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# Measuring the Influence of Language on Grant-Making by U.S. Foundations in Africa

Fabrice Jaumont<sup>1</sup> and Jack Klempay,<sup>2</sup> New York University

**Abstract:** According to the grant database maintained by the Foundation Center in New York City, American philanthropies made 13,565 grants to Africa between 2003 and 2013. These grants total nearly \$4 billion. However, these grants were not equally distributed between countries. One important factor affecting a country's ability to attract grants is its official or primary language. While there are more Francophone African countries than Anglophone, Lusophone and Arabic countries, most funding from U.S. foundations went to countries where English is the dominant language. Our study's main finding confirms the foundations' general tendency to mainly make grants to English-speaking institutions. This finding suggests that U.S. foundations applied a geopolitical strategy of investment and maximization along former colonial lines, in particular former British colonies. U.S. foundations' geopolitical agenda might not be formulated with specific post-colonial considerations. Nonetheless, colonial lines emerge as clear demarcations between Africa's new knowledge societies. These lines are reinforced by the foundations' grant-making strategies.

Keywords: Foundations, Philanthropy, Universities, Africa, Higher Education Development

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#### Introduction: Language and U.S. Philanthropy in Africa

The mechanisms of international philanthropy and foreign investment are extremely complex. Africa's ecology of donors is composed of numerous international agencies, development funds, international foundations, and pan-African organizations that allocate their funds based on a number of environmental and institutional factors. These funds, however, are limited, and grantees oftentimes find themselves competing for resources. Donors thus wield a huge amount of power, shaping the development of the continent through their grant-making practices. This unbalanced relationship between grantors and grantees does not go by unnoticed, and American foundations are often criticized for enforcing a pro-Western agenda as they unilaterally set development goals and priorities (Arnove, 1980; Berman, 1983; Brison, 2005; Amutabi, 2013). Meanwhile, recent literature on African higher education suggests that African scholars are calling for more ownership in the inception and implementation of programs (Tiyambe Zeleza & Olukoshi, 2004; Afolayan, 2007) so as to serve the cause of African development, not Westernization (Cloete et al., 2002; 2006; Jaumont, 2014).

This asymmetry between grantors and grantees is heightened when one considers the role of language in the ecology of African philanthropy. Indeed, most grant-making decisions are made in a handful of languages, which are for the most part European and tied to the continent's colonial history. This reality raises important questions about the influence of languages on the repartition of funds across the continent. When resource-dependent institutions compete for funds it becomes relevant to know if one's institution's dominant language can become an indicator of success in one's quest for external funds. The purpose of this study is therefore to determine if donors establish their grant-making strategies based on certain linguistic lines, showing a bias towards recipient institutions that speak a preferred language. This question becomes increasingly important as English continues to spread and assert its position as the dominant international language.

In order to shed some light on this issue our study examined the grantmaking behavior of U.S. foundations which made grants to institutions in Africa during a ten-year period between 2003 and 2013. These foundations can be classified under five main categories according to the U.S. Internal Revenue Code: independent foundations; corporate foundations; community foundations; operating foundations; and public charities (Cafardi & Fabean, 2006). Their priorities vary greatly, and the many sectors they support are indeed vast. We have chosen to narrow our focus on private foundations in the United States and on the specific sector of higher education in Africa. In the context of our article, higher education refers to university level education carried out by public or private institutions which offer various qualifications, leading to degrees such as Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorates. Our definition also includes research centers and Academic networks as they actively participate in the sector's development and receive funds from international grantmakers as well.

According to the grant database maintained by the Foundation Center in New York City, American philanthropies made 13,565 grants to Africa between 2003 and 2013. All sectors included, 330 private foundations made grants totaling \$3.9 billion to support numerous initiative in Africa. Grant distribution per sector showed a high concentration in higher education and research which accounts for 25% of all grants made to Africa by U.S foundations. The geopolitical distribution of these grants suggests that U.S. foundations show a preference for countries where English is widely spoken or where English is an official language. Sixtyeight percent of all funding went to three countries: South Africa (30%), Kenya (29%), and Nigeria (9%) – predominantly English-speaking countries which are not only close to the United States' interest but also among the most influential on the continent. The role of language in securing grants from international donors is particularly important in the higher education sector, as English continues to establish itself as the lingua franca of most academic disciplines, and countries elect English as their official language of instruction in order to equip their citizens to participate in the global economy. Furthermore, the share of foundation grants to higher education in sub-Saharan Africa is possibly higher than these results show since many foundations ran major programs in the sectors of agriculture, health, and development either directly through African universities or indirectly through re-granting intermediaries, research centers and universities in developing countries, or regional non-governmental organizations and foundations. In this light African universities appear to emerge as critical engines for the socio-economic development of Africa (Parker, 2010). Thus, viewing them as integral parts in the geopolitical strategies of international donors in general, and of U.S. foundations in particular, is logical.

