

Language, Literacy and the Developing World

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ABSTRACT

Literacy has been held up as the torch that will light the way to a world of human dignity and justice. Experts have identified universal vernacular literacy as so obviously desirable as to be "axiomatic." But these principles are a product of social ideology and a failure by members of literate cultures to appreciate the depth of resources that non-literate cultures may offer their members. Researchers and development policy makers show a lack of awareness of the impact of inappropriate literacy programs on oral societies, and, perhaps even more dangerously, of the inherent weaknesses of the literate cultures they represent.

An understanding of the complexity and probable direction of the popular forces at play, and due recognition that basic human needs exist that are met only poorly by industrial societies, should be at the heart of development policy.

This study of literacy, as it relates to the developing world, looks to historical models of language change to demonstrate that language change is not a random process, but follows patterns that, in basis, vary little between historical examples and those of the present day. This should give a perspective on popular forces that create new societies out of old ones, helping to target probable important languages for

developing nations, as well as identifying the role that literacy in any particular language might have in this process.

This study also tries to fathom issues related to education and the nature of knowledge. Western literate societies have a dynamic and linear character, but have undergone an erosion of depth of perception as evidenced by their "literary" output. Oral societies tend to have a more integrated and coherent manner of perpetuating themselves and educating their members. This can be understood, at least in part, through the mythologies that give meaning to the experience of the members of different societies.

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I

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Ocol rejects the old type.
He is in love with a modern woman,
He is in love with a beautiful girl
Who speaks English.

But only recently
We would sit close together, touching each other!
Only recently I would play
On my bow harp
Singing praises to my beloved.
Only recently he promised
That he trusted me completely.
I used to admire him speaking in English.

From: "The Woman with Whom I Share my Husband" by Okot p'Bitek.

Mrs. Beard: There's more important things in life than reading,
son... If there's one thing I've learned in life, it's that
learning things never taught me nothing. And books is the worst.
Dan: Right mother.
Mrs. B.: Last time I read a book, I was raped. So let that be a
lesson to you.

From: Yellowbeard. (film script, no author given) 1983.
Yellowbeard Associates.

1.1 Purpose and hypothesis

Literacy has been held up as the torch that will light the way to a world of human dignity and justice. Experts have identified universal vernacular literacy as so obviously desirable as to be "axiomatic". But

these principles are a product of social ideology and a failure by members of literate cultures to appreciate the depth of resources that non-literate cultures may offer their members. Researchers and development policy makers show a lack of awareness of the impact of inappropriate literacy programs on oral societies, and, perhaps even more dangerously, of the inherent weaknesses of the literate cultures they represent.

This study undertakes to demonstrate that mass literacy programs can neither be justified nor expected to work. The argument will proceed along two general lines. First, historical example and evidence for language change in modern Africa cast doubt upon the long term viability of existing language policies. Literacy cannot be separated from state policy regarding language of education. Popular language forces determine whether these policies will be effective, destructive or ineffectual. The second argument concerns itself with the detrimental impact of literate culture on pre-literate oral societies.

This study began as a collection of semi-autonomous smaller studies, thematically complementary but separately conceived, and in most cases capable of being read independently. The cumulative statement the collection makes is not without its complexities, partly at least because of the nature of the subject matter. Few serious studies of language, literacy and education issues can go far before pointing out the resistance of the material to simple definition. The purpose of this study is to chart a course through a web of interconnected themes

which includes historical process, international development and social class, the many faces of literacy, and inner experience.

This study rests upon a recognition that the primary reality of human life is internal and is not to be accessed through a quantification or exterior assessment of material prosperity, economic performance and social amenity (while their obvious impact must be conceded). The same physical experience may have vastly different meaning from individual to individual, and in different cultural contexts (mutilation being an extreme example). In the same vein, it must be expected that initiatives that involve changes in physical and social behaviour patterns will have vastly different meaning and effect in different contexts.

A much quoted Unesco report on the use of vernacular languages in education (1951) stands on certain assumptions about literacy and schooling that are undoubtedly appropriate to the cultural backgrounds of the panel of experts who designed it (see Unesco report 1976, p.11: "the present generation of experts... simply does not have personal experience of literacy as a national problem"). If it could be demonstrated, however, that literacy is simply a tool, that it is acquired at the cost of the loss of other tools, and that vernacular literacy may not always be an asset, then the Unesco report and the generation of cumbersome language policies it has fostered may be called into question. If a connection between literacy and erosion of the health of "the inner man" ("man" in the gender neutral sense, of course)

could be established, in whatever sense, then our assumptions about our own literacy may need to be revised.

In order to anticipate the effect of literacy on pre-literate societies or sub-cultures it is instructive to learn what lessons we can from history. There is a body of writers on literacy who challenge claims made by proponents of mass literacy campaigns or scholars of literacy and the "savage mind". Freire (1988) champions a literacy that liberates and "conscientizes," but history shows a different effect:

Literacy, as the work of Paulo Freire (1971) [1988] has movingly illustrated, may be a tool for liberation and social change. In most cases, however, the dominant employment of literacy has been conservative, regardless of promises to the contrary. (Graff 1987, p.61)

Literacy did not necessarily serve to emancipate political opposition or religious dissent, but tended to consolidate power relationship and divisions, albeit in a new form. (Baumann 1986, p.6)

The Somali literacy campaign had a socialist indoctrination agenda similar to that of Nicaragua (Miller 1985; Lewis 1986). Its effect was similarly questionable:

Literacy... remains... peripheral to Somali identity, where the stress is primarily on orality. Across the border, within the Ethiopian pluralistic mosaic... extension of literacy... inflames reactive sentiments of ethnic nationalism... (Lewis 1986 p.148)

An examination of the content of the Nicaraguan literacy campaign material (Miller 1985, pp.76-77), with its revolutionary idealism, similarly bodes poorly for the program. The 1976 Unesco report on the Experimental World Literacy Programme (late 1960's to mid 1970's) admits widespread difficulties with its programs and the "futility of assuming

that any literacy programme can attract and hold all people to the point where illiteracy can be eliminated" (p.67). Graff (1987, p.33) points out that:

Perhaps the most striking feature of UNESCO discussions on literacy since 1965, when a campaign to wipe out world illiteracy got going, is that it is remarkably little based on either experiment or historical precedents.

1.2 Some problems

In this study of language and literacy, an argument has been constructed to challenge mainstream thinking about the need for mass literacy programs and to question the reasoning behind the language policies of multilingual developing nations. Briefly, the prevailing attitude is that illiteracy is a backward or disease-like condition to be eliminated with all possible speed, by means of universal schooling for children and mass literacy programs for adults. Many national language policies try to install vernacular languages as the first vehicle of literacy, with subsequent (usually secondary level) education offered in a national or international standard language (following the reasoning of the 1951 Unesco report).

A body of literature exists that presents the African perspective on the issues of language policy and education. Amasoye (1972, p.30) expresses the concerns many Africans feel "that our language [Ijo] is actually outliving its usefulness [sic] as an effective medium of communication and unless something is done now, we shall eventually be

forced to abandon it." Bamgbose (1976) considers the role of mother tongue in education, providing an overview of vernacular education policies and practices in West Africa. Makulu (1971) characterizes the problems of the education systems inherited from the colonial powers:

The present type of education tends to uproot the African child by bringing pressures upon him to accumulate knowledge which does not relate to the life which he lives. Education fails when it does not make the child understand himself and his social and cultural past and the life of the society of which he is a member. (p.35)

Gorman (1970, p.4) recognizes that mother tongue literacy in a language without written texts may be a "dubious asset."

Renewed application to the problems of language planning and education in Africa, in the light of the available literature, fails to produce original solutions. Laitin and Mensah (1991) see Ghana's language problems as best addressed with a three language (plus or minus one, depending on speaker's first language) policy. Akinnaso (1991) endorses a similar policy for Nigeria, even though, given present economic and political realities, he sees no possible strategies for the implementation of such a policy. Brann (1990) presents further evidence for the complexity of language relationships in Nigeria. Agbedor (1991) sees the three language policy that Nigeria failed to implement as the best way of reconciling competing social forces. With the ideal and reality still too far apart, policy continues to suffer from inadequate focus on the attainable and the appropriate. Pidgin English, rejected by most of the above as too stigmatized to receive serious attention, is given that serious attention in Oladejo (1991).

I chose to explore these language issues because of my impressions of the chaos at ground level in Nigeria, where illiteracy is widespread, and the education system bears the weight of accommodating itself to the country's extreme linguistic diversity. The inevitable question to ask, in the light of these impressions, is whether there could be other approaches to language and state sponsored education that would create less havoc in the lives of individuals and the state which they collectively comprise, and that would be less wasteful of human potential. When I returned to Nigeria in 1989 it was on my mind that this time I was going to have to collect my impressions in some manner conducive to scholarly work. Clouding my focus on any specific project was an unshakable feeling that I was witnessing and participating in something of enormous dimensions that virtually no one seemed to be aware of, and that I could not isolate and define for myself. Fabian's work on pidgin Swahili in Zaire (1986) seems to be driven by similar radical intuitions.

Imperialist expansion, Christian evangelization, and the development of modern linguistics and anthropology have not been merely coincidental. Each of these movements - economic, religious, scientific (and all of them political) - needed a global perspective and a global field of action for ideological legitimation and for practical implementation. To object that individual colonial agents, missionaries and field-anthropologists/linguists were mostly quite limited in their political horizons and in their subjective consciousness does not discredit the 'world-system' or similar notions as heuristic tools in writing history. What counts is the factual existence of conditions allowing global circulation of commodities, ideas and personnel. (Fabian 1986, pp.72-3)

Existing discussions of literacy often concern themselves with literacy statistics, administrative procedures, pedagogical practices and motivation strategies (e.g. Wang 1985; Grigsby 1985; Brooks 1976; Sandefur 1981; Unesco 1976). They include the last because of a recurring reluctance on the part of intended candidates for literacy programs to participate, and the common tendency for neo-literates to lapse. Conspicuously lacking is the insider's ground-level perspective. To repair this, while accepting that my own experience is that of a too frequently bewildered outsider, this study has been quite eclectic in its selection of sources.

1.3 An overview

There is an obvious, if perhaps specious, parallel between the career of Latin as a universal language during the time of the Roman Empire and in the following period of diversification, and English during its imperial days and its present instatement as the principal world language and a major language of education and administration in post-colonial Africa. The dissolution of the Latin-speaking Empire spawned conditions that allowed for the ascent of the daughter languages of Latin. English has also engendered a number of offspring. Two sorts of observations can be made about the process whereby new languages are created out of old. The first concerns the actual mechanics of the blending process, including the interaction of substratum and superstratum languages and the effects of other language contact. The

second sort of observation can be made concerning the period in time when a hybrid language has acquired sufficient strength of identity and enough political friends to be able to assert its independence. For example, the Florentine Academy's position in establishing the Tuscan dialect as a literary standard constituted a challenge to the political power of (Renaissance) Rome and ushered in an age of the ascendancy of new European national cultures and national languages.

The possible speciousness of the parallel derives, at least in part, from the fact of the enormous differences between the communication technologies of, for example, the Roman world of the fourth century A.D. and almost anywhere in the late twentieth century. To what extent can we have faith in the validity of historic examples of language change? The literature available on language change in modern Africa does, however, show a strong general conformity to historic patterns of language change in the new nation states. In many countries new languages are emerging out of the blend of local and colonial languages. A natural product of linguistic need, these new languages are making rapid inroads in the domains of both the non-prestigious vernacular languages and the prestigious colonial languages, in some cases making the future of the latter quite uncertain. If language change at present remains true to historic pattern, it may be appropriate to anticipate future developments along similar lines. Nationhood needs a secure sense of identity if it is to survive. Unique national languages may both provide this and be its proud banner.

The equation of illiteracy with disease or cultural deficiency may not stand up to close scrutiny. While it is not possible to maintain that illiterate, or oral, cultures are capable of the complexity or diversity of literate cultures, or that illiterate individuals have the same cognitive skills as highly literate individuals, recognition of the real and appropriate education that oral societies provide for their members is needed. The recommendations for change made by outsiders to oral cultures usually are a reflection of the outsiders' inherited (or acquired) cultural values. Consideration of the importance of cultural integrity and self-determination, as well as how best these might be preserved, is clouded by conflicting priorities or indifference. A clear idea of what an education needs to provide within a specific cultural context will be best determined by those closest to that context (and who those closest to that context may be should not be accepted uncritically). Education cannot separate itself from values and what it is that should be understood as constituting knowledge.

1.4 What: the task at hand

My consistent observation, however simplistic it may seem put in these terms, has been that western culture (or, to get closer to home, Canadian society) tends to produce individuals of various degrees of intellectual competence, but that this seems often to be bought at the expense of emotional stability and personal identity. The experiences I will relate of oral cultures suggest a reverse pattern. Intellectual

maturity along the lines of functioning empiricism (if that is an adequate way of representing a level of intellectual attainment: see Ong 1982, pp.31-77 for the psychodynamics of orality, and Greenfield 1972; but see also Street 1984) is rare, but even the youngest members of, for example, the Yoruba communities I have lived in, show an enviable emotional maturity and security of identity. I hope to be able to offer by the end of this study some sort of accounting for this contrast.

Northrop Frye (1963, p.50) once claimed that the monolingual thinker could not be completely trusted:

We can't use our minds at full capacity unless we have some idea of how much of what we think we're thinking is really thought, and how much is just familiar words running along their own familiar tracks... you learn to think better from linguistic conflict, from bouncing one language off another.

Though I cannot claim to have the other language fluency to make this a productive process, I believe if the word "cultural" were put in place of "linguistic" here, the same principle would apply. This study certainly owes a debt to years of living with cultural conflict.

I do not defend my blanket classification of West African, Australian Aboriginal and rural Mexican cultures as oral, whatever the current literacy statistics are or the number of homegrown Ph.D.'s in their universities. Nor do I enter the discussion about problems of growing functional illiteracy levels in industrialized societies or speculate about a new oral culture in a generation bred on television, nintendo and rock videos (see Ong 1982; 1986; Graff 1987). It is uncontroversial that the former group of cultures are members, in

various degrees, of that group of societies classified as underdeveloped, or developing; and that deficiencies of education, or literacy, are often identified as the root cause of this condition. The industrialized nations, on the other hand, are so because they have a very large class of very literate members running them, whatever may be the case with their less empowered members. I therefore do not intend, for the purposes of this study, to attempt to further refine this division of oral and literate cultures, though this would undoubtedly be necessary if anything more than very general statements were to be offered.

Contemporary social idealism typically discusses literacy in the following manner:

Literacy is a basic right, not a privilege, but it is meaningless without the right, also, to use the skills for one's own benefit and for one's family and community. (Hunter, in Miller 1985, p.xiv)

If we want the darkness to flower, if we hope to establish lands of dignity and integrity with the millions of people who still have not learned to read or write... lands where all people can live in light and justice... then our guiding stars must be struggle and hope. (Neruda 1971, in Miller 1985, p.1)

The crisis of illiteracy has usually been relegated to Third World countries. More and more, however, illiteracy is threatening the continued development of the highly industrialized nations... The implications of a high level of illiteracy are far-reaching and yet largely ignored. Illiteracy not only threatens the economic order of a society, it also constitutes a profound injustice, such as the inability of illiterates to make decisions for themselves or to participate in the political process. Thus, illiteracy threatens the very fabric of democracy. (Freire 1987, p.vii)

The political potency of these statements should not be underestimated. All come from an unchallengeable recognition of the

relationship between power, economic progress, the maintenance of democratic institutions, and literacy. It should be noted, however, that these are extrinsic arguments for the dissemination of literacy, making an assumption that whatever may be lost in the race for the fundamental instrument of western-style development cannot be compared to the gains made. The arguments, while recognizing an incontrovertible fact, are also heavily coloured by the values of the writers, which are in turn deeply embedded in the assumptions of the literate cultures they are a product of. But, it might be asked, is there anything lost as literacy is acquired? Some patterns should emerge, the first of culture-bound misinterpretation of oral cultures by members of literate ones (see also Kaunda 1971, p.vii; Street 1984), a second of the richness of linguistic resources of at least some oral cultures, and a third of the relationship of cultural cohesiveness and integrity to orality.

The content of the process of educating the young of a society before conferring adult membership status on them varies enormously from culture to culture, at least traditionally, and in large part might distinguish separate cultures. The common principle is that education constitutes a sort of contract between a society and its members whereby the society promises some degree of success in adult life in return for satisfactory application to this process. Like any organism, a society's first responsibility is self-preservation. It is for this reason that a philosophy of education like Dewey's (1916) for democracy, or Freire's (1988 etc.) for transformation, must be regarded as unusual, and in

some sense suicidal for the societies espousing them (if, for example, Dewey is to be taken at face value). The Kpelle of Liberia and the Aborigines of Australia may be regarded as better aware of the dependency of the individual on the survival of the whole (Sandefur 1981; Gay & Cole 1967) and the oral societies they are representative of are characteristically conservative and change-resistant (Goody 1968 etc.; Ong 1982).

