

## The Naivasha language policy: the language of politics and the politics of language in the Sudan

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**Abstract** This article provides a textual analysis of the Naivasha language provisions in Sudan in an attempt to explore how political discourse is manifested in each policy statement. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytic and interpretive framework, the article argues that the Naivasha language provisions as political discourse are shaped by the historically mediated relationships between the south and north of Sudan (conceptualized as the territorially united entity before the secession of the south in 2011). In the course of the analysis, the article shows that the discourse of ‘linguistic indigeneness’ promoted by the policy is ideologically motivated. It is intertextual with the colonial Southern Policy and subsequently the discourse of self-determination as legislated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 that has recently heralded the emergence of the southern Sudan as a new nation-state. The analysis has shown that there is a high degree of compatibility between the proposed structural system and the discourse of the language policy. This compatibility is achieved at the status planning level, yet its realization at the practical level remains to be assessed. The article concludes by arguing that a particular version of federalism seems to be the most appropriate political system advocated for in the implementation of this language policy.

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## Introduction

This article reports on a study of the politics of language, in particular the Naivasha language policy (NLP), which is part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Khartoum government (represented by the National Congress Party, NCP) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army, SPLM/A). The politics of language are taken here as the micro and macro factors that are at play in debates about the status and function of a language (Joseph 2006; Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Pelinka 2007).

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995; henceforth CDA) as an analytic and interpretive framework, the article argues that the NLP reflects political discourse embedded in the historical continuity between colonial and post-colonial language policies. The motivation for using CDA is that in language policies, 'power, politics and status differentials' (Lo Bianco 2009:113) are played out in texts and 'CDA has shown that public texts' such as language policy documents 'often carry agendas they conceal' (Lo Bianco 2009:113). More often, what is concealed is inequality. In this regard, language used in policy documents is not neutral. Any choice made on whether to use one form or another reflects 'a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)' (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002:1). For example, the use of passivization, euphemism or metaphors or the organization of the text to foreground or background certain information is based on effecting specific agendas (see Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 2006).

In language policies, languages are very often accorded different statuses: some languages acquire dominant status while others are marginalized in the process (Scarino and Papademetre 2001; Wickert 2001). Language policies therefore can perpetuate systems of social inequality (Johnson 2009). Tollefson (2006:42), for instance, acknowledges that 'policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality, and that policy-makers usually promote the interests of dominant groups.'

CDA is therefore theoretically well placed for a study of the NLP because in CDA language is viewed as a form of social practice (for a discussion of language as social practice see Fairclough 1989; Schiffrin et al. 2001; Pennycook 2010; van Dijk 1997; van Leeuwen 2008). CDA aims to establish ways that domination is reproduced by text, and 'language policy is mostly conducted through texts, texts that are essentially political in nature [and] persuasive in intent' (Lo Bianco 2009:114). Language policies and politics mutually influence each other by facilitating inequality. By so doing, language policies make the 'linkage between language and politics more precise' (Pelinka 2007:130).

The interplay between language and politics is emphatically stated by Joseph (2006:17); he points out that 'language is political from top to bottom'. This interplay between language and politics has been studied in both sociolinguistics

and comparative politics. Sociolinguistics extensively has addressed the politics of language by focusing on the legal equality or inequality of languages (see Tollefson 1991). Research in comparative politics, on the other hand, has addressed how language is used in defining difference (politics of language) and how language is used to communicate difference (language of politics) (Bugarski 2004; Dallmayr 1984). What both areas of study underscore is that:

Language reflects power structures – and language has an impact on power structures. Language can be seen as an indicator of social and therefore political situations – and language can also be seen as a driving force directed at changing politics and society. Language is an in-put as well as out-put factor of political systems: it influences politics – and is influenced by politics (Pelinka 2007:130).

This article aims to engage with issues of hegemony, language ideology, power asymmetries, and social inequality in language planning and how these are manifested through text. By conducting a CDA of the NLP text, the present study straddles both disciplines—sociolinguistics and political science—with the view of providing an insightful understanding of the NLP as an instance of the language of politics and the politics of language. By examining the language of politics, one gets insight into how ‘language is used to persuade others to believe things and do things’ (Geis 1987: vii). The language of politics is persuasive discourse and so are language policy texts (Lo Bianco 2009). Language policies or policies in general inherently persuade or instruct others (provide directives) to ‘believe and do things’ (Geis 1987: vii). Since language policies are examples of the language of politics, a nuanced understanding of language policies requires a detailed textual analysis.