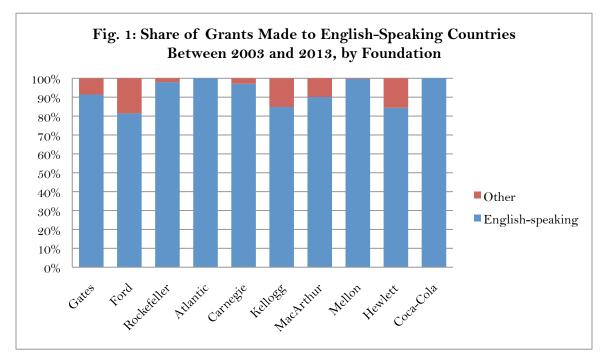
#### Grant Distribution on the African Continent

UNESCO defines a country's official language as "a language designated by law to be employed in the public domain." English is listed as an official language in twenty-five African countries out of a total of fifty-four (referred to as "English-speaking countries" throughout this article for brevity): Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and the Seychelles.<sup>i</sup> Combined, these countries represent just under 50% of Africa's total population.<sup>ii</sup> However, based on a survey of grants recorded in the database maintained by the Foundation Center in New York City, 76% of grants and 88% of grant dollars from U.S. foundations between 2003 and 2013 were disbursed to institutions located in one of these countries.<sup>iii</sup> Fig. 1 lists the total grant receipts over the ten year study period, sorted by country. Countries where English is an official language are highlighted in red.

Country	Total Grant Receipts			
South Africa	\$1,163,607,934			
Kenya	\$1,140,091,091			
Nigeria	\$361,595,257			
Uganda	\$195,968,970			
Ghana	\$156,604,359			
Ethiopia	\$126,048,967			
Tanzania	\$106,705,983			
Senegal	\$91,737,887			
Swaziland	\$78,293,737			
Egypt	\$76,968,172			
Zimbabwe	\$70,783,757			
Mauritius	\$38,725,720			
Mozambique	\$38,714,429			
Botswana	\$24,073,160			
All other countries	\$249,721,000			

The number of grants awarded to institutions in countries where English is an official language is evidently disproportionate, pointing to the systematic way in which American foundations direct their resources towards English-speaking countries. Moreover, the top five countries in terms of grant receipts all use English as an official language, and were awarded 77% of all funds disbursed during the ten year study period. Institutions in English-speaking countries did not only receive more grants or more grant dollars than other countries. They also received the greatest share of the largest grants made during the ten year study period. Of the hundred largest grants made to Africa between 2003 to 2013 (roughly corresponding to grants greater than \$5 million), 85 were disbursed in countries where English is an official language.

In some cases, the bias towards English-speaking countries is institutional: Carnegie's charter, for instance, restricts its international activities to countries that are or have been in the British Commonwealth<sup>iv</sup>. This obviously limits Carnegie's grant-making to English-speaking countries – which the foundation can play to its advantage to answer unsolicited requests. Select grantees in Egypt and Senegal, both of which are eligible members of the Commonwealth but do not list English as an official language, are notable exceptions. However, only 3% of grants made by Carnegie between 2003 and 2013 were disbursed in Egypt or Senegal. A focus on the top ten grant-makers to Africa during this period (Gates, Ford, Rockefeller, Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie, Kellogg, MacArthur, Mellon, Hewlett, and Coca-Cola) indicates that this behavior is remarkably consistent across foundations, superseding differences in scope or structure (Fig. 1). Each of these foundations showed a similar bias towards English-speaking countries, without being subject to the same constraints as Carnegie.



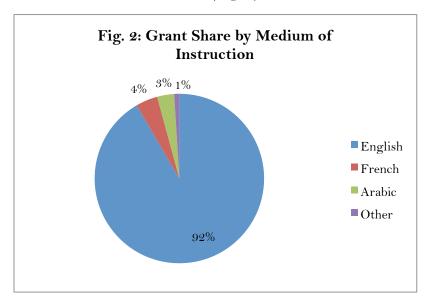
Every one of the top ten U.S. foundations by the total amount of grants awarded to Africa made out at least 80% of its grants to countries using English as an official language. The remarkable consistency of this pattern confirms that the official language of recipient countries plays an important part in the ecology of grant-making in Africa, particularly among U.S. foundations.

