The Interface of Language and History: The Case of Shona in Zimbabwe

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Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The article investigates the interface between language and history. It uses the Shona language and history as a case study. It endeavors to answer the question as to whether we get language in history or vice versa, that is, history in language. The article argues that the two are inseparably intertwined so much that it is virtually impossible to separate them. It posits the view that history is the prime mover of changes in any language through the addition of new lexemes to delineate new items, perceptions and attitudes ushered into a community by historical occurrences while language acts as a repository of these historical events. Language is therefore a source of history as aspects of the historical past can be deciphered from it. The article further argues that in addition to being a source of the history of its speakers, language is a source of its own history as well that could be derived from it through comparative reconstruction.

Key words: Language change; interface; history; Shona; comparative reconstruction; perceptions; acculturation.

INTRODUCTION

Language change is attributable to a plethora of sociolinguistic factors that are all embelmed in history. Sociolinguistics is a branch of study that looks at language in relation to society. It deals with the interrelationships between language and society (Yule, 1996:222). Which means that major changes in society have some ripple effects on the form of its language? They change it as well, in most cases by bringing into it new lexemes to delineate new items, objects, perceptions and attitudes that were non-existent in it before. However, all major changes in any society that have a bearing on the form of its language are in one way or the other attributable to some historical event or occurrence. It is these that enrich the language by borrowing words from other languages through acculturation and the coinage of words to designate new objects and experiences that may appear foreign to them. However, the new words that enter a language as a result of a historical event will always have in one way or the other some association with that event. In this way, history enriches the language while language in turn preserves that history in its vocabulary. Therefore, language and history are mutually dependent on one another. This relationship is inseparable and dates back to the genesis of humanity.

Objectives of the study

To establish

- That history is the prime mover of changes in any language.
- That language is the storage of historical happenings.
- The historical link of the Shona people with West, East and Central Africa through language.

Justification of the Study

In Zimbabwe, language and history are two disciplines taught and learnt separately in schools, colleges and universities. Language is taken to be an inborn means of communication within the individual while history are happenings of the past that have some bearing on the present and the future. Not much research has been done on
the interface between the two in terms of how they mutually influence one another, which is the subject of this research.

Historical linguistics, which Lehmann (1997) defines as a discipline that studies language at every point of its history endeavors to establish this relationship but then, as the definition suggests, it is a linguistic discipline. Its focus is on language aspects that have evolved over a historical period, what Yule (1996:222) regards as diachronic changes as these are viewed from a historical perspective of change through time. Though aspects of the historical past are hinted at in the study of this linguistic discipline, they are of interest to the linguist in as far as they illuminate the structure and relatedness of the languages of today.

This article attempts to link the two disciplines, that is, history and language deemed separate by most scholars. It seeks to establish that history is the prime mover of changes within a language, enriching it in the process while language acts as its repository. In simple terms, the article argues that language is an affluent source of historical data and as such historians and anthropologists should also engage in serious language study in the same way as they do in oral traditions and documents of the past, written or unwritten, to get a glimpse of the history of a people. Studies of languages as noted by Parker and Pfukani (1975:1) “can then help us to trace the movement and intermingling of peoples, and can provide us with a means of grouping or classifying people.” Their identity, point of origin and or history could then be established.

Methods of research

The qualitative research paradigm has been used in data gathering. The approach is an amalgamation of an array of research methods that include ethnography, field study, case studies and phenomenology.

Ethnography is a qualitative investigative research paradigm whose focus is a cultural setting (Leady, 1997; Chisaka, 2000; Denscombe, 2010; Williman, 2011; Strauss, 2008). The Shona language and cultural situation has been used as a case study of all other languages and situations throughout the world. The researchers decided to focus their inquiry on the Shona language and situation as a single entity or phenomenon because it is within their experience. They have been able to make observations of their own social cultural and historical reality. This approach normally goes hand in glove with phenomenology, which according to Leady (1997) investigates the perspectives and views of a given group of people about their own social reality.

Interviews and discussions on the subject have also been carried out with people to establish how the Shona view their own situation with regards to that of other African people. Language structures as used in their social context, in discourse analysis have been analysed as well. Swahili and Yoruba speaking students at Africa University in Mutare have been consulted on some words whose semantics are in no way different from those one finds in Shona. This helped the researchers in their inquiry as they dealt with first-hand information providers on the subject. Written authorities on the languages investigated in this study have also been consulted to authenticate the findings on the subject. This is so because no research is completely independent of others on similar areas of study. Differences only exist in areas of focus and emphasis and on new knowledge generated in the process.

