"And the winner is …": Hierarchies of Language Competence and Fashion Sense in Tanzanian Beauty Pageants

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This paper discusses how successful Tanzanian beauty contestants mark themselves as educated sophisticates through clusters of semiotic materials. At lower-level and provincial competitions, contestants' ability to speak "pure," if non-fluent and non-standard, English helps them achieve victory. This register is coupled with local, often flamboyant, fashions and hairstyles. Yet in the capital city, and especially at the national competition, winning contestants speak a standard, fluent variety of English, a super-elite register that is typically only acquired through tertiary education or through membership in an elite urban household. They also adorn themselves in ways that are in keeping with global trends. When provincial contestants advance through the pageant hierarchy, they find their language skills and fashion sense become indexical of a lack of knowledge and sophistication. This paper thus explores the variable and hierarchical formulations of "language competence" (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck, 2005), and emphasizes, using Agha's (2007) notion of "metasemiotic scheme," that such competence is neither acquired, nor interpreted, in isolation from other symbolic behaviors. *Keywords: language ideologies, beauty pageants, language competence, language inequality, fashion*

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I discuss the ways in which contestants emerge, through clusters of linguistic and non-linguistic behavior, as successful Tanzanian beauty queens. In particular, I emphasize a shift that occurs between provincial cities and the economic center of the country, Dar es Salaam, in terms of how contestants present themselves, as well as how audiences and judges evaluate them. Rather than a case of provincial contestants attempting, but ultimately failing, to achieve a national standard more fully realized by contestants in Dar es Salaam, I argue that there are two poles of orientation, and that contestants in the cities of the hinterland are largely successful in their orientation around one pole, while Dar es Salaam contestants are successful in their orientation around another. It is only when the two kinds of contestants come together that these two sets of standards are revealed as unequal rather than parallel.

At the heart of this paper is a study of language ideology, language competence, and language inequality. Irvine (1989, p. 255) defines language ideologies as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relation-

ships, together with their loading of moral and political interests." In other words, there is a powerful link between linguistic forms and the ways in which people (organized in an array of formations such as communities, classes, villages, states, etc.), perceive those forms. Furthermore, language ideologies are projected onto non-linguistic actions. Gal (1998) states that:

> The task is to explicate how linguistic forms, when interpreted through particular linguistic ideologies, come to be seen as evidence of the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic qualities of speakers and to demonstrate that, when linked to ideas about knowledge, identity, groupness, and beauty, linguistic ideologies provide the justification for widely varying political arrangements. (p. 329)

Language ideologies thus have important effects on people's lives, and case studies have effectively used the concept of language ideologies as a framework for making sense of an assortment of sociolinguistic phenomena. Influential projects have relied on language ideologies to provide analyses of language shift and change as connected with political and social struggle (e.g., Hill, 1998; Kroskrity, 1998; Tsitsipis, 1995). Perhaps more pertinent to the current study, many other investigations have highlighted the role played by language ideologies in structuring inequality within an array of institutional quarters. Both Briggs (1996) and Hirsch (1998) demonstrate how linguistic ideologies, linked with gender, power, and authority, organize both dominant and subversive discourses in formal fora for resolving marital disputes among the Warao of eastern Venezuela and among the Swahili of coastal Kenya, respectively. Spitulnik (1998) investigates postcolonial African language policy in terms of Radio Zambia and its production and reflection of two opposing language ideologies—one that values national unity and the other, national diversity—as seen in the ways languages and, by extension, their speakers and communities, are allotted differing quantities and qualities of airtime. In a particularly distressing case, Haviland (2003) describes an Oregon murder trial in which the language ideologies held by the court and by civic society in general led to the wrongful murder conviction and imprisonment of a young Mixtec-speaking migrant worker from Oaxaca, Mexico. In all of these studies, local beliefs about the use and utility of languages, language varieties, and modes of communication both affect and are affected by institutional decisions and policies, themselves fundamental to people's day-to-day lives.

In the present case, it is the institution of education that is central to much of the data and analysis presented here. Tanzania is home to immense linguistic and ethnic diversity, with over 120 languages documented (Gordon, 2005). Yet these sociolinguistic differences, through decades of policies, dis-

courses, and practices aimed at creating a unified Tanzanian state, have been largely erased (Irvine & Gal, 2000) from urban, public contexts, including schools (Blommaert, 1999; Wedin, 2005). Instead, public life in Tanzania is conducted primarily in two languages, Swahili and English. Swahili, while traditionally a language of the coast, is today the national language and is spoken by most Tanzanians, as a second or third language if not as a first (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1995; Whiteley, 1969). Most urbanites go about much of their daily affairs in one of many registers of Swahili, and it is also the official language of primary school as well as parliament and is used widely across other institutions and settings. While, as an indigenous language associated with self-reliance as well as independence from colonial control, Swahili today carries far less prestige than English, the language of the former colonial power Great Britain (Blommaert, 1999; Mulokozi, 1991). English is the language of "higher" functions—elite business, and, as is of particular importance to this paper, the medium of instruction in secondary school and beyond. Scholars have argued that it is English itself that is considered by many Tanzanians to be the very purpose of an education (Neke, 2003; Rubagumya, 1996). At the same time, even as they are desperate for an education, many Tanzanians are reluctant to acknowledge the differential value of Swahili and English in particular contexts because of the lingering associations of Swahili with self-reliance and independence (Billings, 2006; see also Blommaert, 1999).

Furthermore, access to opportunity—directly linked with education and English—is shaped by steep social and spatial hierarchies. Only the tiny fraction of the population fortunate enough to attain a higher education, or to have been born into an elite urban family, commands robust and empowering English. Indeed, the value of English stems at least in part from its extremely limited circulation in Tanzania. What is more, Tanzania's social, political, and economic capital is concentrated in its capital city, Dar es Salaam. Residents of that city have access to ideas, fashion, education, employment, linguistic registers, and types of people that do not exist elsewhere in the country. Together, these hierarchies give shape to the ideologies of linguistic competence and other factors influencing pageant success discussed here. Of course, they also deeply influence contestants' (and others') lives off stage as well.

The data for this research are drawn from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in three Tanzanian cities between 2001 and 2006, as well as from subsequent study of media reportage. They include twelve video recordings of pageants, as well as interviews and focus groups with contestants, MCs, audience members, pageant organizers, pageant entertainers, and interested community members. These interviews and focus groups were primarily conducted in Swahili, apart from moments of clarification or requests by participants to use English for practice. Newspaper coverage, reporting extensively

on these events, serves to triangulate findings and inform an understanding of these pageants and contestants on a broader social level.

