

Abstract

There is a dearth of research on the economics of language of Africa's official and national languages, not to mention non-official, non-national indigenous languages. The article seeks to fill this hiatus using qualitative data from rural Kenya. A key finding is the discovery and characterisation of reciprocal/symbiotic relationships between indigenous languages and informal economic activities which are amplified by adaptive broker-agent relationships at the indigenous languages/informal economy interface and three-dimensional resilient networks of linkages between non-official, non-national indigenous languages and the informal economy that largely defy the asymmetries that define and characterise the relationships between these languages and the formal economy in much of Africa. On the basis of these insights, the article argues that the linkages between non-official, non-national indigenous languages and the informal economy in Africa hold promise for discourses, processes and interventions that seek to engender the viability, vitality and resilience of indigenous languages on the continent.