History and Changes in the Shona Language

Change is inherent in any language. It is a characteristic that is imbedded in language and is natural. However, an innumerable number of social factors are contributive to this. But history seems to be the major cause of these changes or variations as major historical events in the life of humanity bring with them new lexemes that have a strong lasting imprint on the structure of that language. They enrich it. The Shona language has benefited a great deal in its long history of cultural and linguistic contact with colonialism. Through superstratum influence, the Shona have been compelled by circumstances to borrow and phonologize terms from the super languages, Portuguese and English to designate new technological and commercial objects ushered into their communities by this colonial historical phase of their existence.

The extent of Portuguese commercial and political relations with the Shona-speaking people from the beginning of the sixteenth century until the close of the nineteenth century, though “masked by an African face and further obscured by British colonization, remain discernible” in the Shona language today (Ellert, 1993:173). Proof of Portuguese contact with the Shona people in pre-colonial Zimbabwe “is more pronounced along the eastern border, amongst the Korekore people of the north-east, Njamba, Zezuru and the Manyika and Ndau people of Manicaland province which borders Mozambique, although they are certainly not restricted to these regions” (ibid:173). Portuguese influence therefore could not be felt among the Karanga and the Ndebeles because they were further away from their area of origin, Mozambique. It was during this period of commercial trade with the pre-colonial Shona that language contact and borrowing by the Shona became a reality. Some of the borrowed words have survived to this day and appear as if they have been part of the Shona vocabulary since time immemorial.
According to Ellert (1973), the word *Zimbabwe* is a deviation from the Portuguese word ‘zimbaoe’, a term used in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese to refer to a population center or a chief’s residence built with stones. The Shona corrupted this word to *Zimbabwe* and applied it to the Great Zimbabwe monuments. The Portuguese could not have borrowed the term from the Shona as they in no way had contact with the Great Zimbabwe ruins. Their area of influence extended from the Eastern Border of the country right up to Wedza, and not in areas were these ruins lie.

Other Shona words adopted from the Portuguese as early as the sixteenth century are *bakayau* (bacalhau)-dried fish; *mbatata* (batata)-potato; *bhanana* (banana)-banana; *kachasu* (cachaca)-alcoholic spirit; *mufarinya* (farinha)-cassava; *nanazi* (ananas)-pineapple; *vhinyu* (vinho)-palmwine; *jari* (chale)-shaw-rug; *somboreiro* (somboreiro)-umbrella; *tizora* (tessoura)-scissors; *pinyoro* (penhor)-pledge; *feso* (fusso)-matches; *pasika* (casaco)-easter passover; *vhakachaka* (vacacao)-go on holiday and *pinyoro* (penhor)-pledge. All these words are of Portuguese origin and their adoption by the Shona dates back to their interaction with the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some of the terms have been elevated by the Shona to family and clan names as in Dhiniero (dinheiro)-gold money; Rupiya (rupia)-twenty cent piece; Tizora (tessoura)-scissors and Sinyoro (senhor)-Lord/Sir (Ellert, 1973).

An analysis of these adoptives clearly reveals the history of interaction between the Shona and the Portuguese. Most of the terms refer to the items that the Portuguese brought with them for trade with the Shona. The word *sinyoro*, a distortion of the Portuguese ‘senhor’ which meant a respected person is now a totemic name for a branch of people who descended from the Rozvi and reside mostly in the Wedza district where the Portuguese retreated back to Mozambique after challenges from the British.

The history of contact with the British has also ushered into the Shona language an innumerable number of English words phonologized in the process to Shona. Some of these are *machisa* (matches), *shurushuru* (solution), *penzura* (pencil), *bhuku* (book), *jekiseni* (injection), *piritsi* (pill), *shangu* (shoes), *redhiyo* (radio), *poto* (pot), *tirauzi* (trousers) and many others not easy to mention here. The Shona language is fast loosing some of its traditional vocabulary now being regarded as archaic as people prefer to use these adoptives from English. Borrowing terms through superstrutum influence has been necessitated by need. Colonialism brought with it new technological items that were previously non-existent among the Shona. As a result, devising new terms to designate them by the Shona proved a tough hurdle to surmount. The adoption of these terms from the super languages became the best way forward.