PAGEANTS IN TANZANIA

Beauty pageants in Tanzania are extremely popular, socially progressive, and strictly urban events, with coverage often taking up entire pages in newspapers, which report in minute detail what happened at these events. While on the surface these events are lighthearted forms of entertainment, Tanzanian beauty pageants, like similar competitions worldwide, reveal, through their orientation to self-conscious performance and appraisal, manifold ways in which semiotic behavior is taken to stand for differentially valued types of people within broader swathes of society (Besnier, 2002; Cohen, Wilk, & Stoeltje, 1996; Schulz, 2000). In the present case, the patterns of self-presentation and evaluation that unfold within these events reflect entrenched cultural beliefs about language and other symbolic material as indexes of personal worth, especially as reflexes of education and elite status. These beliefs profoundly affect, and especially in the case of language, I argue, limit, many Tanzanians' lives more generally.

While contestants are the focal points of these events, judges and audiences contribute greatly to pageants, constituting an integral part of the performance themselves (cf. Barber, 1997; Duranti & Brenneis, 1986; Finnegan, 2007; Goodwin, 1986). Audiences are generally young and fashionable, and, as constrained by the relatively expensive price of admission, tend to be members of the middle or upper-middle class. Aided by the ready flow of inexpensive beer and spirits, audiences are also quite rowdy, and often mercilessly honest. These are not spectators gathered to sit quietly for a serious spectacle, and they are at least as entertained by mistakes as by perfect performances. Judges, on the other hand, are dignitaries, celebrities, politicians, and former beauty queens. While they have their set of judgment criteria, they are highly influenced by or in tune with audience sentiment; judges rarely choose as a winner someone who has been jeered by the audience, and frequently the audience darling is also selected by the judges as beauty queen.

Analytically, audiences and judges are useful in different ways. Audiences, and in particular, these audiences, give immediate and sometimes specific feedback on particular aspects of a contestant's performance, through applause, heckling, side conversations, and so forth (cf. Barber, 1997). On the other hand, judges provide a final, opaque proclamation of overall worthiness and offer, when several pageants are taken together, a quantifiable look at which traits are rewarded and which are not. Both of these kinds of reactions are useful in pinpointing language ideologies and other value judgments, and

in observing how these ideologies move and morph across social and geographic space.

Furthermore, Tanzanian beauty pageants exist within a multi-tiered hierarchy, which structures not only the advancement of contestants through the competitive process, but which also regiments hierarchically the people who compete, observe, judge, and win at these events. Over two dozen regional-level competitions occur each year across the country, from which the top three contenders are selected and sent to one of nine zonal-level competitions. The top three finishers of each of these zonal events are sent to compete at the annual Miss Tanzania competition in Dar es Salaam. Dar es Salaam, the country's largest city, its cultural and economic center, as well as its de facto capital,[1] is treated uniquely, holding several pageants that count as 'regional' competitions, and four that count as 'zonal' events. Finally, the young woman who is crowned Miss Tanzania competes later in the year at the Miss World pageant.[2] While discourses and official policy concerning the desirable qualities of a successful beauty queen remain constant across levels and cities, the instantiation of these qualities varies significantly between Dar and its satellites.

THREE ORIENTING CONCEPTS

To understand the ways in which contestants are differentially evaluated, I will employ three interconnected concepts—metasemiotic scheme, indexical (non)-congruence, and social domain—put forth by Asif Agha (2007). These tools point to several aspects of pageant evaluation and success: how audiences and judges link linguistic and non-linguistic signs as belonging together and as standing for types of persons; how audience reactions guide the researcher to ideologies about language and other culturally held beliefs about personhood; and how different sets of competitors, audiences and judges interpret norms for onstage behavior in different ways. More generally, these concepts help shape an understanding of the patterning of pageant outcomes as a reflex of broadly held beliefs about language, education, and status in urban Tanzania.

The first concept, metasemiotic scheme, concerns the fact that, in social interactions, we link linguistic signs and behaviors with a wide variety of non-linguistic ones, as comparable and belonging together. Agha (2007), based on the work of Poedjosoedarmo (1968) and Errington (1988), gives an example of a very codified metasemiotic scheme, that of the Javanese aristocracy, for whom a specific and intricate set of restrictions guides a range of cross-modal behaviors. From hand movements to manner of dress to language (the famous Javanese speech levels), diverse behaviors have, when used together, comparable value in their ability to index the aristocratic status of the speaker.

So what happens when a sign (an outfit, a gesture, a word, a pronunciation) does not fit with the unfolding metasemiotic scheme? Agha (2007) describes this as 'indexical non-congruence,' the second of the concepts informing this analysis. Indexical non-congruence can be intentional, and used for irony or other effects, such as a bride self-consciously presenting herself as non-traditional by wearing sneakers with her wedding dress, or it can be unintentional, as when an American patron in a Parisian restaurant, trying to appear sophisticated through invoking his or her sociolinguistic know-how, summons a female server with 'garçon.' This is a faux pas in two respects (using a masculine form to a female server, and using a term that in contemporary French is now seen as off-putting in such contexts) and results in indexing the speaker as uncouth, or even as a phony. It is the latter type of non-congruence, one that stems from a lack of sociolinguistic knowledge, often while one is attempting to appear extremely savvy, that will be relevant here.

The third concept is that of 'social domain' (Agha, 2007). The interpretation that a particular sign is non-congruent depends, crucially, on a social domain of evaluators. Agha (2007, p. 148) states that:

> In any given phase or historical stage of its existence, a register formation involves a social domain of persons (a demographic group) that is acquainted with the model of speech at issue; the boundaries of this social domain may change over time or remain relatively constant, depending on the kind of institutions that facilitate register competence in society.