In the language of politics, carefully choosing the language with which to present meaning behind ideas is directly related to how language is used, or the choice and organizational structure of language. It is therefore the context that defines the potential range of possibilities of meaning. In this regard, language is by and large, an interrelated set of texts in which ‘meaning potential’ is actualized. Because of its relevance to the interpretation of text, CDA provides the necessary conceptual framework for the textual analysis of the NLP in that the emphasis on text provides a nuanced interpretation of the construction of ideology in discourse (Fairclough 1995). CDA therefore provides an appropriate analytical and interpretive framework for an insightful analysis of text and discourse relevant to language planning.

### **Sudan: A historical sociolinguistic background**

The Sudan shares borders with nine other African countries: Egypt (to the north), Eritrea and Ethiopia (to the east), Kenya and Uganda (to the southeast), the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic (to the southwest), Chad (to the west), and Libya (to the northwest). The Sudan prides itself on being the ‘crossroads of Africa’ (Stevenson 1971:11). Because of its geographic location,

the Sudan contains within its borders representatives of all the major African language families, excluding the Khoisan languages of South Africa.

The number of languages of the Sudan listed in the Ethnologue (2010) database is 142, of which 134 are living languages, and eight are extinct. However, those working in minority languages propose a higher number of languages than suggested by Ethnologue (see Duchene and Heller 2007). Before 2005, the national and official language of the Sudan was Arabic. Arabic is a widely spoken language in the northern part of the Sudan. It is used for official purposes and as a medium of instruction in university and pre-university education following the policy of Arabicisation. A variety of Arabic known as Southern Arabic or Juba Arabic (a pidgin-based Arabic) is used in some parts of the southern Sudan as a lingua franca. Mahmud (1983) noted that Southern Arabic can be traced back to the period of military and trade expansion during the Turco-Egyptian rule.

The current peace agreement, which ended one of the longest wars in Africa between the 'north' and the 'south' of the Sudan and which was enshrined in the Interim National Constitution, names both English and Arabic as official languages. The terms 'south' and the 'north' are used here in a political sense to refer to the current boundaries of the southern Sudan region (its territory was constituted by the former three southern provinces of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile), in relation to the northern region which includes the central, far northern, eastern, and the western parts of the Sudan. As we write, the southern Sudan has its own autonomous government (the Government of Southern Sudan) under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005. The south is reductively associated with Christianity, English and local languages, while the north is identified with Arabic language and Islamic religion. This rather essentialising definition of the Sudan is a product of the British colonial policies (1898–1956), which divided the country into 'the south' and the 'north' through discursive and physical measures. To undo the effects of the British colonial policy, postcolonial central governments selected the option of forced assimilation of the south through Arabicisation and Islamisation. The mistrust and fear of northern domination by the south led to one of the longest civil wars in Africa (1955–1972 and 1983–2005).

In contemporary Sudan, the consideration given to language in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)<sup>1</sup> is an indication that the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) who signed it, or at least one of them, have recovered from a kind of imperial amnesia—'the inability or refusal to confront the complexity of history from which emerged various discourses on language and education' (Tupas 2003:1). It also indicates that the parties have recognized the question of language as a critical arena for the operation of power (Fabian 1986).

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<sup>1</sup> The CPA was signed in 2005 in the Kenyan town of Naivasha between the NCP (representing the Government of Sudan), and SPLM/ASPLM/A (representing southern opposition). In its totality the CPA is intended to create new SPLM conditions at societal and institutional level that can be summed up in the ideologically charged phrase of the 'New Sudan'.

## Theoretical framework

CDA will be used to explore relationships between discursive practices, texts, and events and wider social structures and processes as reflected through the NLP. CDA methodology analyzes texts to indicate the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, political, and historical contexts (van Dijk 1988). In using CDA to analyze the NLP, the intention is to shed light on ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favor their interests through language policy statements.

In CDA there are three levels of analysis: (a) the text, (b) discursive practices, and (c) socio-cultural practices (Fairclough 2003). Textual analysis deals with the description of the form and meaning of the text whereas discursive practice is concerned with the discursive production and interpretation of the text. What is central to socio-cultural practice is the notion of ideology—in particular, language ideology. Thus, in analyzing the NLP, focusing on usage enables us to astutely interpret and unpack the construction of ideology in discourse.

Although language ideology is a current construct in multiple disciplines, there is limited consensus on what language ideology is (for a discussion of language ideologies see Blommaert 1999; Joseph and Taylor 1990; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). In this study, language ideology is viewed as ‘a set of beliefs, ideas or theories about language’ (Gal 1998:318). Woolard (1998:5–9) classifies language ideology into four distinct categories: (1) ideology as representations, assumptions and ideas, (2) ideology as connected to a particular social position, (3) ideology as discourse patterns in the service of maintaining and achieving power, and (4) ideology as a misrepresentation of reality, all of which are significant conceptualizations of language ideology in the analysis of the NLP.