The Shona also had cultural and linguistic contacts with the Nguni dating as far back as the early days of the entry of the Pioneer column in the country. According to Chimhundu (2002:41), “during the prelude to European occupation and during the early days of European settlement, Nguni and Sotho people came with Europeans and worked for them as domestic servants, evangelists and interpreters.” These are believed to have brought into the Shona language Nguni words either directly or indirectly through Fanigalo, “an artificial Nguni based contact language, which the Europeans also imposed on all African workers in the country” (ibid:41). It was also during this period that the Shona migrated to South Africa seeking employment in the Rand Mines. On their return home they brought with them some Nguni linguistic terms that they had incorporated into the Shona language, thereby widening their vocabulary.

Some of the nouns adopted directly from Nguni during this period of the Shona’s cultural, historical and linguistic contact with the Nguni as noted by Chimhundu (2002:38-40) are *mulana* (young person), *mudhara* (old man), *ngarakata* (strong animal/person), *ndururani* (trickster), *gweta* (lawyer), *jaha* (young man of marriageable age), *mambara* (mischievous person), *mbaura* (heater), *mugwara* (crowbar), *sando* (hammer), *mbongoro* (donkey), *chingwa* (bread), *njanji* (railway line), *mugodhi* (mine), *mwadhi* (letter), *dhuze* (near), and *mbombera* (mixed gathering).

Transitive verbs adopted as well in the process are *chisa* (iron), *bhara* (write), *chaya* (beat), *dhonza* (pull), *fundu* (learn), *vhara* (close), *vhura* (open), *chaera’tyaira* (drive), *kuta* (miss), *raura* (fish), *kuza* (urge), *zama* (try), *hora* (earn), and *fakaza* (witnes). The intransitive verbs that also entered the Shona in the same manner are *bhuruvara* (fae/wear out), *shumaira* (preach), *chata* (wed), *dhivana* (mix), *rivara* (be absent minded), *mhan’ara* (report) and *jomba* (breakdown). These are also believed to be indirectly borrowed by the Shona from other languages via English, Nguni, Fanigalo and Sotho as in *gwava* < E: guava; *pijama* < pyjamas < Persian: pachjama; *ngirozi* < E: angel-lat< Greek: *bhudhi* (brother) < Nguni <Afrikaans; boetie and chikwereti (debt) <F: sikweli<Zulu: isikweli.

It is not possible for us here to list all the words that have entered the Shona language through its contact with Nguni as they are too many. Most of these do not appear foreign when viewed by ordinary speakers of the language. However, it is possible for scholars to have a glimpse of the history of the Shona’s cultural, historical and linguistic contact with the Nguni through an analysis of this language that acts as a storage house for this history.

The history of the struggle for Zimbabwean independence is noticeable in some Portuguese words that are still part of the Shona vocabulary as in *abhasha* (abaixo) meaning ‘down with;’ *komuredhi* (camarada) for ‘friend;’ *shefu* (chef)
or ‘boss;’ vhivha (viva) for ‘long live’ and nada ‘nothing’. At home the war coined lexemes that suited the period. Nouns like chimbvido (errand girl), mujibha (errand boy) and makabichi (beef from cattle stolen from white farms) graced the linguistic scene.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic that has devastated humanity also has its fair share of the enrichment of the Shona language (Grand et al., 2010). New terms to designate the virus and its victims have been coined by the Shona. Terms like chakauya (that which came from somewhere), chemadhirezi/chavakadzi/chemadzimai (a disease of the womenfolk), chipedzamiviri (that which weakens the body), chebonde (that which is got through sexual intercourse), chirairanhaka (that which makes the infected write their will) and many others, innumerable to mention here entered the Shona vocabulary as a result (Grand et al., 2010). It is this historical phase in humanity’s life that has ushered in new lexemes into the Shona language thereby enriching it. But then, this is a passing phase in human history that will be remembered or recovered by future generations through an analysis of these lexemes in the language. The words will remind future generations of this phase in human history whose traces will be ingrained in the language.

The history of the Zimbabwean economic collapse will remain an indelible aspect of Zimbabwean history forever. However, this history has given birth to a number of terms that serve as a reminder of this phase in our history. The term hwindi has arisen to refer to a bus/combi loader who charges a fee for a service. The term is a reminder of the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy to almost irreversible levels that loading combis/buses had become an alternative lucrative source of employment. At Chiyadzwa, a diamond field in Manicaland province, illegal mining continued unabated as it was alleged that some top government officials were benefitting out of the chaos that characterized the mining activities. On the language side, linguistic terms like gweja (illegal diamond miner), ngoda (diamond), mutaka (dug-out soil with diamond pebbles), korokoza (one who earns a living the hard way), gwejerini (illegal female miner), gwejana (child of an illegal miner) and herereswa (being troubled by the police) emerged. These linguistic terms contain this history of the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy. Whenever spoken, they remind people of this historical phase in the lives of the people.