Registers therefore exist only insofar as there are people who regularly recognize a specific bundle of features as having a particular social value. The notion of social domain is thus related to the seminal yet fluid notion of speech community (e.g., Bloomfield, 1935; Dorian, 1982; Labov, 1972). Both concepts hinge on an understanding of language and linguistic signs as only meaningful insofar as there are particular groups of people who share or coordinate modes of communication and interpretation. Yet the notion of social domain is distinct in a few ways. First, Agha (2007) uses the term 'social domain' to pertain primarily to register formation, as he considers registers to be central in constituting social life (p. 183). In contrast, a speech community can be governed by any sociolinguistic variation. Second, as overviewed in Duranti (1997) and Morgan (2004), the term 'speech community' can have a wide variety of meanings, some of which may not reflect the fluidity and reflexivity that are key to Agha's formulation, instead sometimes construing community boundaries, as well as register formations themselves, as at least somewhat pre-determined and rigid.[3] Third, while 'speech community' traditionally includes speakers and evaluators in the same frame (e.g., Labov,

1966), 'social domain' distinctly refers to evaluators, while 'social range' refers to sign users, a distinction thus emphasizing the lack of complete overlap in language use and evaluation (Agha, 2007, p. 121). Finally, although proponents of the ethnography of communication, the approach that popularized and modernized the concept of speech community, acknowledged long ago that non-linguistic signs are often linked with linguistic ones and are central in interpreting language use (e.g., Hymes, 1964), the notion of speech community does not readily accommodate that fact. Social domain, in contrast, not only concerns register formation but also the formation and interpretation of metasemiotic schemes:

> A register's tokens are never experienced in isolation during discourse; they are encountered under conditions of textuality (co-occurrence) with other signs—both linguistic and non-linguistic signs—that form a significant context, or co-text, for the construal of the token uttered. (Agha, 2007, p. 148)

Language and non-language are thus inextricably linked into meaningful social units.

For this project, we will see that what one audience or set of judges, as a social domain, finds laudable, another will find laughable. What is congruent and felicitous for one group is non-congruent, an utter embarrassment, for another. Furthermore, metasemiotic schemes are ordered hierarchically, both geographically and socially, and both of these hierarchies will reach their pinnacle in Dar es Salaam. What counts as good or worthy or competent in one contest becomes embarrassing, out of place, and subject to ridicule in another, in ways that reflect more general social categories.

These analytic tools support an understanding of language ideologies as overt, that is, as observable by the analyst in one way or another (Agha, 2007). Sometimes these observations come in explicit form, such as in interviews and other meta-commentaries. In other cases, these observations come in implicit form, such as in the patterning of languages, codes, grammatical structures, or other symbolic material, across settings, persons, and places. This understanding of ideologies moves away from the polarization of ideologies as either implicit or explicit, a tension overviewed by Woolard (1998). Here, multiple data collection strategies serve to approach these ideologies from a variety of angles, not only pinpointing broadly construed beliefs, but also filling them in with rich content, sometimes only possible through more implicit evidence (Agha, 2007; Silverstein, 1981).

METASEMIOTIC SCHEME FOR
TANZANIAN BEAUTY QUEENS

In interviews with contestants, judges, and pageant organizers, several traits emerge as central to a local model of a Tanzanian beauty queen. She should have a 'pretty' face, which is often understood to include a thin nose and light skin. She should be adept at the 'model walk,' and she should be relatively tall, thin though not skinny, with clear skin and good teeth. She should dress stylishly, but not provocatively or garishly. Usually unstated, but clearly present, is a preference for chemically straightened and long hair, worn down or pulled back in a simple or sometimes more elaborate hairstyle. But more than any other feature, people stress the importance of 'confidence,' as manifested through smiling, eye contact with judges and the audience, and standing up straight. A contestant who appears to lack confidence, by slouching or hanging her head, will stand little chance of success, and will likely be the recipient of lively audience critique.

Contestants also speak in these competitions, and so bundled with expectations for dress, body, and comportment, are ones for language use. Contestants have one or two opportunities to speak onstage. Each competitor speaks at the beginning during a self-introduction. Then, if she makes it into the top five, she also has the chance to respond to a question such as "What would you do if you became Miss World?" While, in offstage interviews, contestants and pageant organizers do not spontaneously mention language as a central quality of Miss Tanzania, when pressed a bit, they did mention aspects of language that were relevant, and several themes emerged. As with their physicality, contestants should exhibit confidence in their speech, but without showing pride. This means speaking loudly but not too loudly, for a long enough amount of time but not too long, and stating one's accomplishments without bragging. In addition, some participants emphasized the importance of using a *fasaha* register onstage, as in the following:

(1)   *Unatakiwa ukiongea Kiswahili uongee Kiswahili fasaha kina choeleweka*
      na kama ukiongea Kiingereza uongee Kiingereza fasaha kinachoeleka…

      'If you want to speak Swahili you have to speak *fasaha* Swahili that is understandable, and if you speak English you have to speak *fasaha* English that is understandable…'

Ufasaha, the nominal form of the adjective *fasaha*, refers foremost to a formal way of speaking, and is a term used to describe the register appropriate for the recitation of Swahili oral poetry. It is also linked with schooling, as the

register that, in theory if not in practice, is taught and used in post-primary educational settings (Mushi, 1996; see below). A crucial component of *ufasaha*, whether in English or Swahili, is code purity, or the avoidance of mixing Swahili and English. This facet of proper onstage speech is very much on the radar of contestants and others, as described in the following elaboration of *ufasaha* provided by the contestant in example (1) above:

(2)   *Uongee Kiswahili kinachoeleweka kwa sababu saa nyingine unaweza ku-ongea Kiswahili ukajikuta umechanganya na neno la Kiingereza. Kama naweza kusema hivi, labda nikuulize swali linalohusiana na shule nikas-ema mimi nitajenga shule za 'primary' ingekuwa tayari nimeshachanganya Kiswahili na Kiingereza, kwa hiyo inakuwa sijaeleweka.*

'You should speak Swahili that is understandable, because sometimes you can speak Swahili and find yourself mixing it with English words. For example, I may be asked a question about school and then I say I will build primary schools. Already I have mixed English…so therefore I won't be understood.'

Another contestant echoes this understanding of proper speech that emphasizes code purity over other aspects of normative language, and that code purity is necessary for referential clarity:

(3)   *…saa nyingine watu wanauliza swali halafu nikaanza kuta futa maneno yaani kutengeneza 'sentensi' iwe 'straight' halafu niongee nisiwe nimechan-ganya vitu.*

'Sometimes [during pageants] people ask a question then I start to look for the words, I mean, to make a sentence be straight, then I speak so I don't mix things up.'

Here, the contestant laments the fact that it is challenging to keep her speech "straight," or free from codeswitching. Note, in fact, the legitimacy of this concern, based on her own conversational code, which is dotted with two English loan words (in quotation marks). Contestants are permitted to speak English or Swahili onstage, and the expectation for *ufasaha* holds regardless of which language contestants speak. Contestants are very adept at keeping both English and Swahili pure of mixing, as they have been coached on the importance of this for years in school (Brock-Utne, 2007; Rubagumya, 1994).