I am hoping, then, to build from a perspective that differs from that of the social ideologists. The innocent abroad cannot help but be struck by apparent correspondences between societies separated greatly in space and tradition. Patterns emerge that suggest some underlying principle. General experience clearly shows a divide between literate and oral cultures. What is the nature of this divide and what is its source?

I have chosen on a number of occasions to use the phrase "culture of the written word" as a way of identifying a specific domain within the cluster of associations evoked by the term "literacy." This culture operates to greater or lesser extent in the lives of most communities, with academic communities, the oral elements of a lecture system notwithstanding, positioned at one extreme. Opposed to the culture of the written word is the culture of the spoken word. In contrast to the written word, no community functions without some form of speaking. That given, this study understands traditional West African societies to occupy a position towards the oral extreme in a continuum, though not in

exclusive possession of that extreme. Predominantly oral sub-cultures probably exist within all societies, though it would be a mistake to regard these as uniform. One essential difference between oral societies has to do with patterns of exogenous dominance and influence.

It is probably not possible to get to the heart of the difference between oral and literate cultures without, in some sense, "going beyond the evidence." It is to this end that literary references and terms such as "literary experience" and "mythology" are introduced into this discussion. Because of the great variety of possible sources for the construction of this discussion, far more is left out than can be included. The broader the discussion, the more openings for impressionistic input seem to offer themselves. Literary authority is established by intuitive response. Consensus is achieved through congruency with the reader's personal experience, the feeling of the presence of either insight or error. Given that, it must be expected that the response of different readers may vary according to personal experiential factors.

The main themes in this study, then, have to do with the nature of the culture of the written word, the culture of the spoken word and literary experience. Ancillary themes flowing from these have to do with cultural evolution and language, the function of education, and international development.

1.5 Why: first causes

The decade or so following the independence of many former African colonies of the European powers, starting about 1960, saw much new thought devoted to the creation of fair and coherent language policies in the multilingual nations. Although the language problems faced by each fledgling administration were broadly similar, the details of each national situation varied greatly depending on a number of factors. Established patterns of language use which pre-dated or were independent of colonial control and which reflected local circumstances of cultural contact and trade in some cases had major consequences for post-colonial language policy. These have been sometimes disintegrative and sometimes re-integrative (e.g., in Tanzania, Northern Nigeria and Zaire: see also Makulu 1971 and Fabian 1986). Later contact with European civilization varied enormously in nature from region to region and period to period (Alexandre 1972); each interest group has left its own mark and buried its fossil remains in the African psyche.

A third factor, inseparable from the previous two, but in need of separate treatment, is attitude. I do not refer here to attitude in a sociolinguistic sense, of one linguistic group towards another, but rather of policy makers who try to rise above tribalistic rivalries and post-colonial resentments, but whose perceptions are strongly coloured nonetheless by their educations, prevailing assumptions of international agencies (such as Unesco), and the interest groups they in turn represent. Education and administration create the need for language

policy. Each is more or less effectively institutionalized and to this extent stands as a measure of national development (economic development is presumably a consequence of these). The institutions of education and administration, however, did not suddenly come into being upon formal declarations of independence, but were well established in character, tradition and affiliations. No educator or administrator, however well-intentioned, or however African, would be able to examine issues of language policy free of the process that had put him (or her) in the position of power to act upon that examination.

Language policy emerges from the political control of the institutions of power and authority and, arguably, is a product of their interests. The fundamental domains of language use, however, are non-institutionalized (or, if you will, are functions of much more pervasive cultural institutions): the home, the market, the workplace, the road. An examination of post-colonial discussions of language problems will be limited in the new insights it can produce. The exercise has been repeated enough times already. New directions for language policy are most likely to be discoverable in an examination of the effects of popular forces on language change in Africa.

The rationale for undertaking this study is no less complex than its subject matter. Since this study is, in part, a subjective examination of language policy and literacy issues, the following information might put the direction of this study in a coherent framework. In 1975 I graduated with a degree in English literature, unsatisfied with the

education I had received thus far. The most salient activities of the following years included the pursuit of at least two quite radically different forms of education, the first musical and the second in the building trades. Each of these had palpable objectives and devoted little energy to theoretical concerns. Each also involved an essentially literacy-independent apprenticeship. (A great violinist need never have read a book on violin technique; the most valuable parts of texts on carpentry are the pictures and diagrams. The world of music does have its own "orality and literacy" divide that will not be explored here.)

From 1983 to 1985 I worked as a secondary school teacher in Ilesha, Nigeria, after having been recruited by the Canadian development agency CUSO. Nigeria is the most populous African state with estimates of the 1991 census results recording up to 150 million. It occupies a land mass similar to that of the province of British Columbia in Canada. It is bounded by Niger and the Sahara Desert to the north, Benin to the west, Lake Chad and Cameroon to the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the south (see map p.19). Although Nigeria's colonial history shares much in common with other sub-Saharan African nations and it owes its political boundaries to a decision of the European powers (Berlin Conference, 1884-5; see Hatch 1970, pp.152-3) and statehood to a 1914 amalgamation of British protectorates (see Akinraso 1991 for more detailed background material), Nigeria was never heavily settled by Europeans and the small presence of Europeans today generally consists of expatriates hired on short-term contracts.

1.5.1 Map of Nigeria showing major ethnic boundaries:



Independent Nigeria has been volatile but has pursued its political fortunes with an openness and enthusiasm that place it far in advance of many of its neighbours in the development of political consciousness and a workable political process. Ethnic and linguistic diversity are both Nigeria's greatest wealth and its greatest liability. The four hundred or so ethno-linguistic groups (Akinaso 1989; see however Djité 1988b regarding problems of classification and the exaggeration of linguistic heterogeneity) are dominated by three major groups: the Hausa in northern Nigeria, the Igbo in the east and the Yoruba in the west.

I was posted to the west, to live amongst the Yoruba people. Ilesha is a large market town and the home of the Oba, or King, of Ijeshaland, the surrounding area of towns, villages and farmland. Ilesha Grammar School is the oldest secondary school in the area, having been founded by the community in 1934, but is now just one of nearly twenty secondary schools in a town of over a quarter of a million. Its "old boy" association was strong and influential and the school enjoyed relatively good facilities and a record for academic achievement. It included the only "A" [advanced] level college in the region, which stood as a measure of its distinction.

A large field of high-grade oil in southeast Nigeria created a period of abundance during the height of the OPEC oil cartel in the 1970's and some states, including the one to which I had been posted, were able to offer universal free secondary education. It was broadly recognized, at least by the teaching staff, that universal education

brought with it enormous problems of supply, facility and personnel. The calibre of students also dropped and the success rates that Ilesha Grammar School had recorded of 20-40% in "O" level English fell to 1% in 1985, the first year of certificate candidacy for the students of the universal free secondary education program, according to statistics from a staff meeting at the school and a letter from a former student regarding the 1985 results. The latter figure included my own students, upon whom I had expended much energy and emotion in an attempt to motivate them. I knew that too many had neither developed useful work habits nor earned sufficient successes to encourage their efforts. Many would nonetheless grow to feel that the time spent in secondary school entitled them to a place in their society above their elders. I believed that such students would have a destabilizing effect on their own cultures and on Nigerian society as a whole, and would not offer sufficient real skills to assist in the task of nation-building.

I left in 1985, but in 1989 I returned to Nigeria, this time to participate in the running of a workshop that trained apprentice cabinetmakers and supported itself by the sale of furniture and with building contracts. St. Joseph's Workshop in Inisha (see map p.19) was held to be a model development project. Originally the personal project of a Dutch priest, Piet van Asten, and established by the White Fathers missionary society, it was now managed and staffed completely by Nigerians (with the exception of one assistant, latterly Canadian, of increasingly symbolic function).

The great virtue of this workshop was that it gave boys, most of whom had done quite poorly in the school system, an opportunity to acquire a trade and gain a real day-to-day work discipline. Skills were transferred orally, by demonstration and by endless repetition. The boys took their training seriously and there was a spirit of cooperation and hard work among them that was gratifying to see. Graduates were justifiably proud of their accomplishment and ready to take their place in a struggling economy that would always need good carpenters.

I thus have had the rare opportunity of participating in two education systems in the developing world. The first was created by state education policy and under the scrutiny of professional educationists; the second was privately run and self-supporting, the vision of a man devoted to service. The contrast in terms of quality of preparation for the realities of the world their students would face was dramatic.

But even with the superiority of the apprentice system of the workshop so apparent, I had to take issue with the effect its religious affiliations had on the psychology of the workshop. One senior member of the workshop community was believed by some to be seeking sainthood and was resented because his priorities seemed to lack connection to the real concerns of other members. Apprentices were counselled to accept reduced conditions (on one occasion their food allowance would no longer feed them adequately to continue to do their work) in the name of religious sacrifice. I wondered how a more traditional form of

apprenticeship would have operated and handled the exigencies of changing conditions. I wondered if even the best intentioned western development initiative could be free from destructive effect. This study of literacy owes its inception in large part to these experiences.

1.6 How: methodology

This study moves by stages from the distant and historical to the immediate. There are two broad lines of inquiry established; the first deals with historical patterns of language change which are then applied to specific contemporary situations; the second deals with patterns of cultural change and is tied to the evident polarity existing between oral and literate cultures. The webs of thematic interconnectedness are too complex for all relationships between material to be explicated, given the nature and purpose of this exercise.

This is first and foremost a "field" study. I mean this in as non-antiseptic a sense as I can convey. I have never travelled anywhere for the purpose of conducting a detached study of any person, thing or isolable cultural phenomenon. That I have now here isolated some such phenomenon, however badly defined, should, then, not be considered a product of my purpose in venturing out into the world, but rather a product of ordinary observations made in the course of carrying out the business of life.

I take a "pre-scientific" (or phenomenological) approach to those experiences that I am here classifying as field studies. Although

carefully controlled studies should produce verifiable results, such studies are usually very limited in scope; on the one hand by the tradition and theoretical dispositions of the particular discipline undertaking the study, and on the other hand by the narrowness of focus necessary to isolate a cultural phenomenon that can be consistently observed, measured and tested. In all cases my focus has been relationships with and between the people around me and the emotional dimension that defines the quality of these relationships.

The most abundant of these have been with my students. Helping young adults acquire the tools and insights to face the challenges of their lives is complex beyond the scope of social science:

Teaching involves emotions, which cannot be systematically appraised and employed, and human values, which are quite outside the grasp of science. A "scientifically" brought up child would be a pitiable monster. A "scientific" marriage would be only a thin and crippled version of a true marriage. A "scientific" friendship would be as cold as a chess problem. (Highet 1950, p.viii)

There is a lot of nonsense spouted about the division between the scientific and the creative mind, however, which I do not want to add to. Certain tools are most appropriate to certain tasks. My interests incline me to particular tasks for which I have chosen, what seem to me, the most appropriate tools. It should be conceded, nonetheless, that a general rift between literate analytic culture and oral synthetic culture is identified and explored, with literary works brought to the defense of the latter, after Arnold: "The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not analysis and discovery" (1938, p.687).

The observations I have recorded, and the material I have consulted, are almost all directed beyond our national boundaries. This need not have been so. One recent summer I had to take up yet another set of tools so that I could keep the landlord happy. One job took me to a farming community in northern British Columbia. The farmer I worked for was weatherbeaten, shrewd, with a robust sense of humour, a happy marriage, and with four adult daughters whom he had raised with the same philosophy as his cows and horses, and who were devoted to him. He was also functionally illiterate. Across the valley a young family worked another farm. The wife was a school teacher and the husband a trained agronomist. Their marriage was in constant turmoil, their children temperamental and confused. The husband came regularly to the older farmer's house for advice and refuge. What is true abroad seems also to be true at home.

The fever of sawdust, sweat, chloroquine, and endless roads that gave birth to the anecdotal dimension of this study belongs more to a literary conception. Had this not been the source of my work, however, I would most certainly have had nothing to add to the already formidable studies of language and literacy available to us. It will be for others to determine what value may lie in my approach and if my reasoning is of an adequate quality.

1.7 Outline

Chapter Two is a review of the literature. It is divided into sections that correspond to the organization of the following chapters and the two broad arguments that this thesis presents.

Chapter Three explores historical material which is then related to contemporary African situations. The first section, on the emergence of the Romance languages, is not intended to provide new insights to a field I remain only superficially acquainted with. My intention here is to start from a base of conventional scholarship. Classical Latin was a language variety that was fixed by writing, and which owes both its long life and its long death to this. Popular (or Vulgar) Latin, unrecorded, was free to mingle and evolve. Its modern descendants have gone through a similar process of having standards fixed by literary excellence, and subsequent isolation of that standard from the ongoing evolution of popular speech. It was in the interests of the international community of scholars to maintain Latin as the language of education and scholarship, but academic interest easily dissociates itself from popular interest, and the will of the majority, represented by the voices of vernacular literary genius, prevails in the end. The importance of this discussion lies in the evidence it provides for how languages actually change, and how vernacular languages and popular education arise naturally to a position of authority. There are implications here both for language policy and literacy education.

In the second section of Chapter Three the parallel situations which seem to be emerging in many African states, and in Nigeria specifically, are examined. Here the old colonial languages still serve as the vehicles of higher learning, public administration and international communication. Arguments similar to those of Renaissance scholars in defense of Latin have been made and are still being made to rationalize and prolong the positions of ascendancy of the European languages. At the same time, however, there is growing evidence of the activity of popular forces which are creating new languages out of the blend of local languages and the high status international languages. Economic forces play a large part in this process, and increasingly the material resources necessary to maintain a foreign standard and override popular language pressures cannot be provided.

In Chapter Four I present the "field study" part of this thesis. Literary sources are brought to bear including, most prominently, the literary critic, Northrop Frye (1963; 1971; 1976; 1983; 1990; 1991). Western researchers show a pattern of culture-bound misapprehension of varying degrees of severity. Here it is specifically the role of literacy that is brought into question. Literacy brings a certain competence in its own domain, but much is left out of this domain, including human relationships. Additional thought is given to that which should be considered as constituting "knowledge", and for what purposes a society identifies certain experiences as and invests resources in that process which is education.

In my final chapter I elaborate on these themes further and attempt to come to some sort of conclusion.

II

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Africa today

In Ghana (Saah 1986) language diversity is of a nature such that no indigenous languages have been elevated to official or national language status. A former British colony, Ghana retains English as its official and educational language. Its position seems undisputed in these domains, and it might be noted that amongst English speaking West Africans, Ghanaians have a reputation for having a high level of English competence.

Standard Ghanaian English has become Africanized not so much lexically or structurally, as through its assimilation of cultural norms for local language groups. Thus, the use of euphemism in English by native speakers of Akan reflects the practice of the speakers' first language. A diglossic situation exists between local languages and English.

It is a sad state of affairs that due to the high premium placed on English in Ghanaian schools, most literates feel much more comfortable writing in English to their friends and relations though they usually communicate verbally in their own language. (Saah, p.371)

There also exists a diglossic relationship between varieties of English, with standard and pidgin varieties opposed. Though the language of

"totally illiterate speakers", pidgin "has become so fashionable to use... that even some high school and university students use it a lot in casual conversation" (p.372). Pidgin has acquired a kind of prestige as a language of solidarity and identity. Saah (p.375) writes of working as an enumerator in the 1970 population census, when he was unable to gain the confidence of one old man (albeit, a Liberian living in Ghana) until he switched from standard "book" English to pidgin.

Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) is a former French colony that, at least at a glance, seems to have retained close ties to its old colonial masters (this is an impression gathered during a visit in January, 1990). It exhibits the characteristic language diversity of its neighbours, with four major language groups subdued under French as the official language and language of education. The position of standard French, however, is not secure:

in the face of all kinds of economic difficulties, of record numbers of school dropouts and (intellectual) unemployment, mastery of the official language is no longer a guarantee of socioeconomic integration. In fact, the use of Standard French when addressing an uneducated or less educated person may sometimes be perceived as an offense. (Djité 1987, p.220)

Competing with Standard French as lingua francas are Dyula (a dialect of Mandingo) and Popular French (a pidgin). While Popular French, though relatively widespread, remains stigmatized as a language of illiterates, Dyula is more widely accepted.