The Zimbabwean land reform programme and opposition politics have also mothered linguistic terms in which their own history is stored as well. The linguistic terms jambanja (chaos) and murambatsvina (a refusal of dirt) arose. Jambanja came as a result of the chaos that characterized the land reform programme in the year 2000, with the landless peasants taking the law into their own hands to forcibly displace white commercial farmers who owned much of the Zimbabwean land. The ruling party at the time, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front turned a blind eye on these farm activities as an indication that it had a hidden hand in them. The term jambanja was also used by supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change party to refer to their clashes with those of the ruling party that were now believed to be the order of the day. Murambatsvina referred to the forcible evacuation by the Zimbabwean government in the year 2000 of unauthorized dwellings in urban areas. The two terms embody the history of land invasions and opposition politics in post-independent Zimbabwe.

When we look at all the terms discussed above, it becomes apparent that history has a long and lasting standing relationship with language as they are a product of some historical event in the lives of the people. History is therefore the progenitor of new linguistic terms in any language as it brings with it new cultural, economic and political experiences previously non-existent among the people. It is the need to designate these experiences by the people that gives birth to these terms. In this way history acts as a stimulant to the linguistic growth of a language while language in turn acts as its repository lest this history goes into extinction. The death of a language therefore implies the death of a people’s history and identity in consequence.

Language, its history and that of its speakers

The Shona are believed to be part of the Bantu family that originated in parts of Western, Eastern and Central Africa and migrated southwards along the Savannah grasslands in search of pasture for their animals (Fortune and Dembetembe, 1996). This history is recoverable from their language, which is not just storage for the history of its speakers, but of its own history as well. It is this history that historical linguists have endeavored to reconstruct through the comparative method, which is a method of reconstructing a parent language from a comparison of its daughter languages (Lehmann, 1997). The form of the parent language is said to be hypothetical and can only be established through an examination of the similarities and differences in the daughter languages believed to have derived from it. Shona hails from the Bantu family of languages and derives from a proto-language, Ur-Bantu whose existence is pure conjecture and can only be reconstructed through a comparison of the cognates (words in related languages that developed from the same word) of its daughter languages.

The fact that a parent language can be reconstructed by merely looking at the cognates of its daughter languages implies that languages like humans belong to families and have genealogical lines and histories of their own. Charles Darwin’s nineteenth century theories of human development also gave birth to those of language and language development as language, like humans, was considered to have a life cycle and to develop according to
evolutionary laws” (ibid: 295). Language is therefore believed to have a genealogical tree and a history that could be traced back to a common ancestor with other languages with similar typological and genealogical features. Historical and comparative linguists of the nineteenth century observed that there are regular sound correspondences in certain languages that made them to conclude that these belonged to a common ancestor and were genetically related.

There are close phonological and lexical correspondences between Shona and most languages in West, East, Central and Southern Africa that evidence the historical link of the speakers of these languages. However, these correspondences are more pronounced with languages in West, East and Central Africa, an indication that Shona must have genetically originated in areas in and around Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Angola and Zaire/Congo and must have migrated southwards through Central Africa and settled in the southern part of the continent now Zimbabwe. Fortune and Dembemetembe (1996) testify to this observation when they say “archeologists have found that large migrations (of the Bantu) took place in the area between the equator and the Vaal River in the period 300 BC and 600 AD.” The tables below illustratively bear testimony to this:

| English | Shona (Zimbabwe) | Kongo (Congo/Zaire) | Kikuyu (Kenya) | Swahili (Tanzania) | Kamba (Kenya) |
|---------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Inside  | -kati           | -kati               | -gati          | -kati             | -kati        |
|         |                 |                     |                |                   |              |

| English | Shamba (Tanzania) | Nyamwezi (Tanzania) | Kwanyama (Angola/Namibia) | Bemba (Zaire/Zambia) | Lumba (Zaire/Zambia) |
|---------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Inside  | -gati            | -gathi              | -okati                    | -kati               | -kati               |
|         |                  |                     |                            |                     |                     |

In the examples above, there is a regular sound correspondence between the cognates /k/ and /g/ as in stems /-kati/ and /-gati/gathi/, all meaning inside or in the middle. The shift in pronunciation from /k/ to /g/ in some of the languages could have been a result of some socio-linguistic factors that were of influence among the speakers of the languages in question. However, it is quite apparent that the proto language from which all the ten languages descended had the cognate /k/ and the stem /-kati/.