Together, these linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of a contestant shape her suitability as a crown-holder. Even if a single feature is off, or non-

congruent with the metasemiotic scheme, then the contestant significantly reduces her chances of winning. Some features, such as height, are less likely to draw overt attention or make a difference for pageant success. Other features, such as lack of confidence, an inappropriate outfit, or an unflattering walk, frequently garner audience ridicule and prevent judges from selecting the offending candidate. Language has, perhaps, the ability to make or break a contestant's success more than any other feature, and it is to this topic that I now turn.

LANGUAGE USE, EDUCATION AND PAGEANT SUCCESS

Within and around pageants, metalinguistic discourses about Swahili and English configure the two languages as equal, without any difference in pageant outcome linked to a contestant's language choice (Billings, 2009). In contrast, data show clearly that while most contestants speak Swahili onstage, winners overwhelming speak English (ibid). Contestants who are pageant-savvy choose to use English onstage because they know it will appeal to audiences and judges and set them apart from the majority of other, Swahili-speaking contestants. The appeal of English in Tanzania is due in part to its very limited circulation, acquired primarily through higher education as well as through membership in wealthy households, the two of which are often connected. Since only a very small fraction of Tanzanians has the opportunity to pursue a post-primary education, with just two percent of the population over 25 having completed secondary school (Al-Samarrai & Reilly, 2008), speaking English immediately marks the speaker as a member of the educated elite. This is not only a highly desirable quality for all kinds of employment in the country, but also, as it turns out, for a suitable beauty queen.

In order to compete, contestants are required to have completed four years of secondary school. As such, most contestants are much more highly educated than the vast majority of Tanzanians. With English as the medium of instruction in secondary school, and a subject throughout primary school, these young women have had access to English instruction for 10 or more years. Yet most of the English-language speeches delivered by contestants are riddled with non-standard features and exhibit a clear lack of fluency. Take for example the following speech, typical of English-languages speeches and given as a response to the question, "'If you were given a chance to change one thing in your life, what would it be and why? Explain." It was delivered at a mid-level competition in a provincial city, by a contestant who would go on to win the event:

(4) C: contestant; A: audience

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1   C:    If .. I would {[ar]} be given a chance .. to change one ~thing .. in
2         my ~life,
3         I would {[ar]} ~like to ~change .. the system .. of women ..
4         circumcision /
5   A:    xxxxx=XXXXXXX=
6   C:            =I will {[ar]}-=
7   A:                       == XXXXXXXXxx=xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
8   C:                               =I will like to ~change
9   A:    == =xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx=
10  C:    == =this .. because .. it  causes = many problems to woman life/
11        It causes death and another problem//
12        ~Thank you,
13  A:    XXXXXXXXXXXXXxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
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Not only does this speech exhibit non-standard grammar (e.g., lines 10), it also was delivered in a stilted style (e.g., lines 1, 3, 10) and with awkward pronunciation (e.g., lines 1, 3, and 6), manifesting a clear lack of fluency. Even though contestants have had, by Tanzanian standards, a great deal of education and exposure to English, this instruction has not provided them with competence in standard English. Furthermore, most contestants are not able to speak spontaneously in English, and the only way that many of them are able to use English onstage at all is through memorizing answers in advance to commonly asked pageant questions. They consult books and friends or family to craft their English-language responses, and they can also be seen backstage prior to the events mumbling to themselves as practice.

Yet these clearly memorized and non-standard English speeches typically count as *fasaha*, helping contestants to achieve pageant success. Audiences—not inclined to be unnecessarily polite—applaud such speeches, and judges award contestants who speak this way with the crown. Rather than standard grammar, what matters most for observers is the clear avoidance of codeswitching. Manifestations of confidence and formality help further construct such speeches as *fasaha*, by lending authority and an overall appearance of speaking English well, to an audience who in many cases may not be proficient in English themselves (c.f. Bwenge, 2009). Hence language purity combined with the other linguistic and non-linguistic features of the metasemiotic scheme together index the contestant as a suitable beauty queen, even without robust, fluent English.

The acceptance of this non-standard register as competent stems in part from its association with education and school settings. Many scholars (Mte-

sigwa, 2001; Roy-Campbell & Qorro, 1997; Yahya-Othman, 1990) have described the English used in written and spoken communication within Tanzanian secondary schools as painfully non-standard and non-fluent, on the part of students and teachers alike (Brock-Utne, 2007; Criper & Dodd, 1984; Mohammed & Banda, 2008; Yahya-Othman, 1990).[4] When metalinguistic attention is paid to the form of spoken English in the classroom, it is often to issues of spelling, formality of delivery (speaking clearly and standing up straight), and code purity (Brock-Utne, 2007; Rubagumya, 1994). Furthermore, the constructivist pedagogical style typical in Tanzanian classrooms that hinges on recitation and memorization (Stambach, 1994; Sumra & Rajani 2006; Vavrus, 2009)[5] likewise helps to reproduce expectations for and practices of English use that normalize the formal style and lack of spontaneity reproduced on the pageant stage. Hence, the memorized, non-standard code contestants speak is in fact the result of their schooling, and it succeeds, both as English broadly construed, and as a particular kind of English, in indexing the speaker as having attended secondary school. More relaxed, less rehearsed ways of speaking onstage, even if more closely adhering to the standard, are often interpreted as not appropriately formal or serious, and may even garner negative audience reaction (Billings, 2006).

The fragmentary English used in pageants both recalls and differs from other non-fluent codes and registers described in diverse contexts globally, such as crossing (Rampton, 1995), styling (Bell, 1999; Bucholtz, 1999), and mock varieties (Hill, 1998; Mesthrie, 2002). All of these ways of speaking are enormously rich tools for doing an array of symbolic and communicative work and can count as competent in certain contexts, by certain social domains. Unlike these special varieties, however, the English described here is institutionalized in secondary school and hence counts as competent in far more wide-reaching situations. Nonetheless, as contestants move through the pageant hierarchy, they find that what worked for them at one level of competition does not work at another level. The same holds true for other semiotic behavior. I discuss these matters in the following sections.

SOCIAL DOMAINS I: THE SPECIFICITY OF FASHION AND HAIRSTYLE CONGRUENCE

In pageant circles, many people believe that judges and audiences at the national Miss Tanzania competition prefer a winner who comes from Dar es Salaam, and that contestants hailing from the hinterland are at a disadvantage because of this bias. This conviction is in fact justified, as most Miss Tanzania title holders, since the competition's inception in 1994, are from Dar (Billings, 2006). What most participants do not realize, however, is that it is not a blind

loyalty to the capital city and its inhabitants that leads to this partiality. Rather, it is a preference for an elite, globally-oriented contestant who manifests her privileged upbringing, with confidence and a touch of modesty, and such people and resources are much more prevalent in Dar es Salaam than elsewhere in the country. When contestants advance from their local competition to the zonal event, they typically face stiffer competition in terms of having more challengers who are of the same caliber as themselves. But once those winners advance from the zonal competitions to the Miss Tanzania event, they often encounter a different kind of competitor altogether. Young women from small, insular cities find themselves competing next to young women who have traveled the world, who have attended international English-language schools, who are university students studying law or business, or who are the children of wealthy and well-connected urban elite. The experiences, skills, and worldview of competitors from Dar are often very different from those hailing from the provinces, and these differences inform the particularities of the qualities of a desirable contestant. In other words, while the general way of describing a contestant remains static across pageant levels, the ways in which these qualities are embodied can differ in substantial ways.