In our analysis, the focus is on how and to what purpose language use conceals inequality by using specific textual features (e.g., lexical, grammatical, semantic, etc.). The analysis explores ‘the links between language use and [socio-cultural] practice’ (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002:69), including values and attitudes towards language (language ideology) and how these are expressed in the different Naivasha language policy statements. The linguistic analysis of the NLP text will therefore focus on ideologically significant meaning relations such as collocations, euphemism, and use of grammatical features like modals to indicate degrees of uncertainty.

In this regard, the analysis is based on an identification of the linguistic form, for example, lexicon (official, indigenous), or syntactic structure (e.g., passivisation) and the meaning of each statement is then embedded in a context. To some extent, the textual and discourse practices are conflated in the analysis because although the two are theoretically distinct, in practice the distinction is difficult to sustain. The socio-cultural context cuts across different statements, and there is no single socio-cultural context for each statement.

## The Naivasha language policy (NLP)

The CPA has constituted a fundamental part of the current Interim National Constitution which eventually led to the promulgation of the NLP. Thus the NLP, should be viewed as a product of a long process of meaningful negotiations between the NCP and the SPLM/A (as part of the peace negotiations) that ultimately led to the CPA. It is embedded in the Protocol of Power Sharing which is one of the six constitutive protocols of the CPA. The NLP is intended to deal with the problematic character of the Pre-Naivasha sociolinguistic order. The officially declared language policy that preceded NLP was the monolingual policy of Arabicisation. The rationale in including a new language policy as part of the CPA is to reconfigure the sociolinguistic order in the Sudan and it ‘marks a historical change in official language policy for the whole country’ (James 2008:64).

The main five statements which constitute the NLP are:

### 2.8 Language:

- 2.8.1 All the indigenous languages are national languages which shall be respected, developed and promoted.
- 2.8.2 Arabic language is the widely spoken national language in the Sudan.
- 2.8.3 Arabic, as a major language at the national level, and English shall be the official working languages of the National Government business and languages of instruction for higher education.
- 2.8.4 In addition to Arabic and English, the legislature of any sub-national level of government may adopt any other national language(s) as additional official working language(s) at its level.
- 2.8.5 The use of either language at any level of government or education shall not be discriminated against (CPA 2005:26–27).

## The language of politics in the NLP

The first policy statement (2.8.1) considers all indigenous languages as national languages, and demands that they be *respected*, *promoted* and *developed*. Part of this policy announcement has the function of asserting particular linguistic realities as objective and factual, without any further qualification by using the epistemic non-modal present tense *are*. The discourse of the first policy statement embodies a particular representation of a sociolinguistic reality in the Sudan: linguistic pluralism or the recognition of linguistic diversity hence ‘all the indigenous languages are national languages’. Yet, despite declaring linguistic pluralism the first policy statement does not claim that all indigenous languages are equally important. The social relations between the political forces which signed the CPA are reflected interpersonally and they incorporate unequal power relationships between these political forces. The relations of power behind the discourse of the NLP are disguised through the grammatical organisation of the text by using for example passivisation. Yet, the intratextual context can reveal these unequal

relations of agency: The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in which the NLP is embedded, is signed by two political forces identified textually as ‘the Government of the Republic of the Sudan’ and the ‘Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army’ (see CPA 2005).

The part of the policy formulation which contains firm decisions is expressed through the deontic use of the legal *shall*. The actions of *respecting*, *developing* and *promoting* are obligatory. This directive is expressed through the deontic use of modal *shall* which is more or less equivalent to *must*. The use of the passive is significant: the policy statement does not specify who will be responsible for *respecting*, *developing* and *promoting* the *indigenous languages*.<sup>2</sup> The presupposition is that it is the responsibility of all people to *respect* local languages, the responsibility of a small expert group to *develop* them, and the responsibility of government to *promote* them. However, the strategic use of the passive enables the agents of these processes to evade responsibility. At the lexical level, the terms *national*, *indigenous* and *language* are collocates, and are part of a lexical set which includes other terms such as *promote* and *develop*. Collocates in the language of politics consolidate and mutually reinforce the political proposition. For example, the ideological stance that Sudan is made up of many nationalities, which is the position of the SPLM/A (see Garang 1992:127), relies strategically on the political discourses of ‘linguistic authenticity’ (e.g., indigenous languages) and nationalism (e.g., as national languages) as a strategy to claim the right to power-sharing (in the Sudan) for subjugated groups. As we mentioned above the NLP is an organic element of the text of the Protocol of Power Sharing.