The frequent use of Dyula by the elite and the international community for functions other than those of government and administration has increased the pervasiveness of the language and contributed to making it more attractive to all... the language is no longer regarded as the exclusive medium of communication of the uneducated... [it has] become a marker of the desire to

identify with the natives... this variety is simplified and its lexicon is full of borrowings from other local languages and from French. (p.219)

Though these languages appear to be on the ascent,

populations are suspicious... a new language policy... might rob them of the only chance... to achieve a higher socioeconomic status, which they still associate with the mastery of Standard French. (p.222)

Zaire rivals the linguistic complexity of Nigeria, with 300 local languages, four national languages (Ciluba, Kikongo, Kiswahili and Lingala) and French as "the language of public administration and international relations and the medium of instruction" (Rubango 1988, p.267). With only four per cent of the population speaking this language of power, and with changing times, French here is also in trouble:

Toutefois, depuis l'indépendance, le chômage et le paupérisation des jeunes élites s'accroissent... se forme graduellement une nouvelle aristocratie financière généralement non ou insuffisamment instruite. D'où le slogan populaire qu'on rencontre dans plusieurs langues nationales: "le français, est-ce l'argent?" D'où également la croyance corollaire que... le français constitue une des voies les plus sûres de la clochardisation, de la prolétarianisation. (Rubango 1988, p.256)

French taught in the school systems is accused of undergoing all the deviations from the standard characteristic of the pidginization process. Hostility or indifference to French, poor habits of French use at home and school, incompetent teachers, insufficient instruction manuals are all cited as reasons for the failure of the official language.

The government maintains French as the official language, however, because it fears "une nouvelle tempête de passions et de violences dans un pays où la plaie des troubles politiques et sociaux n'est pas complètement encore fermée" (p.261). It is recognized that another danger exists "à épouser une manière national-chauvinisme stérile et d'ethno-centrisme asphyxiant" which would result in the loss of

certaines valeurs étrangères positives, qu'elles émanent d'Occident ou d'ailleurs, qu'elles soient d'ordre matériel, technologique ou spirituel, culturel. (p.264)

Increasingly, however, English is being seen as this vehicle to gain access to the positive influence of the outside world, and the educated elite seem to be turning more and more to it. English cannot take the place of an internal lingua franca, however. It is in the national languages that French here faces its competition, "particulièrement celles qui, parmi les linguae francae, présentent une vocation continentale et mondiale" (p.263).

Tanzania differs from other countries discussed and shares in common with northern Nigeria a history in which colonial administrations (German and British) used an already established trade language, Swahili in this case, as the language of administration. The happy consequence of this was a post-independence language policy that is "one of the most successful instances of language institution in the world" (Fasold 1984, p.266). English survives for a number of "high" functions, but Swahili, a language both indigenous and neutral (not favouring any particular ethnic group), remains the national and official language.

Tanzania's situation is fortunate and, apparently, unique, for even at the time of independence, use of Swahili was widespread. Kenya, by contrast, has also attempted to establish Swahili, but against a background of very limited use, and it has found itself much more dependent on English for its official and inter-ethnic communication needs.

Tanzania, then, is an anomaly in the linguistic fabric of modern Africa, having, in some sense at least, attained the more open society the Kahanes (1979) saw as the driving force behind language change in diglossic language communities.

Wardaugh (1986) identifies the problem:

When European imperialism was finally effectively removed from Asia and Africa... there was no... redrawing of political boundaries. The previous colonies, often peculiar amalgams of language and ethnic groups, since conquest rather than language or ethnicity had accounted for their origins, became independent whole nations except in a few cases, such as Pakistan, Burma and Sri Lanka, when there was successful separation in contrast to Biafra's unsuccessful attempt to secede from Nigeria and Katanga's from Zaire. Many of the resultant nations have no common ethnicity, and strong internal linguistic and ethnic rivalries, making national planning and consensus difficult to achieve at best... One important consequence is that the new states... are often multilingual but, as a result of their histories, have elites who speak a European language such as English or French. This language not only serves many as an internal working language but is also regarded as the language of mobility. It is both the language that transcends local loyalties and the one that opens up access to the world outside the nation. (p.345)

He goes on to observe:

It is unlikely that in these circumstances such "outside" languages will disappear; rather it is likely that they will continue to be used and that positions of leadership will continue to go only to those who have access to them, unless present conditions change. [my emphasis] (p.345)

2.2 Literacy vs. oral culture

2.2.1 General works

I am not sure to what extent I am following the line of reasoning that led Plato to mistrust the literate mind and Rousseau to speak of his "noble savage." There seems to be a tendency to regard the relevant works of these philosophers as necessary reading for the serious scholar but so self-evidently quaint as to be dismissible in the first few paragraphs of introductory chapters. Scribner and Cole (1981) do this quite tolerably well. Goody and Watt (1968) do take the time to consider honestly Plato's reservations about book learning, while pointing out that a text such as the Republic could never have been created in a non-literate society (a reasoning which is fine, as far as it goes, but fails to give due to the argument in Phaedrus giving first importance to ecstatic knowledge). Havelock (1986) goes more deeply into issues of orality and literacy in Classical antiquity. I do not believe this study can be understood within the traditions of social science and classical scholarship that these writers represent, and, it must be conceded, from their perspective this study must be considered naive. Goody (1968) may have had the sort of observations I am making in mind when he referred to "retrogressive desires that characterize much thinking of the Wordsworthian, Back-to-the-Village, Culture and Environment schools" (p.19). Challenges to the notion that late twentieth century literate high culture is in possession of adequate insights continue to be generated from a variety of quarters, however.

Steiner (1989) in his stimulating, if not lucid, essay about the relationship between art and meaning, finds in the proliferation of secondary (and tertiary) texts in this age an oppressive and empty parasitism, a failure to connect to the profounder level of meaning that creative works reach for. He concurs with Hegel's identification of the "emptiness in the desert of reason" (p.228). Steiner's thinking (like Maslow's psychology of peak experiences) is elitist, however, and by defining aesthetic experience as beyond the reach of any but the rigorously tutored, betrays the inadequacies of his own experience.

For Pattison (1982) speaking and writing present a false dichotomy: "All cultures are by definition oral cultures" (p.24); and he cautions: "there is no guarantee that because people can read and write they can also think" (p.149). He would "rather trust Homer's oral education than the book learning that produced the main culture of Hitler's Germany" (p.55). Although "writing is a method of social discipline" (p.65), "the Great Spirit talks... he never writes" (p.37). Pattison also cautions against literacy programs born of social idealism: "The literacy programs... of... Paolo[sic] Freire are also guided by the principle of obedience... the uneducated are trained to read and write within the context of socialist dialogue" (p.152).

Ong (1982) discusses with some penetration the effects of the various technologies of the word on oral culture. While recognizing the unique accomplishments of oral culture and the disabling effect of literacy on these (e.g. p. 59), Ong greets the evolution of culture into

new technologies of the future with considerable enthusiasm. His claim that members of oral cultures "want literacy passionately" (p. 15) does not, however, account for the resistance encountered to some literacy programs and the tendencies recorded for neo-literates to lapse (Sandefur 1981; Ryan 1985). Fabian (1986) discovers what is perhaps the critical factor determining the success or failure of literacy initiatives, or what it is that is 'exciting' in the "exciting world of literacy" (Ong, p. 15):

The respondent for Scheut in London [circa 1918]... notes that teaching Africans to become literate in their own languages is 'surprisingly easy. There are many natives who have the desire to learn and who, with a few private lessons taken from a catechist or a friend who is farther advanced, have learned to read by themselves.' (Fabian 1986, p.68)

These particular Africans were employees of the Katanga mine and their literacy "was a factor that could double or triple wages" (p. 68).

Graff (1987) uses a historian's perspective to explode widespread assumptions about the relationships between literacy and various aspects of development. Attacking what he calls the "literacy myth," Graff sees literacy as just one of many complex and intricate factors accompanying development, but not sufficient to account for it. Indeed, in some cases such as industrialization (p. 65) and fertility (pp.100-132) there is evidence of negative correspondence. He recognizes also that "literacy, quite explicitly, has been a tool of western imperialism" (p.56).

Street (1984) provides one of the most vigorous challenges to western assumptions about literacy. Seeing in the work of Greenfield (1972) and Goody (1968; 1977; 1986) examples of what he labels

"autonomous" models of literacy (in which literacy can be isolated as a cause of cultural and cognitive effects), he proposes instead an "ideological" model. Thus he states:

What Greenfield and others are privileging and providing ideological support for is, in fact, their own academic establishment, their own practice within it, their own values and rules. (p.38)

In the case of certain mass literacy programs he writes:

A Tanzanian programme, recognising that teaching literacy to people who would afterwards have no personal use for reading and writing was futile, proposed the creation of a 'literacy environment' in which the skills learnt would not atrophy (Unesco, 1971). This begged the question as to what, in that case, literacy was being taught for. Carol and Lars Berggren (1975) offer one answer: literate people are perceived by companies contemplating investment as a market for goods that could not otherwise be sold to them. They relate the Unesco concept of 'functional literacy' to crude commercial exploitation and see Unesco idealism as a thin veneer for multinational interests. Arguments about cognitive consequences of acquiring literacy are, for them, to be seen in terms of this larger economic and political context. (p.13)

Thomas's (1986) examination of literacy in Elizabethan England provides a negative picture of the effects of literacy on the oral culture that ours has descended from. In spite of the extent to which written texts governed this age, "literacy was in fact largely irrelevant to the pursuit of many occupations" (p.104). Illiterates were to be found in most strata of the society and were fully participating members of it (as with the Vai), even to the extent of full involvement in political activity. This was possible because "only a tiny fraction of social knowledge was transmitted via the written word" (p.113). The social effect of literacy is identified:

The printed word thus either educated an imitative audience in accepted views or confirmed a passive one in a position of cultural inferiority...

The spread of literacy in modern England, therefore, did not noticeably alter the direction in which society was moving anyway. Neither did it have more than a gradual effect upon people's mental habits. What it did was to consolidate the authority of the educated classes over their inferiors and to impoverish and disparage other forms of expression... (p.121)

Literacy was not only an instrument for social domination, it's acquisition had side effects for the individual:

Losses which literacy brought in its train: a memory ruined by speed-reading, an inability to retain long verbal instructions or to sit through a lecture, perhaps even emotional deprivation stemming from a retreat from other forms of verbal and physical expression, reflected in a buttoned-up, more inhibited personality and a preference for communication by paper rather than face to face. (p.116)

2.2.2 Field studies

I will next examine a number of studies relating to literacy and oral cultures ranging from discussions of literacy issues related to Aboriginal cultures (Langlands 1981; Sandefur 1981; Turtle 1981) to Greenfield's (1972) identifying cognitive deficiency, to those of certain West African oral cultures by literate members of them (Nwokah 1987; Akinaso 1985), to various studies of Liberian oral or literate cultures (Bellman 1977; Gay & Cole 1967; Scribner & Cole 1981).

2.2.2.1 Aboriginal studies

Langlands(1981) attempts a summary of research done on cognitive differences between cultural groups, then characterizes Aboriginal cognitive ability (for the purpose of developing appropriate literacy programs). He provides this premise (from Harris 1977, p.458):

The idea is that the social and economic history of a society causes changes in ways of thinking, both in terms of the content

of thought and the processes of thought... higher psychological functions... such as voluntary memory, active attention, abstract thought... are organized into different function systems in response to the different needs of historically and culturally determined practical and theoretical activities.

Cultures or societies educate their members in accordance with their priorities, inheritance and environment.

Langland's summary reveals patterns of cognitive specialization such as:

Incidence of eidetic imagery dramatically higher among rural Ibo than among westerners... Ghanaian and Bantu interpret [pictures] two dimensionally. Westerners three dimensionally... significantly better results in remembering stories among Ghanaians [than Americans] if the stories are culturally relevant... Kpelle refused to accept the restraints of the text [in syllogistic problems]. Westerners kept within the limits of the text... Nigerians [are] more auditory and proprioceptively orientated in rod and frame test. Americans are more visually orientated... (pp.56-60)

The analysis of Aboriginal cognitive abilities reveals a pattern of relative deficiency in linguistic and conceptual skills, with some parallels to lower socio-economic status whites. Aboriginal strengths were in the areas of visual discrimination and visual spatial memory. Some evidence was available for superior thinking skills independent of verbal ability. It is noted that the deficiency results may have been because "those tested did not understand English well" (p.66). This qualification, though not given much weight in the study, may call into serious question the validity of the Aboriginal cognitive profile offered here. (Scribner & Cole 1981 devoted much attention to the problems of culturally sensitive testing.)

Sandefur (1981) examines some cultural factors affecting vernacular literacy programs for Aborigines. Resistance of Aborigine communities to literacy programs was an obstacle to educators:

For the traditional Aboriginal, learning to read and write might well be seen as having no relevance. He may see it, rather, as a threat to the status quo, making those who learn to read different to others. (p.4)

Literacy seems to pit individual advancement against group cohesiveness. Aboriginal education "was life itself, a unity of experience" (p.8). Western education and its principle instrument, literacy, are change oriented (Dewey 1916). In the context of a culture that has evolved into and learned to live with this, it is still a difficult social principle. When western education is grafted onto traditional oral cultures, that have persevered thus far through their timeless stability, the effect must be anticipated as traumatic. Traditional societies of sufficient vigour and exogenous experience may resist western style education in full knowledge of the enemy in their camp. Social disintegration in traditional societies that have too eagerly embraced western education is well evident (the Nigerian experience is illustrative). Symptomatic of this are the effects reported of western education and values on an Aboriginal community. Time orientation changed to future from past and present, collective orientation was exchanged for individual orientation and the sense of harmony with nature was replaced by relationships of subjection and mastery (Sandefur, p.5). In addition, "the only adjustment made by some Aborigines is recognizing that the white man is now a dominant factor in

his environment" (p.6). Once again we are reminded that literacy is an instrument of power.

Turtle (1981) gives insight (albeit unintentionally) into the psychology of cultural domination. She is concerned with promoting vernacular literacy in a community of Alyawarra people living in the interior of Australia:

The writer feels there is a need for better communication between the Alyawarras and the dominant white society. Better communication would help the Alyawarras more effectively determine their own destiny...

vernacular literacy would function:

- a. As a bridge to learning more effectively their second language, English
- b. To provide a firmer foundation for the Alyawarras as they face the challenges of a dominant culture and society by building pride in their own language and traditional culture, and preserving their sense of dignity
- c. As a means to gaining a more dynamic understanding of the Scriptures when they become available to them in the vernacular. (p.83)

This looks rather suspiciously like liberalism masking a very powerful assimilationist agenda.

All of these articles are by non-Aboriginals with their own motives for promoting Aboriginal literacy. The writers make recommendations from a secure cultural power base, and though probably with the most generous of intentions, without an apparent awareness of, or at least concern for, the destruction of Aboriginal identity that would follow from the implementation of some of their recommendations.

Shiva Naipaul (1978) relates his impressions of a journey through East Africa. He regards the Africans he meets with distaste and

apprehension and depicts the African in the modern world as both reckless and pathetic. Similarly, the writers of these articles seem to regard the Aboriginal psyche, at the very least, as in need of remediation, the way of life their culture has taught them as inadequate for satisfactory adjustment to the outside world. All of them seem to write without appreciation of the resources of the non-literate mind.

2.2.2.2 Wolof children

Greenfield (1972) looks at the distinction between speaking an oral language and speaking a written language. By oral language she means both pre-literate African languages and dialect variations of English with "deviations away from the written language" (p.169). The main difference in use of the two forms appears to be in the relation of each to context. Oral languages are highly "context dependent... [which] is tied up with context-dependent thought, which in turn is the opposite of abstract thought" (p.169). The speaker assumes a common frame of reference or "psychological point of view" (p.170). Because written cultures usually cover large geographical areas, and by inference, a variety of points of view, the common frame of reference cannot be assumed and language (whether spoken or written) must be relatively independent of context.

Education, correspondingly, differs in the two types of culture. In an oral culture a child tends to learn concrete activities, not abstract generalizations. Written cultures, on the other hand, depend on a "technique of instructing the young based heavily on telling out of

context rather than showing in context." Indeed, written language itself represents a "new and higher level of abstraction" (p.171).

These contrasts, based on various studies of African cultures, have their parallel in the socio-economic stratification of the societies of the United States and England. Lower class mothers exhibit the same context-dependent speech style:

The lower class children do not learn as much from their mothers as do their middle-class counterparts... the result... will consequently be of the gravest sort in terms of adult child communication... A context-dependent teaching style on the part of mothers is associated with a lesser development of an ability to form conceptual and linguistic abstractions on the part of the children. (p.172)

Bernstein's theory (1961) of class differences being reflected in "restricted" and "elaborated" codes also seems to apply to the differences Greenfield observed between different groups of Wolof children (Senegal) representing three cultural milieus: unschooled, bush-schooled and urban-schooled.