At the same time that contestants in Dar are more outward-oriented and elite, so are judges and audiences. In pageants across the country, audiences and judges are drawn from prominent segments of society. Admission prices are steep, keeping out less financially secure observers, and the events themselves, as socially progressive urban entertainment, appeal to a youthful and stylish crowd. Judges, chosen by pageant organizers to give the appearance of authority and professionalism, even if having no relevant experience, are politicians, businesspeople, and other high-profile community members. Yet while the categories of people who are audiences and judges remain constant across the pageant hierarchy, audiences and judges in Dar es Salaam pageants—whether lower-level ones or the Miss Tanzania contest—are more elite than those elsewhere. Admission prices are significantly more expensive in Dar than elsewhere, ensuring that spectators are themselves more likely to be wealthy and educated. Judges are typically nationally known performers, powerful businesspeople, or respected officials in state government.

Hence, the materiality of what constitutes a beauty queen changes as contestants move up the pageant hierarchy and to Dar es Salaam. While sometimes a provincial contestant does well at Miss Tanzania, often, young women from the provinces feel sorely out of place. How they dress and fix their hair, how they move, smile, and speak, all are subject to reinterpretation at the national event, a process which reconstrues what had been successful traits as instead indexical of lack of sophistication, education, style, and know-how. At the same time, certain semiotic behaviors that are valued at higher-level

competitions in Dar es Salaam are understood differently at provincial, lower-level events. The clearest cases of these processes are seen in contestants' dress and hairstyles.

For many contestants, the opportunity to wear beautiful, stylish, and even revealing clothing is central to their desire to participate. Several scholars have pointed to the conservatism that has long prevailed regarding young women's dress in Tanzania, and the associations of dress with promiscuity and moral laxness (Burgess, 2002; Ivaska, 2002; Stambach, 2000a and 2000b).[6] Contestants themselves are broadly criticized in the media and elsewhere as exhibiting an *utovu wa nidhamu* or 'lack of good behavior,' with insinuations that they are 'buying' votes through sex and dressing themselves through sexual exchanges, indicated frequently in newspaper headlines such as *Hatutaki Malaya Miss Tanzania* 'We don't want prostitutes for Miss Tanzania' (Sani, 2003) and *Miss Tanzania, jaribio la* […] *ngono* 'Miss Tanzania, an attempt at […] sex' (Ijumaa Wikienda, 2007). Yet pageants are increasingly embraced as legitimate; thus, many urban Tanzanians understand that the context of such an event is special, and that a young woman who wears such clothing for competition would not do so in her daily life. In this way, beauty pageants provide a (somewhat) sanctioned arena in which to dress up.

Contestants wear three to four outfits of different styles over the course of a competition, and through this array of clothing, along with their requisite accessories and hairstyles, they have the opportunity to display their taste, elegance, and prosperity, as well as their beauty. First, all contestants perform an opening group dance, during which they dress nearly identically in casual dance clothing, typically consisting of a short sarong and a tank top or t-shirt, often tied around the waist, and no shoes. Next, contestants take the stage one by one, delivering self-introductions while wearing *vazi la ubinifu* 'creative wear.' Creative wear consists of an original design, frequently made from local fabrics crafted into contemporary, youthful styles. The idea of the creative wear portion is that these outfits be unlike anything that is available to purchase ready-made, while still reflecting the elegance expected of a beauty queen. Third, contestants wear *vazi la ufukweni* 'beach wear.' During this segment contestants may take the stage in pairs, walking or subtly dancing up and down the catwalk to a popular song. In Tanzanian beauty pageants, it is forbidden to expose the groin area,[7] so contestants typically wear a bikini top and a short sarong around their waist, obscuring skin-tight bicycle shorts underneath.[8] Finally, those who make it into the top five earn the opportunity answer a pertinent social question while dressed in *vazi la jioni* 'evening wear.'

Different portions of the event necessitate contestants to acquire their clothing in distinct ways, and contestants in the provinces and in Dar es Salaam often diverge not just in their taste but also in having distinct means

of securing each outfit for the competition. In all competitions, the opening dance outfit is provided by the pageant organizers and often includes a shirt with the event's name on it, or the name of a prominent sponsor, such a Pilsner Ice Beer or Vodacom. For the beach wear portion, contestants at lower-level pageants frequently rely on a combination of inexpensive or hand-crafted sarongs, coupled with flimsy sandals or flip-flops, and a *mitumba* 'second-hand'[9] bikini top. In contrast, at the national competition and sometimes at other pageants occurring in Dar, sponsors provide contestants with one of several complementary styles of trendy new bathing suits (they still cannot expose their groin, however).

The creative wear and evening wear segments show the biggest gulf between Dar and elsewhere in terms of clothing selection and method of acquisition. During the creative wear portion, contestants often mention who designed their outfit as part of their self-introductions. In the provinces, the designer is nearly always themselves. The fact that a contestant designed her outfit, rather than relying on the creativity of a tailor or a family member, is a source of pride, and contestants who did not design their outfit instead omit this information from their opening remarks. In contrast, while some contestants competing in Dar es Salaam pageants announce that they designed their own creative wear, it is very common for these contestants to declare the, typically one-word, name of their dress designer. Compare the following two self-introductions, the first from a mid-level provincial contest, and the second from a mid-level contest in Dar:

(5) *Habarini za jioni mabibi na mabwana. Jina langu naitwa Rachel Joel. Nina umri wa miaka ishirini. Napendelea kusoma vitabu. Vazi hili nimelibuni mwenyewe. Ni Miss Tanga. Asanteni.*

'Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Rachel Joel. I am 20 years old. I enjoy reading books. I designed this outfit myself. I am Miss Tanga. Thank you.'

(6) Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Mary Samson. I am twenty-one years old. My hobbies are reading, exercising, and meeting new people. My dress was designed by Diana. In the future I would like to be a sociologist. Thank you.