The second policy statement (2.8.2) defines the status of Arabic as a dominant language in the Sudan without explicitly using the word dominant. Clearly, the field of discourse of the statement is the status of Arabic, which acts as a preparatory statement for differences in the legal arrangements of languages. This suggests hierarchically structured relations of power between a group whose language is widely spoken and other groups whose languages are less spoken in the Sudan. The categorical assertion of the status of Arabic is expressed through the epistemic use of non-modal present tense *is*. The dominant distribution of Arabic is textually realized by the use of euphemism: the expression *widely spoken* is euphemism for *dominant*. Euphemism is used to make things appear more positive than they otherwise might be; after all, referring to a language as dominant in the discourse of linguistic human rights conjures images of other languages being abandoned and therefore facing extinction.

Implicit in the *widely spoken* euphemism is the subtle claim that Arabic is a common language and therefore a unifying factor which renders all other differences negligible or of secondary importance. However, the elevation of Arabic seems to be a construction trying to play down regional and material differences. In the Sudan there are variously practical varieties and registers of Arabic which are socio-economically and regionally distributed (e.g., Khartoum Arabic in the central north vs. Juba Arabic in the southern periphery). However, it is

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that passivization is a key feature of this type of text (i.e., unmarked).

‘the political acceptance of such a construction’ (Pelinka 2007:134) that makes Arabic an issue.

As already stated, central to the second statement in the NLP is the status of Arabic as a dominant language, indicated by the phrase, *the widely spoken national language* (the language of wider communication). Williams (1992:127) points out that the expression is a depoliticized manner of referring to a single dominant language, hence ‘[w]hat is labeled the “language of wider communication” is little more than an agency of ideological control which facilitates world domination’. The use of the definite article *the* is significant. In this particular policy statement it implies that the spread of Arabic is specific—a fact recognized by both the writer and the potential reader of this language policy. However, the use of the definite article also signals that the reference is to a specific and unique instance of the concept; in this case, a unique variety of Arabic which presumably is the standard variety. Even if Arabic is widely spoken, there are many different varieties of Arabic which may be indicative of socio-economic differences. For any specific language, ‘social and political diversity exists within that language’ (Pelinka 2007:136). Hence the use of the definite article reduces the complexity of the many differences within Arabic.

The third policy statement focuses on ‘the fiction of language equality’ (ibid.) or parity of status between English and Arabic in the Sudan, at least in higher education. At the level of status-planning, this language policy statement assigns both Arabic and English *equal* official status with respect to higher education (bilingualism) and government business. But this legal equality of status is a *fiction* because there is a ranking order of languages already in existence: Arabic is *widely spoken* and a *major language* which suggests that Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic) and English are not of equal importance in the Sudan, although in terms of textual meaning, the use of English and Arabic in higher education is mandatory. Again, the mandatory nature of the use of these two languages is reflected through the deontic use of the legal *shall*, and the actors or players responsible for the implementation of this language policy are not explicitly stated.

The terms *major*, *national*, *language*, *Arabic*, *higher education* are part of the same lexical set referred to above in the analysis of the first and second policy statement. There is also a semantic relation between Arabic as a *widely spoken language* (second statement), and Arabic as a *major language* (third statement) which evidentially carries a particular experiential view of this language. The terms *widely* and *major* are euphemism for *dominating/dominant*. The sociolinguistic domination by Arabic of *indigenous* languages is textually disguised and reproduced by exploiting the lexical structure in the organization of the language policy statements. The rewording and emphasis of the status of Arabic point to a preoccupation with a particular aspect of the sociolinguistic order in the Sudan.

The third policy statement in the NLP is a compound sentence consisting of a matrix clause with an embedded subordinate clause. The punctuation marks (e.g., syntactic markers of subordinate relations) and the thematic organization of the third policy statement are ideologically significant. The subordinate phrase (*a major language at the national level*) is a re-rendition of the dominant status of Arabic stated in the second policy statement (*the widely spoken national language in the*



*Sudan*). Subordination is used in the third policy statement to place different emphasis on two ideas in one sentence: the equal status of Arabic and English as well as the dominance of Arabic at national level. The subordinate phrase *as a major language at the national level* is not the theme of the sentence. It is kept in the background and can be deleted without disturbing the semantic equilibrium of the sentence, which emphasizes the equal status of English and Arabic. Yet its inclusion suggests that the implied parity of status between English and Arabic is just that: implied and in the background, as there is still the view that Arabic is dominant. Subordination is therefore used to control emphasis.