In Shona the stem /-nze/ means outside as in panze and kunze of classes 16 and 17 respectively. In Kikuyu it is /-nja/; Swahili, /-ndi/-nde/, Kongo, /-nza/; Kwanyama, /-ndle/. Karerwe (Tanzania), /-nza/-Rwanda, /-nse/ and in Nyamwezi, /-nds/. Among the Herero of Namibia it is /-endje/; Northern Sotho, /-ntle/ while in Southern Sotho it is /-ntle/. All these cognates have similar sounds and lexical correspondences, implying that the languages and their speakers are related historically. The proto form of the stem which means “outside” could have been /-nze/ or /-nds/ as these forms are common in most languages of West, East, Central and Southern Africa. The fact that Shona still has the form /-nds/ is an indication that the language is closely related to the mother language and to the languages of West, East and Central Africa from which the Shona are believed to have originated. Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and Zulu appear somewhat distantly related to the proto language and to Shona as they now have the stem /-ntle/ and /-ndle/ respectively. Their sound and lexical correspondences also testify to the fact that they too have a common history derivable from their cognates which are similar as well.

Other examples of the relatedness of Shona with East, West and Central African languages which posits the hypothesis that the language and its speakers historically descended there could be elucidated by the diagrams below:

**Diagram A**

| English | Shona | Swahili | Kikuyu | Rwanda | Nyamwezi |
|---------|-------|---------|--------|--------|----------|
| In front| -mberi|mbele    | -mbere | -imber | -imbele  |

**Diagram B**

| English | Shona | Swahili | Nguni | Sotho | Kongo | Herero | Bemba |
|---------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| see     | Ona   | ona     | bona  | bona  | muna  | muna   | wona  |
| person  | munhu | mtu     | umuntu| motho | muntu | omuntu | umuntu|

In diagram A, the word for ‘in front’ in proto-Bantu could have been ‘mbere’ as in Kikuyu, Rwanda and Shona. The change of the ‘r’ sound to ‘l’ in other languages could have come as a result of linguistic factors that did not affect Shona, Kikuyu and Rwanda. In diagram B, the proto words for ‘see’ and ‘person’ could have been ‘ona’ and ‘munu’.
respectively since the correspondences in sound, roots and meaning in these words could not have been by chance. However, these slight variations in phonology of the Shona words with those conjectured to be the proto forms are insignificant as they cannot rule out the claim that Shona originated in parts of West, East and Central Africa.

Fortunate and Dembetembe (1996) say that before one can be quite certain that the languages one is comparing are genetically related, one has to rule out borrowing from one to another or by these languages from outside sources. Such words would not be the basic vocabulary of a language, but would be part of its cultural vocabulary which in no way help in the genetic relatedness of languages so as to get to their proto forms. Shared aberrancies or cognates in morphological and lexical form which are not a result of borrowing or chance are an indication that the languages in comparison have a common genetic ancestor (Hock, 1991) and in consequence, a common history.

Mutaka (2000) also compares the different segments of words with the same lexical meaning in Swahili, Zulu, Duala and Pedi, so as to reconstruct words from the original proto-Bantu. If we are to add Shona to the list of these languages as shown below, it becomes clear that Shona has a common history with them though this history appears a bit distant with Duala and Pedi.

|             | English | Shona | Swahili | Zulu | Duala | Pedi | Proto-Bantu |
|-------------|---------|-------|---------|------|-------|------|-------------|
| send        | tuma    | tuma  | thuma   | loma | roma  | tuma |
| three       | tatu    | tatu  | thathu  | ilalo| raro  | tatu |
| cheek       | tama    | tama  | thama   | lama | rama  | tama |

For Mutaka, the segment that appears in most segments is a reconstruction in the ancestor language. The proto-Bantu forms would then be tuma, tatu, and tama respectively as shown above as the correspondences in the roots and meaning of these words could not have been by chance or borrowing. Which means that Shona has a closer common history with Swahili and possibly with Zulu than with Duala and Pedi?