In addition to delivering a sophisticated, English-language introduction, the Dar-based contestant in (6) gives the name of her designer, Diana. It does not necessarily matter whether spectators are familiar with the designer; name dropping serves the purpose, along with other signs, of signaling the contes-

tant as elite, connected, and in-the-know.

Yet certain designers, at the highest levels of competition in Dar, are indeed renowned among contestants, judges, and pageant-savvy spectators, and contestants who wear such designers' creations often win the competition. Tanzanian designer Mustafa Hassanali is the most sought-after designer for the evening gown portion of the event, since designing the winning contestant's dress in 1999. Several winners since then have worn his creations, and wearing a Hassanali gown is an immediate sign to fellow competitors that a contestant is serious about winning. Furthermore, Hassanali's evening gowns are typically innovative, as his designs are oriented towards the international, high-fashion scene. Often they are sari-inspired designs, or include motifs inspired by Tanzanian and Kenyan ethnic dress, with luxurious draping, multiple fabrics, and asymmetric lines, dresses the likes of which are not seen in pageants outside of the capital. Hassanali, and other fashion designers, are almost exclusively based in Dar es Salaam, and their designs are out of reach both financially and geographically to provincial contestants. The provincial contestants competing at the Miss Tanzania competition with whom I spoke had not heard of him, and they repeatedly described the Hassanali dress worn by a particular finalist with phrases such as *halivutii* 'it is not attractive,' and *si kitu maalum* 'it's nothing special.'

Instead, contestants competing at lower-level competitions acquire their evening gowns through a variety of other means. Often at these pageants, a primary sponsor will be a wedding gown outfitter that donates or rents for a small fee formal attire to the contestants or the pageant organizers. Other times, the contestant will have a dress custom-made by a tailor, which is itself a sign of prosperity and taste. These dresses are standard, floor-length gowns, elegant and modern but not cutting-edge or innovative, often in a fabric bedazzled with bright sequins or giving the effect of beadwork.

Shoes are also a focal point for fellow contestants. In lower-level pageants dress shoes are often either *mitumba*, or they are borrowed or rented from a pageant sponsor. While always in good condition and reasonably stylish, it is not uncommon to see young women wearing shoes a size or two too big or small. I never saw such compromise at lower-level Dar pageants, where contestants are not necessarily wealthier but have access to different ideas and a wider variety of products. At the national pageant, contestants are provided with new, stylish shoes by a corporate sponsor such as Ocean Sandals to wear during various portions of the competition.

Geographical differences in fashion access and preferences become apparent at the national competition. A contestant who had been successful in her hometown might recycle certain elements of her successful performance at the national event, both because it had brought her success, and because it

will save her money and effort. She may, for example, wear the same 'creative wear' or 'evening wear' outfit when competing at the national competition that she had worn at home, with the assumption that the vast majority of the audience will not know that she has already worn that outfit. In one stunning instance, a regional winner showed up at the national event wearing the home-made, brightly colored butterfly outfit, replete with wings and antennae, that was locally interpreted as creative and well-crafted, and that certainly helped in her achieving the local crown. But because pageant-savvy contestants from Dar es Salaam commission fashion-forward outfits by renowned designers, the audience at the Miss Tanzania competition just six weeks later viewed her creation as girlish, inappropriately theatrical, and unsophisticated, and erupt-ed into derisive hoots and shouts of *Toka!* 'Leave!' upon her entrance onstage. Having been nearly laughed off stage, this contestant had no chance of win-ning, even while other aspects of her self-presentation had been congruent.

Perhaps even more than clothing, hairstyles are dictated more by region-al and class preferences than by access to material resources. Young women across the country put great stock in getting their hair done and choose styles based on current fashion, occasion, cost, and practicality. Within pageants across the country, hair is virtually always chemically relaxed, often given length and volume with weaves or hairpieces. Hair color is usually natural or sometimes subtly enhanced, but is almost never a boldly artificial color. Braids are nearly non-existent at these events. For special occasions, Tan-zanian women often choose styles that may only last a couple of days, their very ephemerality contributing to their allure (see Weiss, 2002, for a contrast to men's seemingly perduring and effortless cuts). Such hairstyles are also favored by many contestants. One of these special-occasion styles popular in and out of pageants is the *bomba* 'pipe,' an up-do that involves relaxing the hair, curling it, then teasing and positioning the upper portion of the hair on the top of the head into a bulbous swoosh. The swoosh extends up above the crown of the head before being attached lower in back, thus creating impres-sive height and volume. Sometimes, the massive curl is shaped instead into a vertically positioned roll or cylinder, with the top of the roll also extending above the crown. Other contestants choose to wear a simple bun, or else one of countless elaborately sculpted designs stacked high on top of the head.

Yet a marked divergence is apparent between the hairstyles chosen by contestants in the provinces and those from Dar. In Dar it is unusual to see the *bomba*, and extremely rare to see an intricately molded vertical sculp-ture. Instead contestants in Dar overwhelming prefer to wear their hair long past their shoulders, and either completely straight or with soft, flowing curls. Some wear their hair partially up with tendrils falling down, or in tight buns, perhaps with a hairpiece in back. On the whole, the styles from Dar are more

subtle and ostensibly simpler, and more in keeping with international, and even white, hair fashions. Similarly, internationally popular hair styles not generally worn locally find their way into Dar es Salaam pageants; in a recent year, the winner of the national competition had a shaved head, a style that is worn across the country by school girls but not by most stylish young women. It is associated with innocence and frugality, as it costs little in time or money to execute or maintain, and it is not considered to be alluring to men (see discussion in Taylor, 2008). Yet this hairstyle, familiar in the international fashion world for being worn by very successful models of African origin such as Sudan's Alek Wek, has come to be seen by some in Dar es Salaam as globally stylish. Nonetheless, on the street in a provincial city, I once heard two fashionable young women in a café ponder sardonically whether the stylish young woman with a shorn head standing close to them had forgotten her wig at home.[10] While trend-setting in Dar, this hairstyle's allure has not caught on across the country.

Like clothing, provincial contestants' hairstyles are also often immediate indexes to Dar audiences of their lack of sophistication. In one striking case at the Miss Tanzania competition, a popular provincial runner-up winner wore her hair styled in an almost foot-high architectural design, extraordinarily rigid and shiny with carefully scaffolded swirls and loops, similar to but even more elaborate than the one she wore at her home pageant. During the group opening dance, giggles could be heard among certain members of the audience. Then when this contestant took the stage by herself for her self-introduction, the snickers became louder, and several spectators offered berating comments, including, "This is not the bush," and, "Does she keep her toothpicks in there?"[11] Both of these statements point to the inappropriateness and lack of refinement of the hairdo from the point of view of this audience. Not actually a hairstyle one would typically see in the bush, the critiques highlight the common view among Dar es Salaam natives that anywhere else in the country is nowhere (Higgins, 2007). While people in Dar es Salaam might also wear such a coiffure, the audience was aware of the international standards of the event, and the fact that such a hairstyle does not travel well, so to speak, and furthermore is not one that would typically be worn by an educated Dar es Salaam elite.

