

**A CASE OF A MOTHER TONGUE AND
ANOTHER MOTHER TONGUE IN SCHOOL:
EFFORTS AT REVITALIZATION OF OLUSUBA
LANGUAGE OF KENYA
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INTRODUCTION

An alarming decline in the number of languages has been reported in various scholarly works around the world.¹ The concern over the disappearance of languages could actually be dated back to the 5th Century.² In the case of Hebrew, for example, the decline was already felt by the 3rd Century.³

On the African continent, language decline has largely been accelerated by language contact between some minority and dominant indigenous languages. For instance, Swahili replaced several community languages in Tanzania, Somali in Somalia; and Arabic in the Maghreb region. In some other contact situations, languages of wider communication which were not necessarily colonial languages took over. This is perhaps the case with the hegemony of Amharic in Ethiopia, Bambara in Mali, Hausa in Niger and Nigeria and Wolof in Senegal over other indigenous languages. But in other cases in Africa, languages of retreating speech communities are suffocated by other relatively small indigenous languages with which they come into contact. Brenzinger⁴ reports the Ethiopian case in which Ongota is replaced by Ts'amakko, Kwegu by Mursi, Shabo by Majang' and Harro by Bayso. Batibo⁵ probably has the most comprehensive compilation of all the endangered languages across the African continent.

Despite such cases of widespread decline of languages, several minority groups are putting in place a spirited battle for cultural sovereignty, featuring language revival. Though a number of these revival attempts may sometimes bear political sentiments, most of them tend to begin with a language project. As is the case with language decline, language revival projects have also been widely reported across the world. There are dozens of accounts on language revival attempts reported with varying degrees of success or failure.⁶

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