#### Focus on Higher Education in Africa

U.S. foundations' preference for English-speakers is particularly noticeable in the higher education sector. In total, this study identified 78 foundations that invested intensively in higher education organizations in Africa between 2003 and 2013. These foundations made grants to African higher education that amounted to \$573.5 million. Overall, 1,471 grants were made to 194 higher education organizations in 28 countries during 2003 and 2013.

Within the context of higher education, an important factor is a country's official medium of instruction (MOI), also known as language of instruction (LOI). The MOI refers to the language that is used in classes and to complete assignments (in many countries, the MOI varies between primary, secondary, and tertiary schools). UNESCO defines MOI as the language(s) used to convey a specified curriculum in a formal or non-formal educational setting (Ouane & Glanz, 2011). The MOI most often corresponds to a country's official language, although certain universities may use English as their MOI even if English is not recognized as an official language by the country's government.

As expected, U.S. foundations investing in higher education on the African continent targeted institutions where English is the primary MOI. More than 90% of higher education institutions that received grants from U.S. foundations listed English as the primary medium of instruction,<sup>v</sup> as opposed to 4% for French and 3% for Arabic (Fig. 2).



The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa presents an interesting case study for the relationship between U.S. foundations and African universities, especially in relation to the question of the primary MOI. In 2000, under the impetus of Carnegie's president Dr. Vartan Gregorian and other foundation presidents, the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa was launched as a joint effort of the Carnegie, Ford, MacArthur, and Rockefeller foundations to support the capacity building of universities and the field of higher education in Africa. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Kresge Foundation joined the Partnership later. In launching PHEA, the presidents of the four founding foundations sought to make a public statement against the commonly accepted view that higher education was not a priority for Africa and that donors should focus on primary

education. The partner foundations contributed close to \$400,000,000 in ten years to build core capacity and support special initiatives at universities in several African countries. Each of the foundations had significant grant-making programs in Africa prior to forming the Partnership, and continued their activities after the Partnership was terminated in 2010.

The Partnership provided most of its funding to higher education institutions in six Englishspeaking African nations: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. Institutions in Mozambique, Egypt, and Madagascar were added to the list of grant recipients, even though English is not recognized as an official language in these countries. The foundations' involvement with higher education networks could have indirectly served the academic community of the continent, including non-English speaking institutions, although this was not the Partnership's immediate objective, and this is worthy of further inquiry as one cannot rule out issues that these countries also had higher education systems of a basic minimal capacity and showed potential to grow and have impact on the PHEA's original objectives.

The distribution of the Partnership's grants among the nine recipient countries conformed to the general trends in grant-making and higher education described above. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of PHEA grants, with countries using English as their primary MOI highlighted in red. 95% of grants made by the Partnership were disbursed in countries where English in the primary MOI.

Country	Total Grant Receipts	Number of Grants
South Africa	\$130,902,994	465
Nigeria	\$77,015,024	146
Uganda	\$54,364,729	150
Tanzania	\$31,573,523	67
Ghana	\$21,354,025	55
Kenya	\$9,834,452	45
Egypt	\$8,069,489	36
Madagascar	\$5,927,000	6
Mozambique	\$4,294,650	19

Table 2: Distribution of PHEA Grants by Country

South Africa was by far the country that received most of the Partnership's attention, followed by Nigeria and Uganda. However, considering the differences between each country's GDP, the dollar should be interpreted relatively, considering each country's cost of living and other economic factors. Similarly, the number of grants made per country reflects the countries' institutions' relative capacities to receive grants at the time. It is also noteworthy that the top recipient of PHEA funding in a country where English an official language, the American University of Cairo in Egypt, uses English as its MOI. Except for Uganda, the overall spending of the Partnership was insignificant compared to each country's estimated yearly spending on higher education. Understandably, the amount of this funding was relatively minimal, and so the Partnership's enormous visibility during this period reveals far more about the foundations' impressive public relation skills. Although there were some notable exceptions, the Partnership invested more in countries which invested the most in national higher education systems. U.S. foundations' preference for English-speaking universities can be attributed to a variety of cultural and institutional factors. One example is the differences of culture and orientation among African higher education institutions according to their location in countries where Arabic, English French or Portuguese are spoken. The following excerpt is from an interview with Andrea Johnson, program officer at Carnegie Corporation of New York during the PHEA:

The francophone countries had universities organized on the French model, which is very different from the British model and the Lusophone model. That's partly too why Mozambique was problematic. They weren't organized the same way. So where as you can have conversations across the Anglophone universities...it's not even the language barrier, it's deeper than that.<sup>vi</sup>

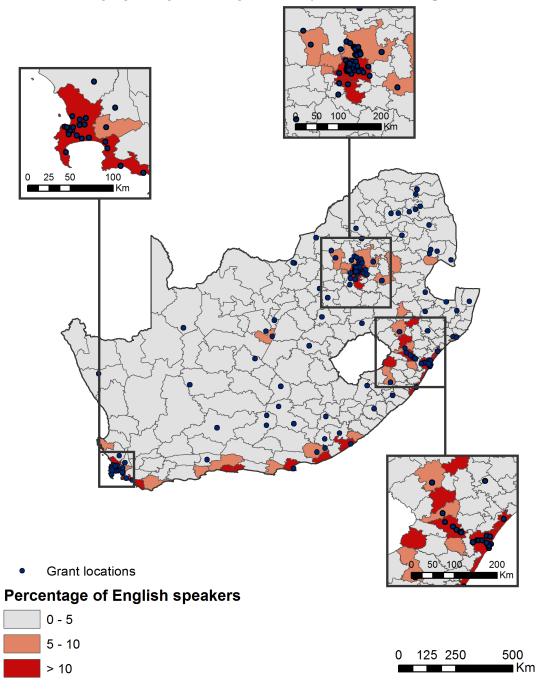
Although the Partnership sought to specifically target countries where it traditionally operated, its funding was mostly distributed to English-speaking institutions in current or former Commonwealth countries.

#### Focus on South Africa

The mechanics of grant-making are complex, making it difficult to determine if there is a causal relationship between English's status as an official language and the number of grants received. Possible confounding variables include G.D.P., proximity to foundation field offices, and political stability, all of which could influence foundations' grant-making behavior.

It is possible to eliminate some of these variables by focusing on a single country. For this purpose, South Africa is a useful and informative case study. South Africa receives more grants from U.S. institutions than any other country in Africa, meaning that there is a large sample of grants available to study. Moreover, South Africa has a remarkable degree of linguistic diversity with eleven official languages and an English-speaking population of nearly 10%. Furthermore, languages in South Africa are geographically isolated (English-speakers tend to be concentrated in certain regions, such as Cape Town), making it possible to use geographic information (i.e., the location of grants) to determine if there is an associational relationship between English-speaking and grant receipts.

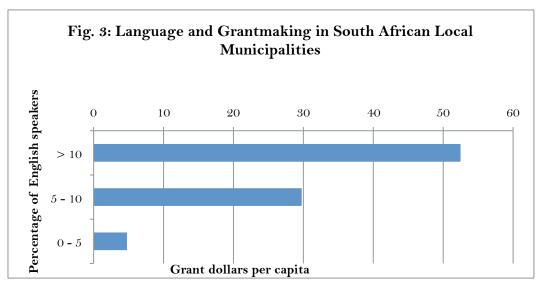
The following map illustrates the location of grants within local municipalities in South Africa. The map combines municipality-level data from the 2011 national census detailing the percentage of English speakers in each local municipality (provided through the Statistics South Africa online service) with the point locations of all grants made to South Africa by U.S. Foundations between 2003 and 2013 (extrapolated from the grant database maintained by the Foundation Center).



Language and grantmaking in South African Local Municipalities

As of the 2011 census, the nation-wide percentage of English speakers in South Africa is 9.6%. The percentage of English speakers in local municipalities was categorized into three bins (0-5%, 5-10%, and >10%) to compare the prevalence of English speakers in each municipality to the national average percentage of English speakers. The point locations of grants were determined by the latitude and longitude coordinates of recipient cities. The map shows that grants are clustered in and around three particular cities: Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban (see inset maps). These are also the regions with the highest percentage of English-speakers nationwide. However, because these are also population centers, it is possible that the apparent increase in grant receipts is simply due to the higher population.

