ITESO'S LANGUAGE REPERTOIRE USE PATTERNS

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This article considers language use and contact phenomenon among the Ateso speakers.[1] The Iteso live in two countries with quite distinct language environments. The language comprises loan words from English, Bantu and other Nilotic languages that are spoken by people who live close to Ateso speakers. English and Swahili are official languages both in Uganda and in Kenya while Luganda is a dominant language in Uganda.

Based on the researcher's assessment, the majority of young Ateso speakers grow up bilingually, with Ateso as the first language and either English, Swahili or Luganda also being present in the home. English, Swahili and Luganda, which are second languages for Ateso speakers, are the most prominent languages in formal education. English is prevalent not only in the formal education sector but is also the language of the media. Surveys conducted by Bunyi (1997) and Piper (2010) show that the young generation is shifting to English and other dominant African languages. In Kenya, there is a widespread tendency for speakers of smaller languages to shift towards Swahili and English. In Uganda, the language policy since independence has "been exoglossic, with English as the official language; in September 2005, Swahili was added as the second official language, and the language policy changed formally to a mixed one." (Rosendal, 2010: 27). According to Nakayiza (2012: 44), "[a]lthough Swahili has been accorded this [official; DB] status [in Uganda; DB], its official use is still highly symbolic, especially as a result of the formation of the East African Community in which Uganda is a member." Luganda and English continue to be the dominant languages in Uganda. Nakayiza (2012: 43) further observes that "English and to a certain extent the majority languages such as Luganda, enjoy a special status in the country". They are considered 'prestigious' by a majority of citizens who increasingly choose to bring up their children in these languages.

The case on multilingualism and language use

There are very few monolingual Ateso speakers and most of these are old (usually above 65 years) and live in remote areas. The vast majority of Iteso are multilingual (bilingual), with Ateso as their first language and either Swahili in Kenya or English/Luganda in Uganda as a second language. In Kenya, English is found only as a third language in the rural settings, whereas in urban areas it may be used as a second language. The generalizations in this study are only approximate estimations of language use based on the researcher's impressions. Specific studies need to test these impressionistic expressions.

Major linguistic influences

Ateso-speaking people have undergone major linguistic influences resulting from living among the Bantu and other Nilotic-speaking people. Languages which are spoken by neighbors of the Iteso are Luganda, Karamojong', Samia, Lubukusu, Sabaot and Luo. It is evident that intermarriages and shared social life across the borders of these languages has led to borrowing of new words between the adjacent communities. Heavy lexical borrowing[2] is a new phenomenon that is becoming more and more prominent in Ateso. Borrowed words mostly represent new items or concepts previously not found among the Iteso. The borrowed items have been integrated into the language and they contribute to the corpus of the Ateso vocabulary.

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[1] Ateso is an Eastern Nilotic Language spoken by the Iteso people in Uganda as well as in Kenya.

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[2] Consider the following nouns borrowed from Swahili or from English through Swahili. The first column indicates relevant Swahili forms that are the source for the Ateso equivalents. All the loan nouns acquire tone that corresponds to the Ateso native noun tones, which are High, Low and Low-High.

a. baisikeli	à-bàísíkèlì	à-bàísíkèlì-ò	'bicycle'
b. mbao	à-bàó	à-bàwó-í	'board'
c. kitabu	è-kítàbò	èkítàbò-í	'book'
d. bakuli	à-bákùlì	à-bákùlì-ó	'bowl'
e. motokaa	à-mótòkàà	àmótòkà-í	'vehicle'

In Uganda, for instance, great influence from Luganda and Karamojong is attested, while in Kenya, a mixture of Luhya (Samia and Lubukusu), Turkana and Sabaot has had a major influence on Ateso. This kind of influence can also be noted in clan names, as revealed by Mwakingile (2012: 147), who notes that, "Iteso clan names reveal long-standing ethnic interactions. Names of Bantu and Northern Nilotic are found among them." In extreme cases, as noted by Webster et al (1973: 11), the "early Iteso migrants who moved to the Bugwere region integrated culturally and dropped the Ateso language in favour of Lugwere." However, it is also worth noting that Ateso linguistic items are also found in languages spoken by neighbouring communities. For instance, "…lexical forms of Kumam [a Western Nilotic language] common in Eastern Nilotic languages are likely to have been recently borrowed from [A]Teso due to close contact continuing still today" (Hieda 2013: 1). The adoption of Ateso linguistic items is limited as forces of prestige and demographic prominence are not in its favour.

