

Abstract

This study assesses language policies and other factors that affected the promotion and development of Kiswahili in the different epochs of time in Uganda. This assessment is based on Uganda's historical background regarding the search for a national language that has been characterised by different language policies across different historical epochs: the pre-colonial period (1840-1894), the colonial period (1894-1962), and the post-colonial period (1962-2019). This study used a blend of three theoretical approaches to language policy and planning (LPP). These are the Historical-structural model, the Neo-classical Model and Language Management Theory (LMT). A narrative technique embedded in a historical design enabled the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Data was generated using interviews, Focus Group Discussion, document analysis and a survey questionnaire. Data was analysed using thematic analysis, content analysis and descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that Kiswahili growth has been dependent on numerous language policies stretching from the pre, during and post-colonial epochs. The constant shift in cultural and political leadership meant that the sitting regime determined the language policies that favoured their leadership or political ideology. As a result, the promotion and development of Kiswahili was affected negatively because the missionaries, colonialists and sitting governments in the post-independent period did not put effective strategies to actualize Kiswahili's growth and development. Much as the most of the respondents indicated that Kiswahili is relevant in Uganda, they however, expressed fears of perceptions and attitudes, cultural nationalism, lack of strong political will and ambivalence in language policies towards Kiswahili promotion and development in Uganda. The study recommends that if Kiswahili is to effectively develop and become the 2nd official, National language or a Lingua franca, Uganda, should adopt a language policy model with explicit implementation guidelines that would streamline Kiswahili in all domains and for all purposes.