The phonological and lexical correspondences of the languages shown above are evidence of the fact that they are historically related. They have a common origin. Parker and Pfukani (1995) concur with this observation when they say that similarity in languages spoken by people often indicates a common origin, while mixed languages indicate the meeting of people from different origins. Consequently these correspondences indicate that their speakers are historically related as well. There are words in Swahili whose form and meaning are more or less the same with those ones find in Shona. Some of these are pima -measure(Swahili/Shona); mwana-child(Swahili/Shona); baba/papa-father(Swahili/Shona); tete-lean/soft/shacky(Swahili/Shona); mvua(Swahili), mvura(Shona) for water; joto(Swahili), choto(Shona) for fireplace; gonga (Swahili), gogodza (Shona) to knock; fupaja (Swahili), fupa/pfupa (Shona) for femur/bone; nchi (Swahili), vhU (Shona) for land and mwananchi (Swahili), mwanawevhu (Shona) for citizen. This agreement suggests a common origin and history for Swahili and Shona. This relatedness could not have been by mere chance.

Swahili, Shona and Yoruba have loan words from English whose phonological and morphological structures they have adjusted in the same manner to make them conform to their own. In instances of this nature, as Mutaka (2000:282) has noted, strange sounds in the donor language are approximated to the indigenous sound segments with which they have the highest degree of phonetic similarity as shown in the table below:

|             | English | Swahili | Yoruba | Shona | Sounds approximated |
|-------------|---------|---------|--------|-------|---------------------|
| Consonant   | konsonanti | konzonandi |
| x-ray       | ekisirei | ekisirei |        |
| Gender      | jenda   | jenda   |        | g>j   |
| Photo       | foto    | foto    |        | ph>f   |

The “c”, “g”, “x” and “ph” sounds in the words consonant, x-ray, gender and photo have been approximated to the sounds “k”, “k”, “j” and “f” as an in konsonanti/konzonandi, ekisirei, jenda, and foto, sounds quite common in these Bantu languages.
In Swahili, Yoruba and Shona still, like in most Bantu languages, complicated consonant clusters from the donor language, English, may be simplified through the process of epenthesis, that is the insertion of vowels between consonant clusters to enable them fit into the phonology and morphology of these receptor languages. Wherever English has these consonant cluster combinations, pr, gr, nk, st and br, vowels are inserted between them as in:

| English     | Swahili  | Yoruba | Shona       |
|-------------|----------|--------|-------------|
| Programme   | programu | purogiramu |
| Grammar     | girama   | girama |
| Bank        | benki/banki | bengi/bangi |
| Sister      | sisita   | sisita |
| Bread       | buredi   | bhuredhi |

English words that end with consonants when borrowed by Swahili, Shona and Yoruba have vowels inserted to them at the end to make them conform to the phonology of the Bantu languages which requires that every word ends with a vowel as shown in the table below:

| English | Swahili | Yoruba | Shona |
|---------|---------|--------|-------|
| Consonant | ekologia | konsonanti | konzonandi |
| Grammar | girama | girama |
| Ecology | ekisirei | ekoroji |
| x-ray   | pambu |
| Pump    | fokasi |
| Focus   | okisigeni | fokasi |

As noted above, Swahili, Yoruba and Shona adopt and adapt loan words from English in the same way. They basically apply the same rules in this process, which is ample proof to the fact that they have a common origin or history. The Shona therefore, have their history stored in their language as shown in the above comparisons, which have linked Shona with some of the languages of West, East, and Central Africa. The Shona are therefore, genetically linked to West, East and Central Africa. This history is imbedded in the language whose affinity with this part of the African continent is unquestionable.

CONCLUSION

The article has established that history is the prime mover of changes in any language as it gives birth to new lexemes through borrowing and other forms of word-building exercise to delineate new objects or experiences it brings to people. It has shown that the history of colonial contact with the Portuguese and the British has enriched the Shona language as most colonial terms have been adopted and adapted by the Shona out of the need to designate new technological items ushered into their culture by the foreigners. The war of independence and its aftermath, and HIV and AIDS as historical events have also made significant strides in enlarging the Shona vocabulary. However the Shona language has proved to be a storage of this history, as this vocabulary will remain an invaluable source of this history to future generations.

The comparative method used in this analysis has also shown that the Shona language is a source of the history of its speakers and of its own history as well which hails from West, East and Central Africa. The regular correspondences in sound and meaning in the cognates of Shona and most languages in that part of the African continent could not have been by chance or borrowing.

The article therefore concludes by asserting that history and language are undeniably intertwined, as the former is the progenitor of the later while the later is the conserver of the former. It is the contention of this research that language study should be taken seriously at all levels of the education system, as language is an interdisciplinary subject that cuts across most subjects of the education curriculum and should not be studied in isolation.

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