Furthermore, the subordinate phrase in the third policy statement can act as a rationalization for selecting Arabic as an official language, because it is *a major language* in the Sudan. There is no rationalization given for extending the same official recognition to English. It is not qualified by any evaluative words to justify its selection as an official working language, opening the door for a range of possible interpretations. Some interpreters of the policy may construe English as a *neutral language* in the social struggle between the two forces (the NCP and the SPLM/A). Yet this interpretation is implausible for two reasons: the Northern nationalist parties including the NCP strategically viewed English as an ‘antilingual’ (in terms of Halliday 1978:154) to the linguistic policies of Arabicization. Hence English is not a neutral language. In the colonial Southern Policy there was a preference for English and local languages as a form of resistance to the nationalist discourse of Arabicization. The colonial Southern Policy acts as one of the intertextual contexts for rendering intelligible the cause behind the officialization of English in the NLP; for southerners, English is historically part of the struggle against any linguistic neo-colonization.

The ranking order of languages which often reflects a ‘hierarchy of power’ (Pelinka 2007:141) is addressed in the fourth policy statement (2.8.4). The use of an additional local language as an official language at the regional level suggests that although the NLP is based on linguistic diversity, as emphasized in the first policy statement, this is not based on equality amongst all languages. Instead a hierarchical ranking order is proposed. The fourth policy statement grants the regional states<sup>3</sup> the right to use an additional local language as an official working language. The granting of this permission is realized deontically through the use of the modal auxiliary *may* (what is possible). The lexical organization of the statement and the terms *Arabic*, *English*, *language*, *official*, *working*, and *national* are part of the same set of semantic fields which are an integral part of the language of politics.

In 2.8.5, the particle *either* in the policy document refers to Arabic and/or English, and not indigenous languages. There is a prohibition imposed on the use of indigenous languages which suggests the hegemonic position attributed to *mainly* Arabic and (less so) English at the level of sub-national government. By creating hegemonic space for English and Arabic, this policy statement effectively reduces ‘space for small languages, small language communities and the identities and communities they make’ (Lo Bianco 2009:114). In this sense, the statement can be said to reassert hegemony in favor of Arabic and English above the indigenous

<sup>3</sup> Sudan is composed of 25 states.

languages. Thus the policy statement is a written directive which performs the speech act of imposing a prohibition against linguistic discrimination and this prohibition is expressed through the deontic use of *shall not* (in the legal use of 'shall'). The NLP endorses the positions of *language-as-right* (but a contextualized right) and *language-as-resource* (Ruiz 1984). The officialization of a local language(s) at the regional state level is based on the view of vernaculars in positive terms as 'resources' that can be mobilized to serve the concerned polity. By contrast, the state policies of Arabicization, unsurprisingly, conceptualize linguistic diversity as an obstruction to the nationalist project of building an Arab nation in the Sudan.

### Naivasha language policy: the politics of language

The lexical organization of the first policy statement reflects the rhetorical strategy of vagueness which is characteristic of the language of politics. For instance, it is unclear how a language can be *respected* and yet this is consonant with discourses of linguistic human rights and linguistic citizenship. There are also presuppositions or assumptions of various types. The expression *indigenous languages* is an existential presupposition in that local varieties of communication are *languages* in the sociolinguistic sense of the term, and are *indigenous* to the Sudan. This way of texturing status-planning decisions is commonsensical but it can also be ideological. The point is that evaluations, whether explicit or implicit, can be viewed as 'a sort of halfway house between statements and demands' (Fairclough 2003:112). Yet this interpretation relies on a specific understanding of the term *indigenous* and a detailed examination of the socio-historical relationship between the south and the north. The term *indigenous* is in itself a source of ambiguity since it opens a complex web of possibilities of interpretation. For example, is Arabic an indigenous language in the Sudan? There are some scholars who argue that it is not (e.g., James 2008). However, as English has become indigenous to Africa, so has Arabic. Communities in the Sudan have appropriated the language and made it their own to the extent that it has become one of the 'local' languages in the Sudan.

Although the meaning of the word *indigenous* is vague in legal documents of international and regional instruments such as the African Union, there is a consensus on the right of 'indigenous' people to 'external self-determination' (for a discussion and critique see Ajulo 1997; May 2001). The fact that southern Sudan has been granted the right to external self-determination through a referendum points to the political instrumentality and the ideological implications of the notion of 'indigeness' in the language policy. The way the term *indigenous* is used in the NLP is therefore not desultory but rather intertextual and compatible with the international legal discourse on the rights of indigenous people.