Young women who reach the pageant pinnacle from their regional pageants arrive in Dar es Salaam proud of their achievements. Quickly, however, they realize they are seen as *washamba* 'country bumpkins.' All contestants struggle immensely with 'confidence,' referred to even in Swahili with the English 'confidence':

(7) *Uwe na ufahamu na uwe na 'confidence' yaani usiogope na uwe mchan-gamfu …huwezi kufika Miss Tanzania ukiwa na ule uogauoga…*

'You have to have awareness and confidence. That is, don't be afraid and be charming…you cannot be Miss Tanzania if you are nervous…'

Confidence is considered to be a quality gained as a girl becomes a woman; while shyness is valued in a schoolgirl, it is not valued in a woman, who should carry herself with self-assuredness (see Taylor, 2008). Confidence is a critical quality mentioned with great frequency by pageant participants, and in newspaper coverage, such as in the headline 'New confidence in Miss Tanzania camp' (The Express, 2004). Yet with at least two weeks of training in Dar before the competition, living and establishing relationships with fellow contestants in a 'camp' hotel, many provincial contestants learn quickly the inadequacies of their style and dress, not to mention their language, leaving them to struggle even more with confidence than their Dar competitors. Some attempt to adapt their pageant style on the fly, while many others have already purchased dresses, or they may be traveling with a female family member responsible for doing their hair and thus committed to a particular hairstyle. These contestants have frequently lost their confidence before even taking the stage, and hence are at a great disadvantage because of this, in addition to whatever linguistic or fashion inadequacies they may exhibit onstage. They may stand with poor posture, tremble, or speak at the wrong volume, all indexing to observers a lack of confidence.

Yet, with clothing as well as with hairstyles, it is not the case that provincial contestants simply fail in trying to replicate a Dar es Salaam-based standard, or that Dar-based contestants put forth a better version of what is seen at lower-level competitions. Rather, in many cases, what wins in Dar es Salaam, and especially at the national event, is different in kind from that in the hinterland. While the general ways in which a winning contestant is described remain static from the hinterland to the capital, and in large part derive from international pageant standards, the instantiation of the metasemiotic scheme differs between these two spheres, and can only be understood through careful observance. But rather than purely parallel, the two modes of interpretation are, ultimately, hierarchical, because a contestant from the hinterland, bringing with her a provincial habitus, has little chance of the life-changing success which fuels her desire to participant in the pageants to begin with. This gulf between Dar and the hinterland becomes even more apparent with language use.

SOCIAL DOMAINS II:
THE SPECIFICITY OF *UFASAHA*

Of course, there is a linguistic component to these shifting standards. As discussed above, there is a widespread understanding of the way that contestants should speak onstage as *ufasaha*, a pure and formal register acquired primarily in secondary school. At most competitions, the routine reliance on memorization and the use of non-standard English grammar and phonology is largely ignored or unnoticed, with emphasis instead on code purity, formality, and confidence in delivery style, and a de-emphasis of standard grammar or fluency (see example (4) above).

In lower-level Dar es Salaam pageants, this way of using and evaluating onstage English remains in place, at least to an extent. While speeches tend to be more polished than those in the provinces, with fewer grammatical mistakes and greater overall fluency, many contestants still show a lack of robust knowledge of English. Furthermore, a preference for a rigid, formal delivery and memorized answers remains. As in pageants elsewhere, a contestant may be ridiculed for speaking in an impromptu manner, leading to an impression that her speech is too long or unrehearsed (Billings, 2006, 2009). But sometimes at these lower-level contests in Dar, the higher concentration of English-proficient audience members leads to their noticing a contestant's deviation from standard English. In one notable case, a contestant who pronounced the salient word AIDS with an epenthetic vowel [ey'dis] was mocked relentlessly (Billings, 2009). Since Swahili syllables are usually open, epenthetic vowels are common in spoken English in Tanzania, and were heard extremely frequently at all pageant levels. While they are usually unremarkable, it was the combination of a few sophisticated audience members, with the fact that the feature was used on this particularly salient word, that resulted in the audience outburst.

But at the pageant pinnacle, the annual Miss Tanzania competition, the way of speaking that is rewarded is frequently markedly different from that which is praised at lower levels. While still described as *fasaha* (see (1) above), the register often spoken by Miss Tanzania winners is fluent, less formal, even conversational, akin to what is sometimes critiqued as lacking formality at lower-level contests. At the national event, the focus thus turns towards standardness, or *usanifu*, and fluency, and contestants who were successful using their extremely rehearsed, school-based English find that this register is non-congruent with judges' and audiences' expectations. The distinction between *usanifu* and *ufasaha* is not one that contestants, and in fact other Tanzanians, generally make, with *usanifu* used primarily by grammarians and academics to refer to standard grammar, and *ufasaha* widely used to describe to 'proper'

language in general, whether written or spoken, and in contrast to *lugha ya mitaani* 'street language' (see Reuster-Jahn & Roland Kießling 2006). For most Tanzanians, what counts as 'proper' language is understood as pure language, as exemplified in (1)-(3) above. In this way, the particular manifestation of *ufasaha* that, before, indexed education, through its purity and formality, now indexes a lack thereof—and someone who stopped her education too early to acquire truly fluent English. What, before, set a contestant apart from her competitors now lumps that young woman in with the many other provincial beauty queens who stand on the stage with her, much less confident than they had been at home.

This shifting of the substance of the linguistic component of the metasemiotic scheme is exemplified in a much-talked about occurrence that took place during the Miss Tanzania 2003 competition. The front-runner of the event, Nargis Mohammed, was well-known for having appeared in a popular music video and was considered to be very pretty and endearing, as indicated in the following newspaper passage:

> …*hasa baada ya kufanya vyema katika video hiyo ya "Zali la Mentali" [na] kutokana na uzuri wa umbo lake na sauti tamu inayosikika katika wimbo huo, Nargis alitokea kuzikonga nyoyo za watu wengi huku wengi wao wakimbashiria kutwaa taji la Miss Tanzania…(Mwanamke, 2003)*

> '…especially after doing a great job in the video of "Zali la Mentali" [and] because of her nice shape and her sweet voice which is heard in that song, Nargis attracted many fans many of whom predicted that she would be the winner of the Miss Tanzania title.'