It seemed that the unschooled Wolof children lacked Western self-consciousness... the concept of a personal point of view... appeared to be absent... The Wolof schoolchildren, in contrast, did not differ essentially from Western children in this respect... The absence of self-consciousness and the resulting presence of an egocentrically unified perspective seem to be associated with an inability to shift perspective on concept formation problems. (p.173)

A connection is found between grammatical structure and grouping operations (superordination).

The embedding of a label in a total sentence structure... indicates that it is less tied to its situational context and more related to its linguistic context... Once thought is freed from the concrete situation, the way is clear for symbolic manipulation... in which the real becomes but a sub-set of the possible. (p.175)

Concept formation associated with language use is not language dependent: the Wolof children, who were schooled in French, showed the same concept abilities in Wolof.

Similarly, Black English copula deletion (Dis ball) represents a degree of context-dependency greater than the more explicit form (This is a ball). Phonological reduction in the same dialect, insofar as it creates a larger number of homophones, is another "example of contextual dependence on a lower level of linguistic organization" (p.176).

Child language shows the context-dependent attributes of oral cultures, whereas adults show an ability to use both context-dependent and context-free forms. Both forms are necessary:

While highly industrialized, literate societies tend to dry abstraction, meaningful human communication depends upon maintaining this flexibility of language use, just as economic survival in such a society depends upon the development of abstract, context-free skills. (p.176)

This paper combines keen insight with unforgivable stereotypings. Greenfield's underlying values regarding sufficiency are too narrowly held. The oral/lower-class children are deficient in certain language skills, perhaps, but what entitles characterizing these as "of the gravest sort?" A much broader study would be needed to determine the actual spectrum of skills the different cultures provide their children with, and to relate these with the skills most needed for survival and well-being in the culture. Additional reservations concern two other areas. Greenfield's testing is no freer from question than in the Aboriginal studies above (Langlands). Performance of isolated tasks,

chosen for their applicability in a different cultural context, will not be adequate to permit generalizations about cognitive ability. Also, I am not sure that lumping oral societies together with lower socio-economic group white societies is always valid. Although transitional oral cultures may share features with lower class white cultures, I believe the common denominator here could be cultural submersion as much as orality. Where oral cultures have not suffered domination by literate civilization, I would expect much weaker correspondences, as the following studies seem to indicate. (For a much more detailed and sustained attack on this study see Street 1984, pp.19-43.)

2.2.2.3 Igbo mothers

Nwokah (1987) examines two types of caregivers to determine what differences, if any, exist between the speech of mothers to their infants and that of other caregivers, in this case pre-adolescent "maids". The subjects are Igbos from Anambra State in Nigeria, of various socio-economic levels, who still practise the tradition of using 8-12 year old children, usually of the same sex as the infant, as baby nurses.

Child care practises in Igbo society vary in many ways from Western practises, particularly in the extent of body contact and social experience the child receives. Although schooling is now interfering with the practise, "the place of maids is still an integral part of any child's upbringing" (p.215).

The initial aim of this research was to find out whether maids speech to infants (maidese) was qualitatively and/or quantitatively different from that of sibling caregivers as reported in the literature, and from that of the mothers (motherese) by analyzing the structural and pragmatic features of each.

Sixteen families were selected, half urban and half rural. Interactions between mother and infant, and maid and infant were recorded for each family. Several differences were found between the speech of the mothers and the maids, but most significantly, the speech of the mothers to their infants corresponded to that of Western mothers. "Igbo mothers see their child as a communicative partner." The mother focuses on "socialization, aspirations, and perception of the infant as a potential adult" (p.230). Structurally Igbo motherese is similar to Western motherese. Differences lie in fewer repetitions and in the absence of a baby-talk lexicon (such as "choo-choo" for train).

This study, by a native Igbo scholar, stands as a challenge to Greenfield. It is apparent that the input the child receives from the mother is rich, warm and full of humour, and in no sense inferior to western motherese. This stands in strong contrast to the starkness of Greenfield's characterization of mother-infant communication in oral cultures. Rather, it is clear that the child grows in a varied and stimulating environment in this culture. This may in part account for the perseverance of traditional child-rearing practises as the Igbos become more westernized in their economic life and education. (See Manfredi 1991 for a much more detailed study of Igbo linguistic awareness and the evolution of Igbo linguistic culture.)

2.2.2.4 Yoruba divinatory speech

Akinnaso (1985) challenges the trend in the examination of spoken versus written discourse to identify the forms as widely divergent. A fundamental error of many studies has been to choose academic literacy and casual conversational speech as representative of the two forms of language, then account for the differences apparent in these as inherent to written or oral language. Writing, however, just as speech, appears in different kinds that are appropriate to the various uses to which each is put. For a comparison of literacy with orality to hold, it must compare styles of writing and speech that, as closely as possible, parallel each other. Akinnaso hypothesizes that a study of this nature will show a pattern of convergence rather than divergence between oral and literary language features.

Divinatory speech in Yoruba may hold a position analogous to academic written language (in English for example). The concept of formality is categorized to show these features:

1) Elaborated code structuring; 2) code consistency (rigid co-occurrence rules); 3) invocation of positional rather than personal identities; 4) emergence of a central situational focus; 5) markedness of setting; and 6) predictability of code, setting, actors etc. (p.334: from Irvine 1979).

Yoruba ritual speech shows, for example, elaborated code structuring at the prosodic level in the pattern of rhetorical presentation, including "1) extensive patterns of repetition and initial couplings; 2) preponderant use of grammatical parallelism; 3) sequential patterning of action..." etc. (p.334).

After the specific features were examined it was concluded:

that many of the observations made about oral ritual communication in non-literate societies also apply to literacy-motivated oral ritual communication in literate societies. For, in many respects, formal lectures, conference presentations, job interviews, Ph.D. orals, etc. are ritual encounters, requiring specialized (para)linguistic skills as well as formal training. (p.352)

Researchers have tended to neglect:

the historical, social, political and ideological contexts in which particular varieties or modes of language are embedded and [also]... how particular forms of language are motivated and perpetuated by the functions they perform. (p.352)

This study is important for the different perspective it offers on the literacy/orality question. Cultural bias (however unintended) has undoubtedly coloured much theory building work, and rigorous challenges to such work are welcome. This study suffers from a couple of possible shortcomings, however. Little data is presented; this may or may not be available in the sources cited, but at least in this study too much of the analysis has to be taken on faith. I am aware of the possibility also that a different cultural bias motivates this discussion. An attempt to dignify a heritage by aligning formal aspects of it with formal aspects of a perceived prestige culture, if a factor here, may obscure the extent and importance of the real differences that exist, for example, between Yoruba divinatory speech and a Ph.D. oral defense.

2.2.2.5 The Kpelle shaman

Research by Gay and Cole (1967, following) into the cognitive structures of the Kpelle identified significant differences between them and American subjects in the way they recalled events, sorted objects and solved problems (Bellman 1977, p.271). The response of the Kpelle to syllogisms in which they view the problem as negotiable (rather than pre-defined by the logic of the first statement), demonstrates an approach to problems "as if their solutions were always problematic and reflexive to the social structure of the interaction setting where it was presented" (p.272). Bellman (1977) examines the interpretative techniques peculiar to Kpelle speakers.

The informants are a shaman (Torkalong) who tells the story of how he acquired his special powers, and two members of his audience who debate the meaning of a riddle the shaman tells as part of his tale. The riddle tells of a boy who gets into trouble then is helped out of it, then ends with a question asking who had helped the boy most (the main person who made this boy a man today). The dichotomized structure of the riddle (with contrasting categories of helpers and trouble causers) set the stage for the debate that followed. The purpose of this debate seemed to be "consistent with the general Kpelle practise of having to discover the structural arrangement of personnel in all social settings" (p.275). Kpelle society recognizes a variety of social domains.

Whenever a Kpelle speaker enters into an ongoing social interaction he must ascertain which particular order of reality obtains as the organizational basis for that setting. This is necessary because it is in the context of an order of social reality that the speaker decides on his right to talk and on his speaking position relative to other members present. (p.275)

The importance of the debate, then, was in establishing "which order of reality... "the boy's obtaining help" was a feature of" (p.276). The other part of the shaman's account consisted of a story about his own upbringing and the process whereby he gained his powers. This story showed the same division between trouble causers and helpers. Through this structural parallel he was able to establish more clearly the identity of his helper (God) and the source of his powers.

Thus the purpose of the shaman's account was to establish the kind of shamanistic power he exercised. Use of such powers is widespread in Kpelle society and relates to universal membership in secret societies, but the purpose or nature of these powers will vary according to a number of factors. It was not the shaman's intention to communicate the literal details of his life, and in fact the details were largely fictitious. His intended meaning had to do with the nature or source of his powers.

The communication of information through indirect expressions, parables, riddles, and story accounts is a common feature of Kpelle rhetoric... What is important in understanding them is not the truth of the events discussed, but rather that the meaning is found through the structure of their respective presentations... Cultural rules are used as mechanisms for the presentation of intended meanings. The relation between rule and meaning, however, is situationally determined... (p.282)

2.2.2.6 The Kpelle and new mathematics

Gay and Cole (1967) studied the problem of western education amongst the Kpelle for the purpose "to understand the Kpelle child, and to recommend methods of teaching him" (p.93). They begin with an appreciation of the western educator's moral dilemma:

The Kpelle are a reasonably well-integrated group of people. The old way of life works well in its accustomed setting. The life of the town on the night of the full moon, when the children are to enter the Bush school the next morning, is a corporate work of art of the kind we no longer know in the Western world. The entire community shares in familiar, accustomed activities. The men and women dance, the "forest thing" comes to the village, sending the women running into their houses, the children prepare, the musicians drum and sing, the young men wear green leaves around their waists and in their hair.

Yeat's poem, "A Prayer for My Daughter," speaks of "A house where all's accustomed, ceremonious," and asks, "How but in custom and in ceremony are innocence and beauty born?" The same easy elegance that characterized the feudal aristocracy of rural Ireland is present here in this Liberian village.

Why is it necessary to interfere with this culture, to try to understand it and to recommend action? Why is there a problem? (p.3)

Their answer to this last question has a kind of inevitability to it. The Kpelle already "are being forcibly inducted into Western culture in a haphazard, disorganized, and insensitive fashion" (p.6).

Gay and Cole's study of Kpelle culture and cognitive abilities is sensitive, however, and they conclude with a number of recommendations for mathematics teaching. Although the authors represent probably the most responsible arm of a movement that has mobilized a great many resources and programs of social change, I cannot help but shudder at their vision of the transformed Kpelle world:

We conclude with the important conviction that children of the Kpelle or other cultures are capable of learning if they are taught correctly. Starting with a mind of rich potentiality and a subtle, flexible language, the Kpelle can indeed improve the world he lives in. If this child understands his own heritage with the creative, open mind of the scientist, he himself will form his own future in continuity with the past. (p.96)

The insensitivity of the induction into Western culture Gay and Cole have identified is not because the representatives of that culture were necessarily brutal individuals. The pattern of social chaos that can be identified where oral cultures try to westernize may be impervious to the best of intentions. The failure is not one of intentions, or even, in some sense, information; the failure is one of mythology. Kpelle culture is fixed by tradition, a self-contained whole:

The Chinese can grow up to ten times as much rice as the Kpelle under comparable conditions - but that is the Chinese way, not the Kpelle way. The Vai do not eat monkeys and the Kpelle do. Americans boil their water, and the Kpelle do not. The Kpelle man seems unconcerned about the contradiction because to him there seems no contradiction. Each tribe has its own ways, and the fact that they differ is not at all surprising... the Kpelle do not feel challenged to accept the proposals made by outsiders. (p.89)

Traditional Kpelle society preserves its coherency, envelops itself in its own system of meaning, passed on through the generations through its own systems of education. A change as obvious and apparently beneficial as improving food production methods could send shock waves through the whole social structure, and the structure of belief, the mythology, that supports it.

2.2.2.7 Vai literacy

Scribner and Cole (1981) conducted a study of the Vai people of Liberia over a seven year period (1972-79). The Vai are unusual insofar as, though their way of life is characteristic of other West African peoples, their language has its own script and a tradition of literacy that extends back at least to the mid-nineteenth century. In addition

the Vai are Muslims and Arabic script is taught and used for religious purposes; schooling in English, the official language of Liberia, is also available. The study was intended to examine the cognitive effects of literacy in a community that had illiterate members, three types of monoliterates and members with more than one literacy. (It is noted that amongst the Vai female literacy is uncommon, though not proscribed, and the subjects were almost all male.)

The study is important for its judiciousness. Pilot tests were run and tasks were frequently modified so that they would be more sensitive to the phenomena the researchers encountered. On occasions the results were quite unexpected and would not fit easily into contemporary systems of classification (for example, the metalinguistic study in which Piaget's sun and moon name switching task was presented; this provoked a philosophical/theological debate about man's right to alter God's word; the authors concluded metalinguistic knowledge was unpredictable). Theories in the social sciences about literacy occupy two poles: that literacy constitutes "an emergent force that brings into existence entirely new mental structures or processes," or that "literacy may influence how a society does its work but not the structures of mental operations" (p.235).

The Vai study supports neither position. Instead "a practise account of literacy" is presented as a framework to both account for the findings of the study "and more generally for understanding how socially organized activities may come to have consequences for human thought" (p.235).

By a practise we mean a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge... All practises involve interrelated tasks that share common tools, knowledge base and skills. (p.236)

Literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script, but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. (p.236)

The findings of this study were that each script had associated with it certain abilities that could be explained by the purpose for which the script was used and the manner in which the script was acquired. Where large differences were found between groups of different literacies, there were usually other factors involved such as schooling, urban experience and age. On all tasks there were individual illiterates who performed as well as individual literates (Vai literacy), even if there were group differences.

Vai script is used in a context of "restricted literacy," and this may, in part, account for the modest nature of the findings: "Vai script literacy can be said to engage individuals with familiar topics in new ways" (p.238). The least effect of literacy, however, was seen with Arabic script, where the function is ritualistic and comprehension is rare. English literacy was associated with the greatest cognitive development, but the specific effect was magnified by other associated factors.

The study of Vai literacy produced unexpected results. Goody, a consultant on the project, anticipated the results in his 1977 study of literacy:

While cognitive capacities remain the same, access to different skills can produce remarkable results. Indeed I would go further

and see the acquisition of these means of communication [writing and formal operations] as effectively transforming the nature of cognitive processes, in a manner that leads to a partial dissolution of the boundaries erected by psychologists and linguists between abilities and performance. (p.18)

Scribner and Cole's study does not support this statement. A conclusion is given:

Our results are in direct conflict with persistent claims that "deep psychological differences" divide literate and non-literate populations... We can and do claim that literacy promotes skills among the Vai, but we cannot and do not claim that literacy is a necessary and sufficient condition for any of the skills we assessed. (p.251)

This study, in its depth, methodological fidelity and even-handed theoretical orientation is of major importance. The Western researcher in an African village is in an environment that can only be approached with suspension of preconception, if it is to be understood at all. A priori reasoning is too often simply a reflection of inherited cultural bias.

III

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICAL EXAMPLES AND MODERN AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

What the details of any particular language change may be (as in lexicon, syntax, phonology or morphology) is not as relevant to this study as the fact that the change has taken place and is continuing to take place, and what the nature of the processes bringing about this change may be. A study of the evolution of the Romance languages, their separation from Popular Latin and their divergence into discrete national languages may shed considerable light on modern language change processes. For the modern language planner it is necessary to be informed about processes of language change so that language planning can harness popular forces rather than be oblivious to them. History also provides alternative models for popular education, suggesting how it is that societies may evolve into literacy.

A quick examination of the major modern Romance languages (specifically French, Spanish and Italian) reveals a broad range of similarities which collectively diverge from Classical Latin. The nature of verbal morphology, reduction of the gender system, loss of case endings and the general movement from a synthetic to an analytic syntax characterize the modern languages and distinguish them from Classical Latin.

The mystery of the origin of the Romance languages is not a great one, though it is not as free from difficulties as the super-abundance of Classical Latin texts might seem to ensure. Popular (or Vulgar) Latin, the actual parent language, was an oral language that apparently deviated significantly from Classical Latin, but, except for a very few short texts (as in Catullus and Petronius and the playwright, Plautus), which cannot be absolutely demonstrated as faithful, it remains unrecorded.

