nigeria, not discussed in Adegbija's book. In the CAR, official versions of the news are composed and presented in French; the Sango versions are hurriedly translated on scraps of paper or extemporized orally. On the other hand, humorous skits are presented in Sango, as is popular music. It has recently become the policy of Radio Bangui to teach its listeners new words in Sango, like the word pakara to replace Monsieur.

A book already written. If a book on language attitudes that includes the above topics ought to be written, this is not to say that the book by Adegbija should be judged as having succeeded or failed to the extent that it is that book. Our primary concern in appraising his book must be in terms of what he himself has comprehended as comprising "language attitudes" and to what extent he has made a substantial contribution on the topic.


Promising though the chapter titles might be—in which the phrase "Sub-Saharan Africa" recurs frequently—the reader is informed in the introduction that "Nigeria will feature prominently," partly because that is the country of the author's origin and because Nigeria, being a "sociolinguistic giant" on the continent will be "fairly effective" in providing a "general overview of similar issues in many sub-Saharan African countries" (p. 5). In other words, Nigeria is assumed to provide a sociolinguistic sample of all of sub-Saharan Africa. Since the longest chapter (twenty-nine pages) is the one on language-attitude research in sub-Saharan Africa, one would have expected Nigeria to feature importantly in it. One is therefore disappointed in finding only one work cited in it—and that by the author. And although there are about twenty-three published works about Nigeria by other authors in the references, they do not figure importantly. In the chapter on education, merely three are cited, two of them from the late 1970s. Two significant works are ignored: Emenanjo (1990) and Osaji (1979).

Although prominent in the title of the book, and frequently used in the text, the word attitudes is not defined. However, we learn from the introduction that the book has the following goals: "to pinpoint the attitudinal patterns towards European and indigenous languages in sub-Saharan Africa; to place such attitudes in a proper historical perspective; [and] to identify, particularly, attitudes in sub-Saharan Africa . . ." (p. 13). In my opinion, these goals are never realized. Other goals are of a programmatic nature. It appears, therefore, that by "attitudes" Adegbija means how people feel about former colonial languages—but concerned primarily with English—vis-à-vis indigenous languages: in other words, attitudes about language choice, a phrase that actually occurs, almost accidentally, on page 100.

Although the author is aware of the fact that literacy and literature are important factors in determining how people feel about a language (pp. 100–101), he ignores the
opportunity to inform readers about Nigeria as a neoliterate society in indigenous languages. *Ije Irohin*, a newspaper in Yoruba, began publication in 1859. Along with Effik, Igho, and Hausa, Yoruba is offered as a subject in the African School Certificate Examination (p. 34). *Ije Irohin* was founded by a missionary, and surely literacy and education in the church and church-affiliated organizations have somehow affected peoples' attitudes toward the Yoruba language. Likewise, we might acknowledge the contribution that members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Société de Linguistique Internationale) have made to the study of attitudes: see, for example, Edmondson (1983); Schaeffer (1991); Showalter (1991a, 1991b, 1994); Stark (1990); Turcotte (1981); and Woods (1995). These are only a few titles that have come to my attention; there must certainly be more, given the fact that the SIL began working in Africa in 1962 in affiliation with the Institute for African Languages at the University of Ghana. The number of languages studied has grown to about 300, and at the present time, there are about 500 members coming from twenty counties abroad who are working in one capacity or other in twenty-three countries of Africa, including Madagascar. From my own experience in the Central African Republic since 1952, I can witness to the SIL's role in affecting language attitudes in a nation that is largely preliterate with respect to indigenous languages, and where even the lingua franca, Sango—although used by missionaries in published form since the 1920s—is still largely undeveloped.

Although Adegbija was not obliged to write the kind of book I would like to see written, one would have hoped that he had cast his net further into the published literature than he did. The following are a few suggestions, some published recently and none of which may have been available to him in Nigeria, but many in Europe near to where he was on a sabbatical leave: Bot Ba Njock (1987); Calvet (1992); Chiwome and Thondhlana (1992); Herbert (1992); Kassam (1990); Knapert (1986); Koenig, Chia, and Povey (1983); Ladefoged, Glick, and Crupper (1972); Lamwamu et al. (1992); Mparutsu, Thondhlana, and Croughall (1992); Robinson (1991); Thornell (1990); and Williams (1994).

Adegbija might have done much more. Someone else should take up the task.

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This volume is a collection of nine "main papers" and six "comments" (in the terminology of the work itself) that were first presented as part of a two-day symposium, held in Hong Kong in July 1994, on the ancestry of the Chinese language. "Ancestry" here means cognate relation, and the concern throughout is with the "genetic" affinity of the Chinese language. Four major proposals make their appearance in these papers and are discussed both pro and con, to varying extents, by the different authors and participants: the "Sino-Tibetan Hypothesis," the "Sino-Austric Hypothesis" (called "Pan-Sino-Austric" by Zhengzhang Shangfang [p. 270], and elsewhere, the "Austro-Chinese