It is also useful to visualize this information graphically. The graph below (Fig. 3) shows that municipalities with an above-average percentage of English speakers received far more grant money per capita than those with a below-average percentage of English speakers (about \$50 per capita versus \$10).



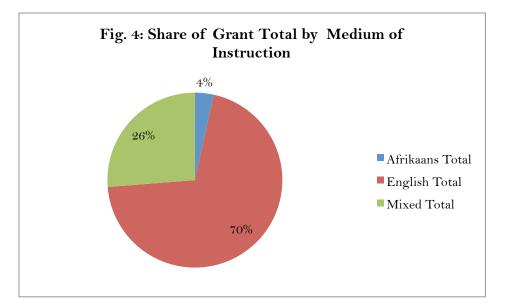
These results confirm that municipalities in South Africa that have a higher percentage of English speakers receive more grants from U.S. foundations. Although it is not possible to determine if this relationship is causal, the association is strong enough to draw some conclusions about grant-making behavior and warrants further study. These results are not surprising, considering that U.S. foundations most likely employ a primarily English-speaking staff, making it much easier to work with English-speaking grant recipients. English speakers could also have an advantage when filling out grant applications, as the instructions and other materials might not be available in other languages. Finally, the correlation between English speaking and grant-making could be attributed to a cultural bias towards English-speakers on the part of U.S. foundations.

Although English is the dominant medium of instruction in South Africa, South Africa's constitution and education laws actively promote multilingualism in schools at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Nevertheless, American foundations active in South Africa show a marked preference for universities where English is the dominant medium of instruction. Table 3 lists the major higher education institutions of South Africa, with their MOI categorized as English-only, mixed<sup>vii</sup>, or Afrikaans-only based on their charter.

Institution	Enrollment	Medium of Instruction	Grant Total	Total per student
University of Cape Town	23500	English	\$124,308,789	\$5,290
University of the Witwatersrand	27934	English	\$64,863,826	\$2,322
University of the Western Cape	15226	Mixed	\$58,180,764	\$3,821
University of KwaZulu-Natal	37850	English	\$35,224,461	\$931
University of Pretoria	38934	Mixed	\$24,726,566	\$635
Rhodes University	6700	English	\$19,847,773	\$2,962
University of Stellenbosch	27823	Afrikaans	\$12,591,192	\$453
University of the Free State	26275	Mixed	\$7,390,432	\$281
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Univ.	22652	English	\$3,749,571	\$166
University of Fort Hare	11074	English	\$3,474,850	\$314
University of South Africa	300000	Mixed	\$3,244,155	\$11
Walter Sisulu University	21946	English	\$2,545,632	\$116
Tshwane University of Technology	60000	English	\$2,447,240	\$41
Cape Peninsula Univ. of Technology	32000	Mixed	\$2,135,233	\$67
Durban University of Technology	23000	English	\$1,746,728	\$76
University of Johannesburg	48000	Mixed	\$1,234,300	\$26
University of Venda	10968	English	\$969,095	\$88
North-West University	44008	Afrikaans	\$256,000	\$6
University of Limpopo	20600	English	\$103,200	\$5

Table 3: Medium of Instruction and Grant Receipts in South African Universities

South Africa's top English-language university is the University of Cape Town. The top Afrikaans-language university is the University of Stellenbosch. Both universities have a similar enrollment and are considered high-level research institutions. However, between 2003 and 2013 the total grant amount received per student at the University of Cape Town was more than ten times higher than at the University of Stellenbosch. Figure 4 illustrates the data in the table above. Overall, institutions where English was the only recognized medium of instruction received 70% of all grants made to higher education institutions in South Africa. Universities with a system of mixed tuition received 26% of funds, while Afrikaans-only universities received only 4% of all grants by U.S. foundations.



The greatest obstacle to this research was finding a way to separate the percentage of English speakers in a municipality from that municipality's population density or status as an urban center. Moreover, English-speaking in South Africa could be attributed to a variety of other demographic factors, including race, education, and socioeconomic level. It is therefore very difficult to determine if an increase in the percentage of English speakers alone is capable of attracting more grants to a particular region. Another challenge was that the database provided by the Foundation Center is poorly maintained. Many records are missing important information such as the recipient city, the grant value, and the year awarded (a total of 115 grants made to South Africa did not list a recipient city and so could not be included in the geographic analysis). Also, names listed in the recipient city was in fact closer to the location listed.