3.2 The emergence of the Romance languages

Boyd-Bowman (1954, p.1f.) gives an outline of the process by which the Romance languages emerged out of Latin which will serve as an overview for the more detailed examination to follow:

Classical Latin was a highly refined literary medium cultivated during the period of transition between the Roman Republic and the Empire (roughly, 100 B.C. to 100 A.D.). But it was not Classical Latin, but a simpler, unsophisticated form (popular or "Vulgar" Latin) that was carried by Roman soldiers, merchants, and slaves into the conquered provinces of the Empire and which in time became the common tongue of the many races that people the Mediterranean. This structure already bore some striking resemblances to modern Italian. With the decentralization that characterized the later Empire, regional differences... began to assert themselves in the use of Vulgar Latin. These regional variations, negligible at first, assumed much larger proportions when the territories of the Empire were broken up and isolated from each other by the barbarian invaders. Held together by the spiritual power of the Church and by the manifest superiority of Roman culture over that of Western Europe's new barbarian masters, the concept of a united Roman Empire lingered on... long after the political Empire had ceased to exist. Gradually the image faded, however. Romans and Barbarians merged to produce new ethnic groups and a new social structure... Linguistically the practice of speaking ROMANICE ("in the Roman fashion." i.e. Romance) triumphed almost everywhere over the language of the invaders, but by then the forms of Romance spoken in the different regions of

the former Western Empire had drifted so far apart that they were no longer mutually intelligible. Thus out of a group of dialects, all of them claiming to be Latin or at any rate modified forms of it, new languages came into existence.

The ancestors of the Latin-speaking people may have entered Italy from the north between 1200 and 1000 B.C. By the eighth century B.C., Latin was confined to a small area around the mouth of the Tiber River. Its sister Italic languages included Ancient Umbrian, Sabellic dialects and Oscan in southern Italy. The earliest inscriptions confirmed as Latin date from the end of the sixth century B.C. Latin was differentiated from the other Italic dialects through several sound shifts.

Greek was a contact language, first through Etruscan, then later directly through Greek colonists in southern Italy. Because Etruscan texts have not been deciphered, the extent of its influence on Latin has not been adequately assessed, though it is known that during the period of Etruscan dominance Latin borrowed loan words. Still less is known about other Non-Indo European language influences.

The Roman Empire expanded in stages, first throughout Italy, then through the western Mediterranean including Sicily, Sardinia, Iberia and NW Africa, then the eastern Mediterranean through the Greek-speaking world, west and north Europe, and finally eastern Europe. Each region exerted different linguistic influences on the language introduced by the invading power. Oscan and Umbrian influences can be found in the language of the urban proletariat of Rome both in loan words and in possible vowel mergers. Iberian substratum influences are seen in

Gascon and Basque loans and in a sound shift, /-f-/</-h-/, from Proto-Iberian Romance and Proto-Romance to Old Castilian. In the eastern Mediterranean superior power was confronted by superior culture and Greek became the dominant language of the eastern empire. Roman administrators worked in Greek and had their sons study it. Latin acquired a great many learned loan words from this contact (philosophia, theatrum, spiritus), as well as developing a definite article via loan-translation. Western and northern expansion brought a large Celtic region under Roman control. Whatever the initial resistance of the Gallic to Caesar's campaigning may have been, later generations appeared to be active participants in the Roman order and voluntarily foresook the languages of their heritage for Latin. Popular Latin acquired Celtic loans such as: cerevisia 'beer' (Sp. cerveza) carrum 'wagon' (N.E. 'car'); camminus 'road' (Fr. chemin) etc. It is apparently not established whether Breton is a residual Celtic language or if it was reintroduced subsequent to the withdrawal of Roman administration (though there is a general preference for it having been reintroduced by Britons fleeing Anglo Saxons).

The expansion of the empire was contained at the German frontier with the defeat of the Roman legions in 9 A.D. by Arminius (at Teutoburg Forest), though modern Switzerland, Austria and Hungary were absorbed, as well as Britain. The Balkan region was taken in the early second century A.D., including modern Slavic areas of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, which preserve Latin place names, and Albania, which acquired a large number of Latin loan words though retaining its own language.

The spread of Latin came to be a product of the extension of Roman power throughout Italy and elsewhere:

It must not be assumed that Latin was substituted for the language previously spoken, in any given region, immediately on conquest by Rome. On the contrary, it often took centuries for Latin to supplant the local language, and in a few instances outside of Italy, e.g. Basque, it never did... Many scholars consider that the Greek used to the present day in certain small villages in the toe of Calabria and in Apulia goes back to the language of Magna Graecia...

In language matters, Roman policy was the opposite of what is considered to be imperialistic practice in modern times. Rome did not impose the Latin language upon conquered peoples or allies. On the contrary, the use of Latin was treated as a special privilege. Latin was then rendered highly desirable...

In this situation, it should hardly be surprising that a number of local populations should learn Latin, speak it with peculiarities carried over from their earlier language... and hand it down to their linguistic descendants with these features. (Hall 1974, pp.61-63)

Hall locates the split between Classical Latin and the Popular Latin ancestral to the Romance languages at after 150 B.C. (determined by the dating of sound shifts that are shared by both CL and the Romance languages). The greatest extent of Popular Latin came in the fourth century A.D. when it was in use in the regions outlined above. The subsequent history of the Romance languages shows an erosion of this European geographical base, as various language groups settled in former Roman territory (Slavic, Germanic, Arabic etc.).

By the fourth century A.D. intrusions into the Empire by non-Latin speaking groups were beginning to affect the linguistic makeup of the empire. Large numbers of Germanic soldiers were recruited into the legions of the northern areas, thus introducing a number of new Germanic

words into Latin speech, such as /werra/ > Proto-Italic Western Romance /guerra/ > Mod. Fr. guerre, 'war', replacing the Latin bellum.

The fourth and fifth centuries saw wave after wave of migrations of Germanic nations, which brought about the final demise of the Western Empire in 476. The Visigoths (401-410) were followed by the Ostrogoths (493-555) who were followed by the Langobards (568) in successive invasions of Italy. Burgundians settled near Lyons and Geneva, Alemanic groups settled the upper Rhine and Switzerland, the Franks took over much of northern Gaul, the Low Countries and the Rhineland. Vandals crossed Iberia into N. Africa.

In the sixth and seventh centuries Slavic groups migrated into the Balkan region, the central and lower Danube valley and Dacia (now Romania). In the seventh and eighth centuries Moslem Arabs began sweeping through Palestine and N. Africa, invading Iberia in 711 and establishing their rule over Sicily from 827 to 1016. Arabs also advanced into parts of southern France in the eighth century.

For up to seven centuries Arabic was the language of the ruling class on the Iberian peninsula; of the Iberian Romance languages, Castilian was most influenced and Catalanian least by this presence. Loans to Spanish were abundant and covered areas of government, administration, the military, medicine, the home, cultural life, topography, agricultural items and place names: alcalde, 'mayor' < /alk:di:/, 'judge'; almirante, 'admiral' < /al-amir/; Madrid < Ar./magrit/, 'small fortress'. (Arabic, of course, influenced many

languages, particularly in the areas of mathematics, science and philosophy. Familiar words such as algebra, zero, almanac, and alcohol are examples of Arabic loan words that have made their way into many languages.)

Norsemen began their expansion in the ninth century, establishing a recognized rule in northern France (Normandy) in 901, and abandoning their language for Gallo-Romance. Norman aggression in the following centuries took the French language as far as Palestine (1099-1187) and the Byzantine Empire (1204-1261), as well as to England in 1066.

The new languages, acting as superstrata, exerted their effect on the Romance speech of the old Empire:

Through the same process as that of a substratum-language, namely, the survival of relics of a period of bilingualism... In the case of a superstratum, the later comers would have acquired the language of the region and spoken it with a foreign accent. This would then have been imitated by others because of the prestige (in the case of upper-class speakers of Germanic origin) or the numerical superiority (social equals of Slavic origin) of the linguistic descendents of the supervenient group. (Hall 1974, p.84)

Although Hall has previously rejected pidginization as a factor in the evolution of the Romance languages (1974, p.76), the process he is describing here must surely involve more than foreign accents. Acquisition of phonology is just one dimension of language acquisition and imperfect phonological acquisition was very likely accompanied by imperfect syntactic and morphological acquisition (the "interlanguage" phenomenon), and this may largely account for the erosion of inflectional endings and the movement from synthetic to analytic

structure in the Romance languages. This is not a transference phenomenon (the Germanic languages were not syntactically "simple"), but rather a predictable "decay" of language forms that is characteristic of incomplete second language acquisition, and can be observed widely at present in second language acquisition contexts. (For a discussion of interlanguage see e.g. Brown 1987, pp.168-197; processes of language decay are discussed in a special issue of Applied Psycholinguistics (Snow & Locke 1986) on language loss.)

3.3 The Florentine Academy

So far I have, largely courtesy of Hall (1974), given a sketch of the details of the emergence of the Romance languages from Popular Latin. It is a story of a world order that decayed and, at least in outer form, disappeared, to be succeeded by centuries of migration, competition for territorial control and the emergence of national identities with specific and stable geographic boundaries. In some respects the Roman Empire lives still; earlier generations of school children in this century continued to study the language and culture of the Romans and the Roman church is still the largest Christian denomination.

The process we have observed here is one where popular speech, under the wanton influences of history, wanders ever farther from its parent and becomes something no longer familiar, having acquired distinctions and idiosyncracies, scars and tattoos, from a life long spent on the

streets. When the process has gone on long enough, and the accompanying culture has matured; when the process of acquiring the old language is too difficult, but its knowledge too important to lose; when the political climate has enabled an acute sense of national identity, and the vernacular produced a body of literature; when differences between neighbours are more important than similarities; then the time is ripe for new standards. The rise of national standard languages has a different story in each nation, with the establishment of the French Academy a well known example. It was, however, in Florence that the first such academy was created to address the task of establishing a literary standard for a vernacular Romance language. This story will have implications for the later discussion of language issues in Africa.

Florence was one of the most flourishing independent city-states of Renaissance Italy, controlled by the Medici family and rival to the influence of Rome. The Platonic Academy, established to promote the study of Plato's philosophy, operated in the latter half of the fifteenth century. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Orti Oricellari met to discuss literature, linguistics, history, politics and philosophy (Machiavelli was among those who read to this group). Other Academies were linked to the Pope and concerned themselves with religious matters, Dante's bones and lectures on poets. It was, however, the Accademia Fiorentina, established in 1540 (first as the Accademia degli Umidi) that made a "concerted effort with a specific program for the popularization of learning" (De Gaetano 1976, p.100).

The controversy between the intellectually aristocratic Latinists and the leaders of the educated middle class, who hoped to raise the moral and intellectual level of society through the popularization of learning, led to the establishment of an institution for the purpose of promoting the aims of the latter group. (De Gaetano 1976, p.87)

The founders of this academy were mostly merchants, of broad and unorthodox interests. The Academy was provided with an administrative structure and in 1542 "Cosimo I proclaimed the Academy an institution under the full protection of the state" (p.108). Although Cosimo's motives were, at least in part, to deflect and rechannel political energies, this could only be a short-term effect:

In sponsoring the Academy's program the Florentine government had given the movement a political character. The Academy had become a unique institution empowered to direct some aspects of the education of a state, the most important being the program of replacing Latin as the medium through which knowledge could be acquired.

The program was different from the programs of all other academies. It presented an effort to gain freedom from the intellectual authority of the traditional Latin scholar and to stir the people to personal thinking through the translation of all sources of knowledge, both secular and religious. (De Gaetano 1976, p.110)

One of the Academy's chief responsibilities was the creation of a grammar to standardize literary Italian. Interestingly, one member of the Grammar Committee resigned

Because he felt that Italian was still in a formative stage and the codification of a grammar during such a stage would lead to arbitrary rules which would be detrimental to the natural growth of the language. (De Gaetano 1976, p.124)

De Gaetano goes on to observe:

Because of this early success [in standardizing literary Italian] and continuous effort by the dottori, Italian has changed less radically than other modern languages. The dottori have kept it

"pure", stunted its growth, and made it so stilted in style that it sometimes sounds unnatural even to a Florentine. (p.124)

(This evokes, for example, one description of Nigerian English (Akere 1978) and cautions against a premature establishment of a standard.)

The Academy undertook to translate important works into Italian as well as lecture regularly on the major literary figures who wrote in Italian (or Tuscan: Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio predominantly). Gelli felt:

That one is at his best in his own language and should not try to gain literary reputation in a language which does not come naturally to him, and especially in a dead language, as Gelli uniquely regarded Latin. (De Gaetano 1976, p.132)

Inevitably, the Academy was bound to question the use of Latin in the Church:

The Academy's aim to replace Latin with the language of the people did not exclude the language of the Church. Gelli was not the only one among the Umedi who was incensed by the Catholic practice of holding Church services in Latin. (p.132)

Although members of the Academy admired those in the Protestant movement (such as Luther) who had rendered the Bible into the vernaculars, the fact of having its political hands tied by the Medicis seems to have made it politically non-threatening and saved it from any major conflicts with the Church. The Academy had a specific mandate, and in this it was successful. The threat that education must ultimately pose to established orders seemed not to have put it at peril.

In spite of the Church's interference and Cosimo's political interests the Academy... became the most effective institution in the secularization of learning which had ever existed in Europe...

Institutions like the Florentine Academy are in essence expressions of the cultural forces that lead to nationalism. The

loss of a universal language is regrettable for both scholarly and political reasons. However, the revival of classical Latin made the distinction between ancient and modern tongues seem even sharper. Moreover, its influence on the vernacular facilitated the latter's growth. By the sixteenth century the competition Latin faced from modern languages was too great to be overcome. Tuscan, for example, had developed to a stage that rendered it amenable to any form of communication and had the added advantage of being... a language which people spoke and could learn to read and write much faster than Latin. It was an idiom which had evolved as a natural phenomenon as opposed to classical Latin which had been revived through the special efforts of the humanists. It would seem that the champions of Latin were struggling against the currents of history. If modern languages eventually replaced the ancient one it can only be because they were growing in more favourable conditions; for language is a social phenomenon which gains acceptance in the environment in which it grows, whatever the advantages and disadvantages to scholarship and society. (p.135-136)

The Romance languages began in obscurity. Their growth and spread were a product of that restlessness that drives nations to compete for home and sustenance, power and aggrandizement. Classical Latin was a literary language that diverged from the language of the street early in its life. It took over seventeen hundred years before literary and popular language once again coincided (however briefly), first in sixteenth century Italy. The extent of the differences between the two codes became so great as to make the literary code inaccessible to most speakers of the popular code, and pressures built up for the establishment of a new literary code. Some of history's lessons are sufficiently uncomfortable to recommend avoiding repetition. The story of the emergence of the Romance languages informs us in this.

3.4 Nigeria and language change

3.4.1 Introduction

The processes that brought about the distinct Romance languages seemed to have been organically slow, with centuries passing before a community was fully "Romanized". Today, abetted by the pervasiveness of English-speaking culture and the invasiveness of its communication technologies, language change seems to be much more rapid. Literary languages and popular languages, in some parts of the world at least, are developing uneasy relationships in a much compressed time span. Today a broadly universal standard English is establishing itself as the primary world language. At the same time new popular languages are arising out of the bilingual communities most affected by English contact (as in Papua New Guinea, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Nigeria etc.). An understanding of the forces creating these new popular languages is a necessary step to legitimizing them, rationalizing popular education programs and minimizing social upheaval.

It is not easy for an outsider to get a sense of proportion on social and political issues in Nigeria. The African inherits a temperament, environment and history that is not immediately comprehensible to a nordic visitor. Experience teaches both caution and enthusiasm. To live in Nigeria without forming opinions about language issues would be unthinkable; problems of communication and inter-ethnic tension are a part of daily business for native and foreigner alike.

The questions an outsider might ask are many and broad. How do language groups come into conflict? What steps are taken to try to deal with these conflicts? How often are policies to deal with linguistic diversity effective and how often destructive? Can we predict some of the conflicts that occur? Can enlightened language policies ease the ethnic tensions that apparently all multilingual societies face? These are universal questions. Are there universal answers?

My views are informed by my own experience as an observer of Nigerian life, a teacher of young Nigerians, and as, at times, a member of a linguistic minority in conflict with the community around me. The spacing of my two periods of residence has allowed me to get a feeling for rate of change. Nigerian society is quite unstable and is currently going through a period of economic hardship. There are social forces at play that may have dated the earlier work of Nigerian linguists and language planners. Not the least of the new factors is a decline in the standard of and access to education. English, the official language, is virtually no one's first language and depends for its vitality on a vigorous and widely accessible education system. As in other African countries, the once seemingly unassailable colonial languages may not in time be so difficult to dislodge, once African societies stabilize into a way of life based on their own priorities and realities.

My interest, then, is in language attitudes, language change and implications for language policy in the West African country of Nigeria. Although Nigeria has been identified as the most ethnically and

linguistically (equivalent terms in Nigeria; see Akinnaso 1989) diverse in Africa, and its problems of administration and nation-building the most difficult, its predicament is by no means uncharacteristic of many countries, both in Africa and elsewhere, and both today and in past.