Literacy is limited to less than half the Iteso population in Kenya and about 68% of the population in Uganda (UBOS, 2006). In Uganda, literacy is exclusively in English, but in Kenya, it is also in Swahili. Those whose repertoire covers more than one language prefer English, Swahili or other Bantu languages such as Luhya and Luganda that are deemed to have a high social standing within the social context. Based on the researcher's observations during fieldwork, the young people mostly employ Ateso when talking to elderly people but use Swahili or English when communicating with their peers.

Ateso use in the social domain
Language use patterns differ significantly between the Iteso of Kenya and Uganda. Iteso speakers in Uganda switch much less and if they do they use English phrases and lexical items, which must in many cases be considered borrowing. In Kenya, there is more code switching in Swahili.

Ateso does not receive much attention in the social domain. English is spoken mainly by the educated in the society and serves as the language of the people deemed to be upper class. English is also dominant in electronic media.

English, Swahili and Luganda are predominant in all public settings and have all but marginalized Ateso and other non-dominant languages.

In school, although Ateso is not officially prohibited by either the Ugandan or the Kenyan governments, most schools actively suppress the use of L1s within school premises (Gacheche, 2010: 6). During fieldwork, the researcher visited two schools within the Teso region, where he observed that the use of Ateso is discouraged and learners who use it are punished either by teachers or selected students, who are chosen to guard against 'mother tongue' speaking. The situation is becoming even worse at home, where some parents have started to consciously abandon Ateso in favour of the dominant languages in their interaction with children. This may lead to a gradual decrease in the number of Ateso speakers and to the death of the language.

In church, the main languages used are English, Swahili and Ateso. Ateso is used for the oral presentation of the church teachings while Swahili in Kenya and English in Uganda are usually the written languages that the Bible is read in. Sometimes the translated Ateso Bible is used.

The Iteso are organized into clans, which form the primary social organization. Their social organization defines the cultural constraints and taboos that guide the use of language. Most vocabulary related to body parts is confined to use among members of the same social groups. Elders are seen to be guardians of the language and their conversations are often clothed with proverbs. Other social groups include lineages, age and generational sets. Unfortunately, with the influence of modernity the traditional social systems are almost completely disappearing from Iteso life.

Language policies
Through national language policies, most African governments have pushed the majority of the African languages to the periphery. As a consequence, not only hundreds of small African languages, but also many languages with larger numbers of speakers like Ateso, are either undocumented or under-documented (see UNHCR 2003). Inadequate financial and intellectual support from the governments has halt-

ed efforts directed at developing African languages.

More recent government policies in Uganda and Kenya are in favour of first language education. These policies aim to ensure that mother tongue languages in Kenya are re-introduced into the education system and used as a medium of instruction at lower primary level. The guidelines – if implemented – will officially introduce Ateso into the institutions of learning. In Uganda, *The Government White Paper* (1992) recommended first language instruction up to Primary 4. Ateso is identified as one of the languages that should serve as a medium of instruction within the areas inhabited by Ateso speakers. Like Labwor, a Southern Lwoo language, and many other indigenous languages, Ateso is a de facto medium of instruction in the first four years of primary education, even though there are no textbooks in the language. The common practice is for teachers to translate their teaching materials from English (see Heine & König 2010: 10). For Ateso to be an effective medium of instruction and also a subject in schools, there is an urgent need for the development of Ateso educational material. The increased number of studies on Ateso (e.g. Barasa, 2015) aims to have a significant impact on the development of the literacy materials in the language.

In summary, this study offers an overview of language use patterns among the Iteso. Based on the existing literature and the researcher's knowledge, information on Ateso-speaking people is discussed in the various sub-sections. This aims at contributing to an understanding of the Iteso people in general, while also making known factors that have had an impact on their language. Such information is important as it demarcates the functions and milieus of language use and changes that have occurred due to the Iteso people's movements and interactions with other speech communities.