More significantly, the term *indigenous* was part of the colonial discourse of the Southern Policy in the Sudan (1920–1946). The main objective of the Southern Policy was to construct the *south* and the *north* of Sudan as separate political entities. To achieve this project, the policy involved the construction of languages,

(re)creation of tribal boundaries, and racial typology of people in both the south and the north. This is evident in the following extract from the Memorandum on the British policy in Southern Sudan (the Southern Policy) in which the term *indigenous* is mentioned (For full text see Beshir 1968; Abdel-Rahim 1965):

The policy of the Government in the Southern Sudan is to build up a series of self-contained racial and tribal units with structure and organisation based, to whatever extent the requirements of the equity and good government permit, upon *indigenous* customs, traditional usage, and beliefs ... Apart from the fact that the restriction of Arabic is an essential feature of the general scheme it must not be forgotten that Arabic, being neither the language of the governing nor the governed, will progressively deteriorate. The type of Arabic at present spoken provides signal proof of this. It cannot be used as a means of communication on anything but the most simple matters, and only if it were first unlearned and then relearned in a less crude form and adopted as the language of instruction in the schools could it fulfill the growing requirements of the future. The local vernaculars and English, on the other hand, will in every case be the language of one of the two parties conversing and one party will therefore always be improving the other (our emphasis) (*The British Policy in the Southern Sudan*, cited in Abdel-Rahim 1965:20–23).

Within the colonial language planning context, the term *indigenous* was indexical (Silverstein 2003) of the southern *indigenous customs* including languages. The postcolonial discourse of the NLP on *indigenous languages* is intertextual with the colonial discourse of the Southern Policy. In other words, there is a historical continuity between the NLP and colonial Southern Policy with respect to the discourse of linguistic indigeneity. In light of this strong historical trajectory of the term *indigenous*, an apt interpretation of the phrase *indigenous languages* in the NLP is that it is a re-indexicalization of the *southern* identity vis-à-vis the *northern* one. The NLP as political discourse is shaped by the historical relationships between the south and the north of Sudan as competing constructs.

The immediate question is, why is the term *national* repeated in juxtaposition with Arabic in the second statement, since it is already mentioned in the first statement in collocation with *indigenous languages*? This lexical repetition of the word *national* in the NLP is ideological and asserts the aforementioned interpretation in respect of the first statement (that *indigenous* designates southern languages). This statement is a confirmation of the current state of affairs: Arabic is a medium of wider communication (i.e., a lingua franca), since it dominates the official functional domains including education, legislature, business transactions and political debating and deliberations across communities who primarily speak mutually incomprehensible languages.

The dominant language ideologies underlying the (colonially constructed) relationship between Arabic and Islam mean that if the status of Arabic was to be challenged, the status of Islam would, ipso facto, be challenged as well. The implied message is therefore one of social and linguistic security sent to supporters of this ideology that the CPA would do no harm to their language or religious status

in the Sudan.<sup>4</sup> Put differently, the first policy statement asserts the *African* character of the country's national identity, while the second one asserts the *Arabic/Arab* identity of the same country. The two policy statements encapsulate the dual and sometimes dueling identities in the Sudan (Sharkey 2008).

The policy statement that Arabic is the *national* language points to a particular ideological stance. It is intertextual with the 1998 National Constitution language policy of the NCP. So we have two schemes of classification of the discursive social order in the Sudan, each based on a specific ideological view. The first scheme (of the SPLM/A) refers to the linguistic human rights of all social groups in the Sudan and demands an equal social position with respect to their 'African identity', while the second scheme (of the NCP) indicates that local languages are not functionally equal to Arabic (i.e., not widely spoken). In other words, two forms of identities are textualized in the first two statements: the first sentence projects an African identity on Sudan (this view is mainly held by the SPLM/A), while the second sentence projects a dominant Arab identity. These antagonistic ideological representations are discursively encoded in the NLP. Hence, one can argue that the discourse of the language policy is structurally a site of, and pragmatically has a stake in, the ideological struggle between the socialist principle that conceptualizes Sudan in pluralist terms, and the nationalist principle that frames Sudan as a monolingual nation-state. There are two ideological frameworks: the *left* (represented by the socialist ideology of the SPLM/A) and the *right* (represented by the Islamic nationalism of the NCP) struggling over the definition of the sociolinguistic order in the Sudan.

The social relations between the NCP and the SPLM/A are textually inscribed in the relational values of the words of the policy statements (e.g., *indigenous, national, widely spoken, major*, etc.). This overlapping and at times mutually exclusive lexicon suggests that language policy is an arena of social struggle between the *south* and the *north* over the identification of the discursive character of the Sudan. As Deng (1995:4) points out, 'in the Sudanese context, the more the North asserts its Arabness, the more the South asserts Africanness as a counter-identity'. The historical conflict over national identity between the south and north that inherently incorporates a conflict of power relations is enacted in the linguistic and structural organization of the NLP.