3.4.2 Historical patterns

I will first summarize the typology of language decline presented in Kahane and Kahane (1979), then speculate, in the light of the evidence for language change in other African countries (Ivory Coast, Zaire, Ghana and Tanzania), on possible futures of the official and national languages of Nigeria. I will argue that language change observable in African states conforms to historic patterns and natural laws which operate with little regard for the best intending language plans.

To champion the observed lessons of history is to challenge what appears to be a widespread assumption about the uniqueness of the age in which we are living. Communication technologies seem to make it improbable that significant cultures can survive in isolation, and seem to have made the spread of world languages both desirable and inevitable (see, however, De Gaetano 1976, pp.135-6). The present status of English as an international language may be without precedent, but clearly it represents a phenomenon often repeated throughout history, and its uniqueness at present is purely a matter of degree. Medieval Latin served an analogous useful function, as did Classical Latin, Classical Greek and French at their respective periods of ascendancy. Civilizations go through cycles of rise and decline; the ebb and flow of

history embraces periods of internationalism and universal states, and of nationalism and the drive for individual identity. There is no evidence that these poles of civilization have ceased to effect a dynamism of change.

Kahane and Kahane conclude their examination of the decline of Western prestige languages as seen through six selected case histories with the following summary:

A frequent pattern of sequences, then, seems to unfold: a diglossic system, H vs L, reflecting a class society, is strangled by L, which expands under popular pressures. Elitist H declines, but it does not disappear completely; rather it compromises with L through a largely lexical fusion, thereby creating a more flexible instrument for a more open society. The standard which is born is the language of the educated middle strata. (p.196)

In the light of this, then, the questions to examine are:

- 1) Are the old colonial languages, in widespread use now as official languages and languages of education in African countries, likely to survive?
- 2) What is happening to the "national" languages (Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba in Nigeria)?
- 3) Are there other languages emerging that are establishing themselves, policies notwithstanding, as primary communication vehicles (lingua francas)?

Another way to ask these questions is to ask if the historical typology outlined above holds, or if, in this unique period in history, the forces at play will produce new patterns of language change.

In the African countries examined there is widespread evidence of the emergence of popular lingua francas, unofficial challengers in many cases to the official languages as established by stated government policy. In Ghana the popular lingua franca is pidgin English which is gaining acceptance amongst well-educated members of the society, though it does not at this time threaten to supplant English. In Ivory Coast, however, standard French seems confined to a particular social stratum, its former prestige undermined by changing economic realities. Rising is the popular language Dyula, enriched with French lexical items, acceptable across social class and ethnic boundaries, though not yet developed enough to take over the official duties of standard French. In Zaire standard French is being challenged as an international language by English, and as a lingua franca by the national languages, though official functions cannot be surrendered at this time. Similarly, in Central African Republic the official language is French, but a national language in widespread use, Sango, is a combination of a simplified local language and French lexical material (Samarin 1986). Tanzania is an exception to the pattern apparent here due to more favourable historical circumstances.

3.4.3 Nigeria

Nigerian linguists devote much thought to national language issues. Most are frankly uncomfortable with the role English has assumed in Nigerian life; it is a sort of inescapable reminder of a colonial past few feel proud of, or completely reconciled to. It is felt that, at

least so far, English has not "forged the national unity or integration envisaged by the early planners" (Awonusi 1985, p.25). Discussion of language issues follows a well-worn course. Possible indigenous alternatives to English are examined, then rejected because of probable interethnic conflict (Akinraso 1989, 1991; Awonusi 1985; Fakuade 1989; Olagoke 1982); Exogenous African languages are considered, such as Swahili (Olagoke 1982), and are then rejected because of difficulties encountered where this strategy has been tried (Kenya and Uganda). A less common alternative has emerged in Nigeria where a planned language (Gusa: see Igbineweka 1987) has been developed. There is little historical precedent for the success of planned (artificial) languages due to a lack of "historicity" and "vitality" (see discussion of Stewart's formula in Fasold 1984, p.64-67). Most discussions conclude as in Awonusi (p.29): "therefore, loved or hated, the English language is bound to remain Nigeria's lingua franca for the foreseeable future."

The national language most frequently singled out as a possible candidate to replace English is Hausa. It has a history as a trade language across the northern regions of several modern West African states, it numbers more speakers than even Swahili in East Africa and it has been developed as a language of administration. Awonusi conducted a study early in the period of the second civilian regime (1980) which indicated that there was considerable openness amongst the elected members of the government to the Hausa language as a replacement for English. This support seemed to cross the old ethnic divisions. Fakuade

(1989) traces the spread of Hausa through a number of non-Hausa speaking areas in some of the northern states of Nigeria.

Awonusi's study, however, was made during a period of great optimism that the subsequent performance of the civilian regime could not sustain. Hausa has never, professed openness of legislators notwithstanding, made significant inroads in the Yoruba and Ibo speaking parts of Nigeria, though each of those languages seems to be growing in importance relative to its minor language neighbours. Significantly, neither Awonusi nor Fakuade saw Hausa establishing itself nationwide. It would seem that if Nigeria had in fact split into the three countries it nearly did in the 1960's (it was the north that first attempted secession; the east, Biafra, followed), language problems would be of considerably more manageable proportions. This reasoning still has considerable currency, though perhaps is losing its force in the younger generation.

Recognizing the magnitude of the problem, the government of Nigeria, in 1977, presented a three language policy:

The Government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his mother-tongue. In this connection, the Government considers the three main languages to be Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. (Olagoke 1982, p.200)

This policy was developed in a time of great expansion of the education system. It was not implemented then. Today that system is very much in decay; school enrollment has dropped with the re-introduction of school fees, funding is not available to staff schools adequately, texts and supplies are few. The three-language policy (that is, native, English

and one other major language) seems a remote dream. It is simply too much trouble in a climate where basic survival cannot be assured.

With 40% of Nigerians bilingual in English, and its exclusive use for the functions of the present federal military government and with the major languages not able to gain acceptability beyond traditional or present geographic domains, it might seem that English is too firmly established and too important to lose. Perceiving this to be the case, some writers have sought to dignify it through a concept of Nigerian Standard English. Akere (1978) examines some "wider semantic features" associated with kinship terms. His attempt to identify with a rigorously "correct" English that acquires its African identity in this manner, while dismissing the syntactic and phonological changes of popular usage as "mistakes and solecisms", suggests an understandable but unnecessary insecurity. The educated elite may often have felt a need to measure themselves by international standards. This need, however, undoubtedly serves as a counter-force to the realization and articulation of a coherent African identity. The rise of a truly representative popular standard will reflect growing confidence in the identity it expresses. The emergence of that confidence should reflect an evolving maturity of the new national societies.

The language that seems most likely to become that popular standard is pidgin:

Pidgin English has almost taken over the role of lingua franca in nonformal domains. Thus, it has become the most popular medium of intergroup communication in various heterogeneous communities throughout the country... it is now developing into a mother tongue and is spreading both horizontally across the entire

country and vertically across various categories of speakers, literate and illiterate, male and female, old and young. (Akinaso 1989, p.136)

Nigerian Pidgin is a combination of southern Nigerian languages and English (see also Faraclas 1989). It is used by some newspapers, by broadcast media, as a literary vehicle and as the language of the marketplace wherever different ethnic groups meet. It is the language of communication used by the police and the army. It is growing in acceptance amongst educated speakers (as in Ghana).

With economic hard times, the decline of the education system and the shrinking of the professional civil service, a new class of elites can be expected to emerge, as in Zaire, who show financial and business acuity, but, being generally less educated, will speak the language of the marketplace. Many of the best educated in the Nigeria of the 1990's are finding that the ivory tower can no longer provide the middle class lifestyles they had grown accustomed to. They too are finding new peers in the world of entrepreneurs and the exchange of goods and services.

Perhaps also, as literacy fails to bring the rewards it once seemed to promise, those more fit to survive may prove to be those illiterate farmers and market women once ridiculed by their better educated children. As the young people come to recognize a greater value in the skills of these people, the prestige they acquire is likely to attract identification through the use of their language variety. Although it is speculative to generalize from a few personal observations, I have noticed young people using pidgin, taking the trouble to learn it when a few years ago they might have shown contempt.

3.4.4 Conclusion

Language change is inevitable. History provides many examples of this. Today, in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, language change shows a close adherence to historical patterns. The typology presented earlier seems to be strongly representative of the process in evidence. Nigeria, like other African countries discussed, has a functioning diglossic system. Standard English, the language of an educated elite, serves as the high language, H. Pidgin English, the most widespread popular lingua franca, has traditionally been used by the uneducated. Popular pressures, the product of changing economic fortunes and a maturing identity, are in fact spreading this language and reducing the domain of standard English. Pidgin is already a compromise language between certain local languages and English. Because of its predominantly English lexical content, it should readily be able to assimilate new lexical material for ever-expanding functions. Though pidgin is not yet the language of the educated middle strata, it is rapidly becoming acceptable to them.

It would be incautious to claim that Nigerian Pidgin will in fact one day become the official language of the country. There is evidence that, at least in some contexts, pidgins (or creoles) do operate as transitional languages (e.g. Valdman 1986, re. decreolization in Haiti). The status of English as an international language is currently undisputed and it is unlikely that it will be replaced in certain critical domains in the near future. But this does not mean that the

status quo will survive. The processes that brought about the decline of other prestige languages are active in many African countries. We can expect significant language changes.

IV

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LITERATE MIND AND THE ORAL MIND

4.1 Oral culture and literary imperialism

4.1.1 Introduction

Many voices from literature have recognized a deficiency in the western mind, and attributed it to a severance from any of a number of possible source dimensions of human experience. It was perhaps D.H. Lawrence who attacked this issue with the greatest passion. It was clear to him that social ideologies were more often than not pernicious. Freedom would come when the individual on the street recognized that government was a management structure for providing sewers and garbage collection, and as long as it continued to do so adequately, it need be of little concern. He goes on to say:

The actual living quick itself is alone the creative reality. Once you abstract from this, once you generalize and postulate universals, you have departed from the creative reality, and entered the realm of static fixity, mechanism, materialism. (1950, p.88)

A juxtaposition of several familiar literary sources provides a pointed, if not uncontroversial, comparison of the oral and the literate mind. This leads into the anecdotal material following, which is intended to provide complementary evidence of the difference in

orientation. This is intended to show instances where a literate perspective is disadvantaged.

4.1.2 Butler, Homer and Frye

A recent summer's reading had me follow a trail of thought that led from Northrop Frye to Samuel Butler to The Odyssey. Butler's interest in Homer was substantial insofar as, toward the end of his life, he published a radical reappraisal of the problem of The Odyssey's authorship as well as translations of The Iliad and The Odyssey. His interest is also at least suggested in his earlier popular satire, Erewhon, which is a telling of another sort of Odyssean adventure.

The Odyssey is chosen from time to time as an obvious and familiar example of a piece of literature (or, in deference to Ong 1982, a "text") produced by an oral culture, which would have originally been recited from memory to a live audience, and which was written down in a later age (see Pattison 1982; Frye 1972; Ong 1982; Havelock 1986). Butler, having published topographical works, satirical and theological texts, scientific essays, a novel and numerous miscellaneous works and translations, and considered by G.B. Shaw "as the greatest English writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century" (Encyclopedia Britannica), was undoubtedly in possession of a literate mind. His translation of The Odyssey is one of the most readable available, and it does not sacrifice the character of the original (as far as I can tell) to this end. It's great peculiarity is in the abundance and nature of its footnotes and photographs of nineteenth century Greece, all with the

purpose of explicating the world of the ancient Greeks to the "contemporary" reader. Butler is quick to point out logical inconsistencies in the narrative, as in when he questions the truth of the details of Odysseus's battle with the suitors because the lay of the building seemed to disagree with the story details. Similarly, he points to the story's description of household items as evidence that the epic was written by a woman (from Sicily, apparently).

The Odyssey rewards repeated readings. I keep going back to it because of its perennial capacity to trigger unexpected response. Odysseus's difficult relationship with Neptune, the god of the sea, and his battle with Neptune's son, the Cyclops, create resonances of meaning for me that have not ceased to fill me with wonder. The Athena/Mentor presence is neither literary device nor a gratuitous and fantastic personification of the nature of inner life and the source of wisdom. Calypso's eternally barren love that loses to Penelope's mortal devotion retains a contemporary message. Odysseus's daring to listen to the forbidden song of the Sirens is a parable of the will to knowledge. These stories are nourishment to the imagination (here is the connection to Frye). It has never occurred to me to even try to think out the details of Odysseus's household. Butler's concern here, I believe, parallels the concerns of the nineteenth century scholars who undertook the revision of the Authorized Version of the Bible (contemporary to Butler's Homer). Veracity of external detail, however, has little to do with the reader's response to either Homer or the Bible (which is

another work of oral culture: see Frye 1983), or the reason why readers have returned with repeated satisfaction to these texts.

Butler's Erewhon, by contrast, has not stood the test of time as well (though the machine-smashing theme is not without appeal). The crude psychology of the hero's "savage" guide, the ingenuousness of Butler's imaginary society, the bogus wonders of its culture, the vacuousness of the hero's love and the quaintness of the 'technological' deus ex machina when the hero and his love escape, betray not just Butler's personal failure to achieve the sublime, but a failure of the literate analytical mind to get far beneath the flotsam and jetsam of the world of ideas to the bedrock of human knowledge.

4.1.3 Anecdotes: excursions into the field

During the Christmas break of 1988 I spent ten days travelling around Mexico, much of the time by means of the local bus lines. I shared the buses with whoever was poor enough not to be able to travel by more comfortable means, and, in my ignorance of the people, I initially felt concern for my safety and the security of my possessions. However, I noticed very early on that I attracted virtually no attention and had nothing to fear. I also noticed a quality in the people that I had not seen since my experience as a development worker. I had been strongly drawn to the Yoruba market women whom I had travelled with on the public transport in Nigeria. The vehicles had been in chronic disrepair, the cabins shook with unrelenting tapes of local music and some of the roads were in torturous decay. In the midst of this the

women radiated an imperturbable calm. Now I was seeing these Mexican farm families facing forty-eight hour, overcrowded bus journeys with the same imperturbability. Small children sat contentedly on the luggage in the aisles for endless hours. A mother with young twin daughters shared a row of seats with me for twenty-four hours without ever a complaint from either of them.

Not all my travelling companions were like this, though. Once I shared a taxi with a group of Canadian women in southwest Nigeria. They shrieked with laughter, made nervous jokes about Nigerian ineptitude and complained about their living conditions. Having arrived with the best of intentions to adjust to a new culture, and equipped with superior post-secondary educations, they had fallen into the usual expatriate attitude of resigned derision. Educated and urbanized members of both societies also showed similarities of behaviour and had similarly listless and temperamental children.

I walked back and forth between worlds in Mexico. In Mazatlan I watched a middle-aged Mexican couple walk along the sidewalk, arms around each other and laughing with great animation as they spoke to each other. Mexican children played in the surf with unselfconscious abandon. Outside an international hotel an American couple stood apart, arms close to their bodies, the tension between them apparent to the most casual observer. The woman scolded her son for going too close to the water, saying he would soil his clothes.

Later, when I had returned to the development field, I found myself from time to time working with roofing crews, engaged in the design and erection of wooden framed roofs for new concrete block buildings. I was used to drawings, figures and making use of resource texts and my designs drew the admiration of the master and apprentice carpenters I worked with. Their average literacy level was marginal, they generally having begun their apprenticeships after unsuccessful experiences of the rather chaotic school system. Their carpentry skills and knowledge were acquired on the job, through oral transmission, demonstration and much practical experience. Whatever respect my paperwork may have generated, my presence on the job site was by their indulgence. The initial stages of framing involved walking along the tops of walls, no hand holds available and too high above the concrete floor below for my taste. The others watched with amusement as I stiff-leggedly balanced my way along, catching myself with panicky starts and eventually electing to slide along on my rear end rather than face the balancing act. I had designed and built roofs before, but had rarely had to face such heights and such probable unpleasant consequences of a fall. My companions, by contrast, moved around with any easy balance, barefoot, ten-ounce hammer in one hand and a handful of spikes in the other. I watched with breathless admiration once as an apprentice threw a handful of nails up to a master above, who caught them all in the sweep of one hand.

As an educated westerner I received a reflex of respect wherever I went in Nigeria. My skills in the world of the printed word were

generally well beyond those of the people I worked with. But I learned to feel quite self-conscious and uncomfortable with this reflex; beneath it I could also sense a widespread perception of a ridiculous quality which my western compatriots and I had. The well-intentioned among our hosts were uniformly protective of us. It took a special kind of knowledge to be able to move easily through the African world, and we very obviously did not have this knowledge.

One student of mine, puzzled by the magnitude of European achievement, had written for me that he thought if he read an encyclopedia, he would understand the secrets of the white man. He was gazing into what was for him a great mystery. To understand the secrets of the African, or perhaps the rural Mexican, we would need to plunge naked into their world of human relationships, physical toil, birth and death, conflict, passion and spiritual and occult forces. It is not our literacy that provides the skills to navigate these waters.