In addition, the attribute used to map the grant locations (recipient city) was not precise enough to conduct analysis on the city or neighborhood level. It would be possible to find the geographic coordinates of the main office of each grant recipient, but because of the huge number of recipients involved this would not be practical. Also, the location of an office in a multi-lingual city does not necessarily reflect the actual language distribution within the organization.

Although there appears to be a strong correlation between the percentages of English speakers and the number of grants received in South Africa, these results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other countries. A similar type of analysis could be carried out for other countries that receive a large number of grants from U.S. foundations and where English is an official language (such as Uganda). It would also be possible to conduct the analysis for a country where English is not an official language but has a significant population of English speakers, to see if grants are concentrated in regions where these English is spoken (such as Egypt).

Finally, more work needs to be done to isolate the effect of English-speaking on grant-making behavior. This could be done for South Africa or another country with a significant English-speaking population. Because there are so many confounding variables that need to be

accounted for (including race, education, and socioeconomic level, as discussed above) this would most likely involve advanced statistical analysis that falls outside the scope of this project. This type of statistical research would be able to quantify the relationship between English-speaking and grant-making, adding an additional layer to the analysis.

#### Conclusion

The discourse on priorities in African higher education is placed in a contested terrain, where grantors and grantees not only negotiate one another's perspectives but also contend with inhospitable national contexts. In certain African countries, governments do not necessarily encourage the development of universities or international donors who are not overtly cooperative. Much to their credit, U.S. foundations have helped universities become self-sustainable and less dependent on government funding. They also succeeded in raising awareness about higher education in Africa as a sector worthy of financial support, thus making the case for Africa's universities in national and international contexts. However, these foundations did not engage sufficiently with non-English speaking institutions, even when this was important to generate more equity and sustainability on the very sector that they sought to promote.

Our study's main finding confirms the foundations' general tendency to mainly make grants to English-speaking institutions. This finding suggests that U.S. foundations applied a geopolitical strategy of investment and maximization along former colonial lines, in particular former British colonies. By favoring higher education organizations that use English as the language of internal and external communication and learning, U.S. foundations create durable connections with the continent's future leaders and entrepreneurs along a language associated with cultural references that they dominate. Several cases (such as Ford in Egypt) can be seen as exceptions to this rule as their geopolitical agenda might not have been formulated with specific post-colonial considerations. Nonetheless, the colonial lines are then reinforced by U.S. foundations' grantmaking strategies.

U.S. foundations concentrated their efforts on a select number of institutions that use English as the dominant language. These were, for the most part, elite institutions to which foundations were accustomed to giving funds. Their approach of targeted selection, which has remained central to their strategies of institutional development at home and abroad, is understandable. Yet, it has left many institutions of higher learning wondering what to do to attract foundation funding. These also include less prestigious institutions, or fields that are not a priority for foundations.

Additionally, considering the importance of language and culture in the mechanisms of globalization, and acknowledging that language groups compete in the knowledge economy, the influence of U.S. foundations in Africa reinforced the dominance of English as the lingua franca of the continent's development. By favoring higher education organizations that use English as the language of internal and external communication and learning, U.S. foundations created durable connections with the continent's future leaders and entrepreneurs along the lines of a language associated with cultural references that the foundations dominated. Universities in Francophone, Lusophone and Arabophone countries appear to be less equipped for receiving grants from U.S. foundations. Both foundations and universities in these countries should reach out to each other and work together to remedy this problem.

U.S. foundations' geopolitical agenda might not be formulated with specific post-colonial considerations. Nonetheless, colonial lines emerge as clear demarcations between Africa's new knowledge societies. These lines are reinforced by the foundations' grantmaking strategies. Arguably, the lasting connections established between U.S. foundations and Africa's elite, maintained through the English language, ensure a guaranteed return on investment for donors in English-speaking nations.

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#### Notes

<sup>i</sup> CIA World Factbook

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Calculated as percentage of total dollar amount, adjusted for inflation.

<sup>iv</sup> The Carnegie Corporation of New York Charter, Constitution and Bylaws (2011)

<sup>v</sup> English is the primary language of instruction in Botswana, Cameroon, The Gambia, Kenya,

Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>vi</sup> August 10, 2011 interview with Andrea Johnson, Program Officer, Higher Education and Libraries in Africa, International Program, Carnegie Corporation of New York

<sup>vii</sup> "Mixed" refers to universities that use both English and Afrikaans as mediums of instruction, and treat both languages equally from an instructional and administrative point of view.