The term *official* in the third policy statement of the NLP is part of political-speak. There are two conceptions of the term *official language* in the literature. The first conception defines official language with reference to authoritative policy statements. The second sense identifies official language by reference to use in specific domains such as education and media (see Cobarrubias 1983; Keller 1983; Ruiz 1990). In the third policy statement, the term *official* refers axiomatically to the authoritative declaration of the equal use in specific domains of English and Arabic. The equal use of Arabic and English in official domains, particularly in the northern Sudan has yet to materialize.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Note that the Machakos Protocol is a compromise between Sharia (Islamic law) and right to self-determination for the south (see Young 2005).

<sup>5</sup> As we write we are only 5 months away from the southern referendum to be held on 9th of January 2011.

Nonetheless, Cobarrubias (1983:43) distinguishes between three types of state with reference to official language: endoglossic (the official language is an *indigenous* language), exoglossic (the official language is an imported or ex-colonial language), and mixed state (official language status is granted to both an indigenous and an imported language). Thus the third language policy statement shows that Sudan is of a *mixed* type: Arabic is interpreted by its speakers as an *indigenous language* (in the north) and English as an ex-colonial language.

However, Cobarrubias's category of official languages imposes a deterministic and fixed typcasting of languages into endoglossic (or indigenous) and exoglossic (or colonial/outside). First, it seems not to take into consideration the dynamic and social constructedness of official language situations in countries such as the Sudan or African states in general. Secondly, if an ex-colonial language has undergone a strategic process of appropriation or Ausbau planning, then its modified form can become the property of its speakers (see Joseph 2006:54). Historically, in the southern view Arabic is an ex-colonial language in the Sudan (exoglossic in Cobarrubias' 1983 terms). However, Arabic has undergone a process of linguistic appropriation in the sense that it has been conceived of not only as a native tongue but also a marker of collective identities in the different parts of the Sudan including the south (Miller 2003).

The proposal to have English and Arabic as official languages, within a federal state, is not a novelty. The Federal Party was a postcolonial southern party established by Ezboni Mondiri, who was a graduate of the Faculty of Arts, the University of Khartoum. It included in its manifesto a draft constitution for a federal state in the Sudan (Bob and Wassara 1989:306–307; Sanderson and Sanderson 1981:353–354), demanding recognition of both English and Arabic as official languages. The third policy statement in the NLP can rightly be interpreted as a product of the long social and armed struggle of the south for a federal system within which English and Arabic are equally weighted as official languages. Thus, the NLP can be viewed as a discursive and interdiscursive hybridization of two historically conflicting ideologies in the Sudan (secular socialism by the SPLM/A vs. religious nationalism by the NCP). The main thrust of the argument is that the selection of English as an official working language in the NLP is not purely instrumental but also ideological. Within the context of the NLP, English is undergoing a dual process of decolonization and indigenization particularly in the southern Sudan.

In respect of the fourth policy statement, federalism is proposed as a specific structural system appropriate for the implementation of the language policy. The suitable political system in multilingual contexts is decentralization,<sup>6</sup> federalism or loose association (Wright 2004:70) since it encourages linguistic pluralism and multiculturalism. In the Protocol of Power-Sharing, the NCP and the SPLM/A signatories put it bluntly that:

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<sup>6</sup> For the distinction between 'centralized' and 'decentralized' language planning see Tollefson (1981).

[The Parties are] convinced that decentralization and empowerment of all levels of government are cardinal principles of effective and fair administration of the country. (CPA 2005:11)

However, researchers in political science place federations into two major categories: national federations and multinational/multiethnic federations (Anderson 2008; O’Leary 2001). This raises an important question regarding the nature and type of federalism advocated in the NLP. Mono-national federalism is compatible with Gellner’s (1983) theorizing on nationalism as ‘one nation one culture’. O’Leary (2001:284) points out that ‘integrationist nation-builders in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean have distrusted federalism precisely because it provides secessionist opportunities’. Multinational federalism, on the other hand, seeks ‘to express, institutionalise and protect at least two national or ethnic cultures, often on a permanent basis’ (ibid., 280). To understand how these various discourses of federalism are played out in the material reality in the Sudan we have to broadly examine the official policy of Arabicization of the NCP.