My Nigerian students showed all the patterns of deficiency discussed in Greenfield (1972) and Langlands (1981). They did apparently have poor "logico-mathematical" reasoning abilities, poor grasp of three dimensional spatial relationships as represented on two dimensional surfaces. One, who had frustrated me consistently with the trivial mistakes he made in his mathematics homework, often helped me around my home. His duties included shopping in the market for me. Upon his return laden with his purchases, he would recite from memory every item, its exact cost, the total cost and produce the exactly correct change. It

was a feat that I was never capable of. (See Goody 1977, pp.12-13 for a similar story.)

My primary teaching duty was English language instruction. My students ranged from intermediate levels of English to very poor. Only a few were able to express themselves in extended prose writing, and this limitation was not restricted to their English, for their ability to express themselves in written Yoruba usually paralleled their English abilities (this seems to be a general pattern: see Ladefoged et al. 1972 for an inconclusive study of this effect in Uganda). The Yoruba, however, place great importance on the ability to speak in public and virtually all these boys could stand in public and improvise a prayer of great length and force when called upon to do so. I stood in dread of the day when they would ask me to do this, for I knew that I would be awkward, brief and unconvincing (see Ong 1982, p.61). This public speaking ability was not just ritual; I had spent two years in weekly staff room meetings where the discussions included much extended speech making, coloured by frequent quotations from Shakespeare(!) and pithy proverbs, both traditional and English (see Ong 1982, pp.36-41).

A Marxist analysis of culture might explain these stories in terms of the exploited class and the exploiting class. The Bourgeoisie lose their humanity and the struggling classes maintain theirs (see Wilson 1940). Though there may be a germ of truth in a Marxist analysis of social class, I do not believe that it adequately accounts for the behaviours in my stories of cross-cultural contrasts. It may be that as

cultures evolve and individuals develop ever greater degrees of literacy, it is at the cost of personal relationships and general ability to relate to surroundings (see Frye, 1990 re: alienation from the natural world). Literate cultures evolve further and further into specialization, atomizing analysis, abstraction, and into the ever-expanding realms of possibilities (see Greenfield 1972) rather than into a sure sense of the boundaries of the real world. The reward of increasing literacy may be material prosperity; a danger of it may be in personal and social fragmentation, loss of meaning or purpose and a consequent impoverishment of personal and cultural experience (see Gay and Cole 1967).

4.1.4 Freire

The difficulty is that literacy is not a social principle, but a tool, a technology, and one that may not be relevant in every cultural context. But literacy is also a development issue and though I am skeptical of the real benefits of mass literacy programs, I have not yet given Freire his due, nor have I adequately disposed of him. He maintains that literacy "is a weapon for maintaining or transforming the received order of social relations" (Bee 1980, p.56). The fact that literacy has been used to reinforce social inequalities may not mean that it cannot be used to bring social transformation. Evaluation of Freire must take into account the context in which he has worked and the audience he is addressing (Mackie 1980, p.118).

To appreciate the stress Freire places on cultural action in his writings and his current practical work, one should be aware of

the severity of the cultural domination inflicted by the Portuguese. For the Portuguese... "educate" meant "de Africanise". No longer did the child learn by a process of participation in the ongoing life of the family group and the community, gaining skill and understanding of life and work through living and working. (Walker 1980, p.131)

Literacy, then, is not a superior way of knowing, but a weapon for resisting cultural invasion and removing cultural oppression.

Freire, however, goes further:

Illiterates are often considered undernourished, not merely in the physical sense, but also because they lack the "bread of the spirit". In this way illiteracy comes to be seen as a disease that must be eradicated. (Mackie, p.117)

But Freire, like Orwell, is also drawn to the qualities that illiterate culture preserves:

When I arrived with the people -the misery, the concreteness, you know! But also the beauty of the people, the openness, the ability to love... (quoted in Walker, p.126)

It is more likely the case that the disease lies in the cultural invasion, not the illiteracy. Mass literacy programs from this perspective must be equated with other immunization programs. Perhaps when the disease has been destroyed, the cure can be abandoned.

Freire puts curriculum planning in the hands of those who learn (Connolly 1980, p.81), as a way of countering the effect of institutionalized education:

Official education, however well-intentioned, has as its goal an acceptance of what is, rather than a mobilization towards what ought to be, that is domestication rather than liberation. (Barnard 1980, p.38)

Education, East or West, as offered by schooling, suffers from the same fundamental flaw:

Those whose political interests are protected by the established structure of schooling and threatened by revelation of the realities of that structure are faced with two basic alternatives. They can come out into the open and start turning schools into acknowledged centres of political indoctrination along the lines of China, the Soviet Union and other countries where the ruling ideology is clearly taught as such. However, this would mean for western countries, contradicting the prevailing form of liberal ideology which pretends that no particular "line" is taught in schools. (Walker, p.122)

Functional literacy programmes may be defined as: intensive rather than extensive, selective rather than widespread, geared to employment rather than culture, and as a first step towards producing qualified working power. (Bee 1980, p.48)

A reason for being wary of most literacy programs, and education systems, is that they are too obviously designed for the purpose of making illiterates and the uneducated into "fully participating members of society," that is, for domestication and assimilation. This is unambiguously so in some cases:

As to the chairman herself, she, being a literate, took a more active role in her social activities. Not only could she read newspapers, books and documents, but also write the text of speeches to publicize the Government's policies. For example, when the documents concerning family planning reached her, she could not only read out the documents, but also explain them in the light of her own experience. As a result, 49 middle-aged women of her brigade got themselves sterilized in the hospital. (Wang 1985, p.54)

Aside from depth of humanity, oral societies have one other major strength: they are relatively impervious to social indoctrination by dominant cultures. Their weakness, of course, is their vulnerability to the long-armed brutality of global economic forces:

The poverty of the Brazilian... is as much a part of the western way of life as the pollution and street crime which choke our cities. (Mackie, p.13)

4.1.5 Knowledge and mythology

This study has drawn from three sources: personal experience, empirical studies and literature. It is to the last of these that I will return now. My thoughts about literacy have at root a concern with what, if not "the" problem, is at least "a" problem of knowledge. It is in the body of work of the literary critic Northrop Frye that I find the most appropriate discussion of this. For Frye, knowledge cannot be equated with an amassing of uncontroversial information about the world; it is something that emerges out of a comprehension of the patterns that life falls into that seems best captured by mythologies and literary experience. "Mythology tends to see history as a sequence, not of unique events, but of repetitions of model or pattern situations" (Frye 1990, p.56). Frye was not an anti-rationalist, but he recognized a need for balance:

Without ever denying, along with Jung, the importance of rational thought, Frye would be unwavering in supporting a submersion in poetic experience. (Ayre 1989, p.251)

He outlined three stages of language: the metaphorical, the abstract and the passive descriptive. He was eager to stress that society is best off when all three phases of language are being used. (Ayre, p.369)

(Contrast this with Steiner's (1989) identification of western extreme imbalance in the direction of abstract language.)

By metaphorical Frye also means imaginative or poetic language, which he regards as the most primitive form (see also Frye 1971, p.36f). It is only "mature" cultures that have evolved to a dominance of the least natural form: sustained prose, abstract language. Abstraction has

its inherent dangers: "Abstraction... was the product of repetition of experience without fresh thought" (Ayre, p.311). (Compare this to Berlin 1970, p.14: "From an evolutionary point of view concerned with environmental adaptation... abstract color terms are... relatively useless concepts in societies living close to nature.")

The modern individual no longer lives close to nature and must struggle to deal with a fundamental alienation from the natural world outside the boundaries of civilization (Frye 1990). Contemporary environmental awareness notwithstanding, I doubt this condition is reversing. The problem is one of knowledge, and has been rendered more acute by our exploding communication and information technologies: "A rush of experiences with limited possibilities of development into genuine knowledge is the major educational difficulty with electronic media in our society" (Frye 1990, p.75). Instead of being liberated by truth, we are being fragmented by an unending flood of information, unassimilable and personally disintegrating in the sense that that reflective process which provides coherency of values, depth of relationship, quality of membership and simple identity, is not allowed to establish itself. In Conan Doyle's "A Study in Scarlet" Dr. Watson remarks on the extraordinary individual he has come to know in Holmes, who combines such great depth of knowledge with such great ignorance. Upon Watson's surprise at his ignorance of the movement of the planets, Holmes responds:

I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across,

so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. Now, the skillful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order. It is a mistake to think that the little room has elastic walls and can distend to any extent. Depend upon it, there comes a time when for every addition of knowledge you forget something that you knew before. It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones."

"But the solar system!" I protested.

"What the deuce is it to me?" he interrupted, impatiently; "You say that we go round the sun. If we went around the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work."
(pp.21-22)

Holmes is certainly not talking about an immersion in poetic experience, but he is making a pragmatic statement about how to maintain order and coherency of the mind and agrees with Frye in his skepticism about the value of amassing disconnected pieces of information and calling this knowledge in any useful sense.

It is, then, mythological or poetic or imaginative experience that has the resources to enrich our understanding by depths of significances, by extending a web of connectedness and pattern through our lives. Frye's work seeks to point out the tremendous wealth of that body of literature we have inherited, closest to the language of oral culture and the fundamental structures of the imaginative mind. He redignifies many sources that our age seems to regard with suspicion simply because, with their historical veracity (or uniqueness) in doubt, we regard with suspicion any other message that may be contained in them. (See for example Frye's 1983, pp.46-7 discussion of Gibbon's

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.) The consummation of Frye's life's work was an attempt to release the Bible from the straight-jacket of unidimensional analysis, whether orthodox religious or orthodox empiricist (see also Frye 1991).

4.2 Language, literacy and the developing world: a literary perspective

The 1951 Unesco report on the uses of vernacular languages in education is founded on the principle that literacy is a basic right:

"We take it as axiomatic that every child of school age should attend school and that every illiterate should be made literate."
(p.6)

Unesco's later discussion of national literacy programs (Carron & Bordia 1985), acknowledging gains and losses, is unchanged in orientation ("illiteracy... is intimately associated with socio-economic deprivation and exploitation" (p.16)). Popular literacy programs often associate literacy with terms such as empowerment, liberation, conscientization (Freire 1988, etc.; Miller 1985). It is said that the foundation of modern democracy is an informed electorate and that universal literacy is the instrument of this informedness (Mill as quoted in Goody 1968). Philosophy and science can only develop in a literate society as does much of the elaboration of advanced civilization (Ong 1986, Goody 1986). Literacy is seen as a tool for modern nation building in the developing world (Lewis 1986; Carron & Bordia).

The early 1960's was a period of considerable optimism. The creation of the many newly independent nations in Africa and elsewhere was attended by a wave of idealistic and youthful development initiatives (and agencies such as the Peace Corps in the U.S., the Volunteer Service Organization in the U.K., and CUSO in Canada) dedicated to giving that liberal-minded helping hand that would clear the way for a new age of prosperity and democratic institution (See Harrison 1981). Although the record of achievement of the international development initiatives has not been as dismal as some commentators (such as Harrison 1981) have suggested, or as the famines and civil wars might indicate, the task of creating modern states out of traditional societies has proven much more difficult than some hoped it would, and the record is bad enough. The patterns of cultural change have broadly been disintegrative and the picture over time is one of failure of popular representative governments, failure to modernize substantially the national economies, a fragility of social order, and widespread poverty coupled with extravagant excess.

This all has been to the despair of the liberal-minded westerner. But then the twentieth century has not always been kind to middle-class values. George Orwell writes with an authority derived from his years as a policeman in Burma, as a tramp and as a freedom fighter in Spain. His respect for the working class was born of his willingness to experience the world as they did. Not all he found there was deprived. But he found that as soon as a member of this class was able to capture

this life in print, he became an outsider to it. The culture of the working man is oral. The printed word is a Bourgeois tool (see also Graff 1987, p.69). The process of acquiring this tool coincides with the exchanging of the one class identity for the other. Orwell (1968) was sympathetic to the labour movement in Britain between the world wars. He recorded many of his observations during the years he tramped around England and elsewhere. A product of an upper middle-class education (Eton), he nonetheless had a strong aversion to middle-class values: "modern man is rather like a bisected wasp which goes on sucking jam and pretends that the loss of its abdomen does not matter" (p.179). His poem "On a Ruined Farm" recalls to mind Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" and mourns the human world crushed beneath the wheels of capitalist industry.

It was not just the exploitation by the overt capitalist that was at fault:

The socialist bourgeoisie... have at the back of their minds a vision of the working class all T.T. [tea-totallers], well washed behind the ears... talking with B.B.C. accents. The working classes are very patient under it all... (pp.245-6)

His experience of the Spanish civil war and ongoing perception of labour leaders in Britain was ultimately disillusioning:

What sickens me about left-wing people, especially intellectuals, is their ignorance of the way things actually happen. (p.395)

Orwell did not lose his appreciation of the qualities that drew him to the working classes, but he saw that their climb out of exploitation was fraught with ill. When he contemplated the excesses of working class leaders he claimed:

One is almost driven to the cynical thought that men are only decent when they are powerless. (p.372)

Blixen's memoir of her life in Africa (1938) is remarkable for the strength of connection she was able to convey to the land and people she lived with. Laurence's account of her years in Somaliland (1963) give a picture of the much more usual estrangement of colonialists from their surroundings (with a few exceptions) and she reflects on the feelings of inadequacy that drive the colonialists affected superiority:

It is to be hoped that one day Africans may be able to see them for what they really were - not people who were motivated by a brutally strong belief in their own superiority, but people who were so desperately uncertain of their own worth and their ability to cope within their own societies that they were forced to seek some kind of mastery in a place where all the cards were stacked in their favour... (p.226)

Blixen accounts for the difference in the story of an aristocratic friend gone derelict:

It was fit and becoming, I thought, that Emmanuelson should have sought refuge with the Masai, and that they should have received him. The true aristocracy and the true proletariat of the world are both in understanding with tragedy. To them it is the fundamental principle of God, and the key, - the minor key, - to existence. They differ in this way from the bourgeoisie of all classes, who deny tragedy, who will not tolerate it, and to whom the word of tragedy means in itself unpleasantness. Many misunderstandings between the white middle-class immigrant settlers and Natives arise from this fact. The sulky Masai are both aristocracy and proletariat, they would have recognized at once in the lonely wanderer in black, a figure of tragedy; and the tragic actor had come, with them, into his own. (pp.203-4)

Walter Ong (1986) and Jack Goody (1977) see science and philosophy as only possible in literate cultures. Eugen Herrigel lived in Japan in the 1930's (?), employed to teach philosophy. He was fascinated by the

extraordinary skill of Japanese archers and began to study with a master archer. After considerable time with unremarkable progress, the master decided to have a look at the European philosophy texts Herrigel taught:

He had, so Mr. Komachiya told me later, tried to work through a Japanese introduction to philosophy in order to find out how he could help me from a side I already knew. But in the end he laid the book down with a cross face, remarking that he could now understand that a person who interested himself in such things would naturally find the art of archery uncommonly difficult to learn. (Herrigel 1971, p.72)

The kind of mastery of self the zen archer was capable of was very difficult for the overly intellectual westerner to achieve.

Hardy's returning native encounters forces stronger than his learning when he attempts to bring a school to Egdon Heath. The hero arrives from Paris with a plan to civilize the heath, but "civilization was its enemy" and the contest is unequal. Rather than destroyed, however, he is reclaimed by the heath. As he takes his place in a natural order he recognizes his "bare equality with and no superiority over any single living thing." Hamsun's story (1971) of the destruction of values and a way of life when the industrial world invades the traditional agricultural world parallels Hardy's. To the modern urbanite these natural worlds seem remote and sentimental, yet the characters who represent the invading modern world are troubled and compromised in ways that are uncomfortably familiar.

E.M. Forster's lectures on the novel (1927) makes this claim: "fiction is truer than history, because it goes beyond the evidence" (p.63). This is important because: "we believe that happiness and misery

exist in the secret life, which each of us leads privately..." (p.83). The novel, or the literary art, is a fundamental repository of truth because it reveals the secret or inner life of its material and speaks directly to our own inner life. Conversely, the ordinary explicitness and fidelity to documented sources of contemporary journalism and academic writing gives us too often truth without substance, veracity without vitality.

Self-knowledge likely has little to do with the force behind literacy campaigns: "If another ladder to employment were contrived, much so-called education would disappear, and no one be a penny the stupider" (Forster, p.11, somewhat out of context). Indeed, excessive devotion to literary experience seems a sure ticket to the back-eddies of this society. The need, then, for reconciliation operates at various levels, and in different directions; as the reader becomes more deeply immersed in the culture of written words, that other world of bright colours, real human intimacy and physical adventure slips further and further out of grasp. If consolation is to be found in those "years that bring the philosophic mind," let us not hasten to bring them so soon upon ourselves.

I have already expressed a skepticism of social ideologies. All systems exact a price and offer certain securities in exchange. That price, for us, is often some aspect of our humanity. Western capitalism, whatever its virtues (see, for example, Braudel 1977; 1981), is wasteful of material resources and brutal to those unfit or unwilling to

participate in the race for material prosperity. The evolution of world capitalism and world scale economies will create a world culture in which a few make the decisions affecting the lives of us all.

My response to this probably reflects my own middle-class background. Freire's call to action is addressed to those at the bottom of the heap. But the middle-class beneficiaries of the inequalities are more characteristically accepting of the cost they pay for the benefits of membership in the social order. I do not believe the material I have presented implies any call to action. Quite the reverse. Rather than social action, the literate bourgeois strata, in their "velvet ruts," need to consider their own deficiencies. Critical change will not result from modification to social institutions, but rather the resourcefulness that emerges out of the struggle of the individual to find a human space in spite of those institutions.

An educated imagination is not dependent on the written word. It is, however, a product of cultural health, and cultural health is a product of the place primary human concerns have in cultural life. The neglect of primary concerns in favour of secondary (or a distortion in the service to a hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1970)) cannot but create imbalances or instabilities in a culture. Those cultures that embrace a realistic and healthy human psychology will be stable and enduring, all other things being equal. Oral societies preserve and maintain some element that breathes life into them. Literate societies too often find their own humanity erratically and insubstantially. International

development is the business of promoting social change. Are we the model for the better world promoted?

4.3 Summary

Havelock Ellis reflected on the career of one of Britain's most successful diplomats. The quality that made this diplomat great was that he, whenever possible, avoided action. There is a lesson in this for development policy makers. Oral cultures have their strengths and weaknesses. Sufficient meddling will reduce these to just weaknesses. Literate cultures have institutional power and access to vast resources of information, but their individuals tend to lack personal emotional integration. The essential difference lies in some living quality that oral cultures unselfconsciously possess and that frequently eludes us.

I see this living quality as a product of a capacity for aesthetic, ecstatic or religious response. Whatever is understood by the term "humanity", the understanding cannot be complete without including these. Further investigation of this quality is a project for another time and place, however. For now I will recapitulate my main points.

The moral force behind literacy movements is, I believe, analogous to Orwell's assessment of the socialist bourgeoisie (as Graff 1987, p.69 has identified historically). The difficulty with this is that some aspects of oral cultures do not fit into the antiseptic bourgeois concept of development. Current development initiators have their own axes to grind and differ from earlier missionary initiators only in

content, not in orientation. As Blixen and Laurence both noted, the vacuum at the heart of the bourgeois sensibility presents a fundamental obstacle to understanding between African and European, oral culture and literate societies.

The value of any particular tool used by a culture, be it literacy, the internal combustion engine, or fertilizer, must be measured in terms of the happiness or misery created in the lives of members of a society as a consequence of the use of the tool. Happiness and misery, however, dwell in the inner life of the individual, and cannot be evaluated by an assessment of material prosperity.

An examination of the history of the Roman Empire and the Romance languages provides a model for how cultures actually evolve from point of contact with universal states to their eventual re-emergence as separate nation-states with identifying national languages. Arguments in favour of universal languages do not stop the tide of popular pressure on language change. Education systems that devote great resources to establishing widespread literacy in universal languages will encounter the same resistance that Latin ultimately faced in Florence and elsewhere. Vernacular literacy programs are also doomed to failure, though for different reasons. Most vernacular cultures are oral and literacy is largely irrelevant in these cultures (as in 16th century England; see also Ryan 1985, p.160 regarding resistance to vernacular literacy in Tanzania). Literacy will remain a tool for an elite who work on the interface between their own and developed societies, and who

use international languages, but the highest expressions of the new African national cultures will find their way into the emerging popular languages. It is these languages that will bear most fruit in long term literacy programs, but literacy itself will continue as a tool useful only to certain sectors of these African national communities. Any revolutionary literacy programs will either fail, destroy the integrity of the target language group cultures, or both.

"Mythology" can be just one term for representing the coherence of inner life resources that a community or culture provides for its members. A society in possession of a great literature and literary values need not be literate. Conversely, a highly literate society may well be out of touch with literary experience and incapable of producing great literature. Western mythology draws from two primary sources, Greek Classical and the Bible. But while literate western culture has lost the resources to express itself to the depths of Homeric literature, a Yoruba writer (Rotimi 1971) has managed to breathe new life into the Oedipus story by giving it his native setting.

I am not prepared to offer further principles by which development goals and literacy programs might be reoriented. The world will go on in its way. A couple of principles seem to be safe, however. The first is that regardless of what evidence might seem to exist to the contrary, all business between members of different cultures should be conducted on the assumption of equality. If business cannot be conducted on this basis, it should not be conducted at all. Most development

relationships assume inequality and proceed on that basis. Time does not right this imbalance. Secondly, as with Ellis's diplomat, when in doubt, do nothing. It is highly unusual for a people simply to lie down and die. If this is the situation, short term humanitarian aid is indicated. But intervention rarely creates independence of action, except through conflict. Intervention that is designed to create dependencies may help run western economies, but can hardly be championed as for the benefit of developing nations. Literacy has been available to the western world for more than two thousand years. It has yet to be acquired universally in any society. Much of the world can get by without it. We should have the repose to let this be. When the rewards of a specific literacy are seen clearly to outweigh its costs within a community, its members will find the resolve and openness to receive it. When literacy programs are instituted by policies inimical to the well-being of a community they can be expected to encounter resistance, engender failure, and be destructive in ultimate effect.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

This study has examined two interdependent problems facing multilingual developing nations. The first problem to be treated was that of language policy. On the understanding that popular forces exhibit recurring patterns in their effects on language change, it is argued that history and not social ideology should inform language policy decisions. History shows that, characteristically, diglossic communities resolve linguistic conflict through a fusion of high and low languages, with the lexicon of the high language providing the resources for the low language to expand into all linguistic domains.

In the case of Nigeria, Pidgin English thus acquires a special importance, as do comparable emerging languages in other African states (such as Dyula in Ivory Coast and Sango in Central African Republic). This has implications for language policy. Existing Nigerian policy (1976) targets a three or four language system. Recognizing the strength and complexity of the ethnic forces that official language policy must publicly address, and the role of schooling and state-sponsored education in promoting national unity, succeeding language planners have not been able to offer alternatives to this formula.

But Nigeria has not been successful in progressing toward an implementation of its language goals. Making such goals seem all the more remote is the fact of the deteriorating education system. Any effective formulation of language policy must take into consideration the reduced powers of the education system to implement pervasive policies that promote change in patterns of language use. Rather than state intervention in language change, however, a 'free market' approach to language policy would lift the burden of cumbersome language planning and allow the limited resources (for the foreseeable future) of education administrations to be directed to the development of 'real world' skills for those most likely to benefit from them. In large part it should be possible for these skills to be acquired without radical change to existing cultural and linguistic resources.

The second problem this study examines regards the effects western style development, and most specifically, literacy, have on pre-literate and neo-literate societies. Assumptions made about the impoverished nature of traditional societies are just that, assumptions, the product of cultural distance and the nature of the 'literacy-contained' education researchers represent. In order to attempt to stand outside a literacy-embedded world view, and the strict confines of the culture of the written word, this study has referred to a number of sources not usually consulted in literacy studies. The result, however distastefully subjective for some readers, is a weight of evidence for both the threat literate culture poses to non-literate culture and the cost literate culture exacts from itself.

It is clear that the "domestication" and "conscientization" that Freire dichotomizes cannot be separated; both are the inescapable effects of literacy on culture. If literate culture is successful, largely, in disciplining and channelling the energies of its most resourceful members into highly specified pursuits, it is at the loss of much that is vital, creative and meaningful. When highly domesticated products of literate cultures step into cultures where dynamic forces are at play which they have not been equipped to deal with, they may either attribute the shortfall to themselves, or those cultures.

5.2 Conclusion

The English speaking world of the present day may not be entirely analogous to the Roman Empire of the fourth century. The English language is not the voice of a single national will or contiguous territory. This could mean, however, that the political effect of English is the more powerful, in inverse proportion to its visible identity. If this is the case, it will not be difficult to conceive of ourselves as instruments of a subliminal and pernicious will, not identifiable as to source, but all the more sweeping in its powers.

Alternately, the English language may be the instrument of a movement that will bring about a latter day Pax Romana, spreading with the English language the "manifest superiority" of our political and cultural institutions and the universal perspective of the scientific mind. The impact of English is certainly not culturally neutral, but

why not positive? Perhaps after a few more years of global strife and English classes, and the dust given time to settle, we will be able to sit back and congratulate ourselves on a job well done.

Or perhaps those of us who are more actively involved in the dispersal of English are players in a quite different game; unconscious of the significance of what we are doing, because that is the only way to live in the present, we stumble or strut into our profession because we must do something to survive. We genuinely like our students, being stimulated both by their variety and the opportunity to respond to their real needs. And we, as all little people do, struggle to find a place for ourselves that will meet our own needs. We have not the luxury of questioning our every move, any more than the Roman soldiers, merchants and slaves did. History will take care of itself.

Is there in fact some sort of connection between literary experience according to Northrop Frye, the story of the Kpelle shaman, the speech of Igbo mothers to their babies, the Mexican children playing with abandonment in the surf, the Yoruba market women sitting with deep-rooted stillness during an uncomfortable journey, and the speech-making of my teaching colleagues? Conversely, is there a connection between the advanced state of literacy of our civilization, our communication technologies, husbands and wives who hate each other, hyperactive travellers, shallow literature, swamping abstraction and colonizing educationists?

Akinnaso (1985) presents a case for oral cultures possessing a full range of restricted and elaborated codes, as do literate cultures. Scribner and Cole's study (1981) seems to make it clear that literacy itself has only modest psychological effect, like acquiring any other skill. It is simply a tool that a society may use in going about its business. This sort of observation has its parallel in some of the literary sources cited. Frye believed that literature (and the arts) did "not work by magic, and are not mind altering drugs: they cannot make people "better" unless there is already a reasoning will to be made better" (Ayre 1989, p.385).

Oral culture at its greatest is also literary in the most meaningful sense. Literacy, a more or less cognitively neutral skill, nonetheless represents a great divide between cultures which can be measured in part by literary creation and in part by literary response (to turn the reasoning of Goody 1986 on its head): "The Aeschylus whose message is linked to the middle class norms of twentieth century America is very different from the creator of Prometheus Bound" (Pattison 1982, p.212). By contrast, the Sophocles who wrote the Oedipus plays lives on with vividness and power in a modern adaptation to a Yoruba setting, still free of these middle class North American norms (Rotimi 1971).

For Frye, the literate mind need not be a victim of the unprocessable world it has created. Literary experience provides a refuge: "coherent lifestyles, connected with primary concerns, will emerge from the infinite possibilities of myth" (1990, p.222). But

alienation from the world surrounding this mind will be its unending torment:

the purpose of a liberal education today is to achieve a neurotic maladjustment in the student, to twist him into a critical and carping intellectual, very dissatisfied with the world, very finicky about accepting what it offers him, and yet unable to leave it alone. (Ayre 1989, p.298)

I suspect the real source of the serenity of the Mexican mother with her twin daughters was mythological. The husband and wife in conflict were not that way because either was particularly hateful, but because of a failure of their mythology to give more than the most demeaning of purposes to their existence. Technological wizardry seems inimical to the vitality of the inner dimension of human culture. Samuel Butler fails where Homer does not for mythological reasons. Butler's mythology is technological and fatuous; Homer's is rich and sustaining.

I do not differ so much in my attitude from the Canadian women in the taxi in southwest Nigeria, or the earnest Australian educators, or Gay and Cole. I had also to struggle with the incredible human waste of an African society that had apparently set its own educational priorities and made its own decision to westernize. The result of that, to my eyes, was the creation of a whole generation of failures, who could not help but turn up a wake of chaos everywhere they went in the society they would soon be running. The destruction of traditional authority and the integrity of families was widespread as semi-educated children of illiterate parents, jobless but too proud to take traditional occupations, stayed, useless, indolent and abusive of their

elders, at home. Those who worked had not the skills to do their jobs competently; their work standards reflected the general acceptance of failure of their education.

Clearly, those integrated societies that have such power to evoke images of our collective primeval past, are, in most cases, already many paces outside the gates of Paradise. The impetus toward change cannot be arrested once it has begun. However, we easily lose sight of the time and complexity of the process that brought about western institutions; in our eagerness to have developing nations join in these, we both assign to them an impossible task and act in ignorance of our own cultural inadequacies. Our orientation toward change has an integrally evangelical quality. Even westerners must be persuaded to make changes and will harbour resentments at the inconvenience. It should not be surprising that this evangelical principle spills over our boundaries, creating armies of technological missionaries, well-intentioned, liberal-minded and spreading in their paths the open mind of the scientist and the cultural incoherency of their western inheritance.

Let me speak in terms of our own rusting mythology. The story of the fall of man is not, of course, simply an inaccurate account of creation, nor is it just a Miltonic pretext for difficult poetry. Knowledge, we hope, will one day bring us to another Paradise, a New Jerusalem. But what sort of knowledge will that be? No society can be catapulted from the orality of the undeveloped world to the technological world of western societies in one motion without the destruction of the system of

beliefs that gives meaning to the lives of its individual members. Western empiricism can bring prosperity, but its responses to questions of meaning may fall far short of adequacy. Western empiricism is built on facts, on information, its free exchange and its free pursuit. If knowledge is, however, as Frye suggests, mythological in nature, and Homer and Aeschylus in better possession of it than you or I, are we not premature in looking for a New World Order?

One day I may face again a class full of African faces struggling to comprehend the civilization which I am their most visible representative of. What will I say to them next time? Will I try to tell them to go back to the villages and to their families' farms? They will laugh at me if I do. Can I tell them to respect their elders when I am the agent for the destruction of that respect? Should I tell them to study their own myths and legends (push for their publication and attempt a scholarly study)? Should I refuse to go at all on the grounds that all forms of cultural imperialism must stop and oral cultures freed to evolve according to their wills?

Though my answers would be a uniform "no", and I can see no way of arresting the historical patterns of contact and change that all cultures undergo, I cannot help a feeling of regret. I doubt that the dependency of life on diversity is purely genetic or biological. The Taoist principle of union of opposites, or Jungian principle of the shadow informs us. Western civilization can bring great prosperity to those who would embrace it, but the shadow it casts is as great as its

light and it has equally spread poverty on all its boundaries of contact: material, institutional and spiritual. I could wish for strong alternate models of development, competent to manage material needs but more deeply rooted in the resources not of social idealism, but of mythological experience and cultural reality.

5.3 Implications for future research

This study has been constructed largely of intuitions, my own and those of the various writers I have been able to conscript into service. In some cases I have not accepted the results of existing empirical studies because the results seem too probably contaminated by either cultural distance or ideological interference. Perhaps the most satisfactory of the studies available is that by Scribner and Cole (1981) of Vai literacy. The resources necessary for such studies, both financial and in expertise, are considerable, and it may not be realistic to hope for many of these. Modest studies undertaken in an appropriate manner, however, could produce valuable results. The Yoruba and Ibo linguistic communities in Nigeria are much larger and more complex than the Vai of Liberia. Literacy, both vernacular and English, is well established and coexists peacefully with widespread illiteracy. Literate members of these cultures still use abundantly the strategies of oral discourse. Worthwhile studies could be conducted in these communities to produce, for example, community literacy profiles, identification of domains of language use and a correlation between

social stratification and literacy. Questions to examine regard how literacy is distributed, how it is used, what attitudes prevail about literacy, and what are its observable effects? Is there a measurable difference in self-image, problem-solving strategies and social integration between literate and non-literate?

Nigeria should also be a proving ground for hypotheses about language change. Is Nigerian Pidgin English really the language of the future or is there yet another variety of English emerging? A follow-up study to Collins (1968) which draws analogies between innovation in the 'literary' English of popular writings and innovation in Middle English might broaden the story of English in Nigeria.

Needed are some specific recommendations for language policy development, especially in the area of education. Although there may be time to discuss endlessly possible alternatives to existing languages of administration, the consequences of preserving non-functional education policies are graver.

Other studies which interest me equally, and that I can claim to have begun, deal with parallel evidence for the destruction of certain universal qualities in western culture. One such study examines the history of translations of the Bible into English. Similar observations can be made in a study of architecture, music and the visual arts. We are surely at the threshold of something as we pass out of this century. The extent to which this something is knowable will be a product of our apprehension of the patterns that emerge out of a study of cultural history.

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