The NCP started the Arabicization process of higher education in the Sudan by a top-down presidential decree in 1990 (At the time the conflict in the south was intense). This should not be surprising, for all nationalist linguistic policies in the Sudan have been imposed by various centralist (national) governments rather than developed systematically as an output of democratic deliberation and consultation. The only type of federal political system, if any at all, that is clearly compatible with the nationalist (statist) policies of Arabicization is mono-national federalism (Anderson 2008). In this federal arrangement, as Turabi (the Islamist leader of the regime in its earlier years) stated, ‘minorities in the south of Sudan are to have autonomy, immunities and freedom in the model state of the Prophet, as did the Jews at the time of Muhammad’ (cited in Cantori and Lowrie 1992:53). This would turn the nationalist project of the NCP into one that is federal in form and centralized unitary in content. This type of national federation was part and parcel of the NCP’s proselytizing discourse of building an Islamic nation-state in the 1990s under the banner of *al-mashru’ al-ḥaḍāri* (the Civilization Project), and it is incompatible with the SPLM/A, whose ideology belongs to a completely different philosophy of federalism. The kind of federal political system that is advocated by the SPLM/A and other social groups is a multiethnic or multinational federalism that unites ‘people who seek the advantages of membership of a common political unit, but differ markedly in descent, language and culture’ (Forsyth 1989:4). So, the congruent context for the implementation of the new language policy is a type of structural system that rightly adopts multinational (or pluralist) federalism within a secular and democratic political framework in which power is radically restructured not between ‘the south’ and the ‘the north’ but between the centre and all peripheries (the east and the west are included) (see Garang 1992).

The new language policy can be said to apply, using the relevant technical terminology, the ‘territoriality and personality principle’ of language planning (Kloss 1971). At its simplest, the territoriality principle indicates that the choice of official languages varies from region to region in terms of local conditions. For example, the western region could choose X as an official language according to its

local conditions, thus the selected official language in that region may not be the same as the official language in the eastern or southern regions of Sudan. The personality principle signifies that English and Arabic are the official languages at the national level. This personality principle is asserted by the last policy statement in that it grants Arabic and/or English speakers the 'right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of language' (for a detailed discussion of this type of language right see Macías 1979; McDougal et al. 1976).

The discourse of language rights embedded in the fifth statement and the assumption that people are unaware of their rights is misplaced. This view of language rights is an illustration of top-down planning by educational policy makers on behalf of language speakers. Tollefson (2002:328), for instance, notes that 'while professional linguists, teachers, and other language specialists can contribute in many ways to the success of language programmes, the broad involvement of parents and other community members is critical'. May (2001:167) also reminds us that 'the fate of a language cannot be borne on the back of education alone'. Scholars who focus on the wider matrix of social relations view schools more as agents of social reproduction than of social transformation (Pennycook 2001:121). A significant caveat should be added here. We are not arguing that language policy and planning should be a completely bottom-up practice; there is always going to be a top-down element in the planning process.

Part of the discourse of the NLP is undoubtedly highly essentializing (e.g., indigenous languages), yet this essentialization is not intended to mark languages themselves as different, but rather the speakers of those languages. Thus, the NLP is about a conflict over socio-economic issues (e.g., right to self-determination) between the *south* and the *north*, constructed and managed on a linguistic terrain.

In short, the socio-economic struggle between the two political parties which is largely discursive is encoded textually in the NLP. The construction of a new social order of indexicality (Silverstein 2003; Blommaert 2005), as part of the project of *The New Sudan* requires, in our view, two things: firstly a situated understanding of the various local discursive practices of the people, and secondly a bottom-up engagement in language planning processes.

### Critical reflections and way forward

This paper has provided a textual analysis of the NLP using CDA as an analytic and interpretative framework. CDA has been used to analyze the ways in which the socio-political orders (colonial and/or postcolonial) mutually determined the semiotic structure of the policy text. The analysis has shown that the NLP as political discourse is shaped by the historical relationships between the south and north of Sudan which are imagined as mutually exclusive social entities. The analysis has also shown that there is a high degree of compatibility between the proposed structural system and the discourse of the language policy. This compatibility is achieved at the status planning level, and its implementation at the practical level remains to be seen. The CPA has given the south the right to self-determination through a referendum which took place on the 9th of January 2011.

The south had the option to secede or to remain united with the north. The referendum result led to the secession of the southern Sudan as a separate nation-state. The partial or lack of implementation of the language policy, particularly in the northern part, may have severely shaped access to the discourse of rights embedded in the peace accord (the CPA requires the rendering of the peace accord into local languages).

However, the implementation of linguistic political statements such as language policies is not, on its own, a guarantee of the spatializing unity or disintegration of social groups. The collateral damage of the very semiotic configuration of the NLP viewed as a postcolonial recontextualizing discourse of colonial conceptualization of language needs to be researched. One way of doing this is by developing critical awareness of local practices of various groups since it is the basis on which any just language policy in such a country as the Sudan should be established.

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