She indeed was the winner of a lower-level Dar es Salaam pageant, and impressed the audience repeatedly with her confidence and beauty each time she took the stage at the national event. Her making it into the top five came as no surprise to the audience. Also in the top five was Sylvia Bahame, who had placed as the runner-up in another lower-level Dar es Salaam pageant. There was no pageant buzz surrounding Sylvia, who was not considered to be particularly beautiful, but instead had prominent front teeth, a broad forehead, and a stockier build than many contestants. However, when these contestants spoke during the Q&A session, their linguistic skills led the audience and judges to change their minds about who should take the crown.

Nargis took the stage for the Q&A session looking stunning, wearing a dark blue sequined dress, her hair fastened to the side with a flower. She announced her preference to use English, and then was called upon to answer the question, "In the recent budget, Tanzania has embarked on campaign [sic]

to remove poverty. Tell us, in your view, what should be done to remove the poverty." She began her response confidently, with relatively standard English, but very formal and stilted delivery, a speech that would have earned her praise at lower-level contests. After a few lines, Nargis was applauded for the humanitarian content of her answer, but it was this applause that initially caused her to lose her place in what was clearly a memorized speech. At the urging of the MC, Nargis restarted her answer, but when the audience realized she was not able to give an impromptu speech, they began mercilessly mocking her. Once the MC gained some control of the audience, Nargis started her response for the third time, only to fail once more in completing her answer. The audience went wild with amusement and ridicule, and there was no way that Nargis would take home the crown.

Then it was Sylvia's turn. In contrast to Nargis, who was a secondary school leaver, Sylvia was currently enrolled as a law student at the University of Dar es Salaam. She had also spent years attending international schools in the Middle East due to her parents' work. Below is her speech, in response to the question, "Is woman's role different from man's? Explain.":

(8) C: Contestant; A: Audience

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1    C:   Thank you very much/
2         Good evening ladies and gentlemen, judges/
3         I would say that indeed a woman's role in the society is very
4         different from that of a man's role/
5         First of all women are predisposed to bearing children/=
6    A:                                          =xxxxxxx
7    C:   Therefore this means that automatically they have certain rights
8         and responsibilities that are different from- to those of men//
9         Secondly, I would say that women that work have a higher work
10        load than that of men, because first of all, there's a certain mis-
11        misconception in most societies that women's role is to simply
12        work, cook, and tend to the family, and if this is so, then
13        women who work have their work load doubled//=
14   A:                                          =xxxxxxxxxx
15   C:   Therefore at the end of the day they are not fully appreciated/
16        Thank you//
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While adhering to the emphasis on code purity, Sylvia's speech was not like the other examples of *ufasaha*. Because of her educated and international background, she spoke an idiosyncratic non-local variety of English characterized by linguistic and stylistic features from Tanzanian, British, and Ameri-

can English. She also used sophisticated grammar and turns of phrase, which taken together marked her as highly educated and international. Furthermore, in line 8, she shows an orientation towards a perceived standard, in her self-correcting the preposition that follows "differs," from "from" to "to."

Nargis and Sylvia competed at two different prominent zonal-level events in Dar es Salaam prior to taking part in the Miss Tanzania competition. Nargis was the winner at hers, while Sylvia went home with second place. Clearly more fluent and confident in English during her event, Sylvia's less formal delivery style did not count the same way as it did at the national event. Furthermore, unlike Nargis with her celebrated figure, Sylvia was not considered to be a beauty. Newspaper reportage rarely if ever commented on Sylvia's overall attractiveness but instead issued descriptions such as, 'Her stride, her smile and the gap between her teeth really made her shine' (Dimba, 2003),[12] a prominent pageant organizer described her to me as "a bit chunky," and focus groups depicted Sylvia as *mneno kidogo* 'a little fat' and a *dada kimeo* 'unattractive girl.' They explained that newspapers cannot speak of a newly crowned Miss Tanzania in frank terms, as she is Tanzania's hope for gaining international recognition at the Miss World competition later in the year. So without the fame, beauty, or charm of Nargis, Sylvia possessed the linguistic skill set that, in the particular context of Miss Tanzania, indexed her upbringing and experiences that made her worthy of the coveted national crown.

CONCLUSIONS

The hegemony of English vis-à-vis Swahili in Tanzania is indisputable and holds across multiple spaces, scales and institutions. Scholars have repeatedly shown that, throughout the country, English is understood to equal education (Neke, 2003), and that, without standard English, one's hopes of upward mobility are limited (Mohammed & Banda, 2008). It is at once a situation rooted in colonial legacy and also one fueled by a more recent desire to be connected with the rest of the world, and a belief that knowledge of English is the conduit for such connectedness (Neke, 2003).

The present study elaborates on such findings in two primary ways. First, this analysis shows that 'elite English' in Tanzania is not monolithic. Instead, interpretations of English competence are space- and place-specific, thus taking to heart Blommaert and co-authors' (2005, p. 200) directive for sociolinguists to pay attention "to competencies expected and attributed by participants in a given environment," rather than to monolithic codes with known names, such as 'Dutch' or 'Japanese.' Other research has likewise pointed out the many faces of English in Tanzania, as used in a variety of institu-

tional and other settings, from the university campus (Blommaert, 1992), to the newsroom (Higgins, 2007), to schools (Brock-Utne, 2007) and parliament (Bwenge, 2002). This paper builds on such studies by considering the scaled understanding of what it means to speak English, even within a single institution. This variability is, furthermore, crucially linked with social and spatial hierarchies outside of the pageant world.

The second observation is that specific linguistic registers are connected with other semiotic behavior, and these semiotic materials together work in shifting clusters to index their users as possessing certain qualities (Agha, 2007). Often, if just one element of the metasemiotic scheme is non-congruent, the user will immediately be seen as a phony, a misfit, or a rustic. Standard, fluent, impromptu English, spoken by a provincial contestant wearing a homemade outfit and elaborate hairstyle, would stand out as non-congruent, both at her home competition as well as at the Miss Tanzania event, with spectators being unsure how to make sense of her. In recent newspaper coverage of the national competition, the pageant coordinator was quoted critiquing contestants for arriving from zonal-level events not knowing how to "differentiate a glass for juice, water and wine," or how to "lay spoons and forks after meals" (Kapinga, 2008). Special training was underway to ensure that contestants would learn these skills prior to competition, interesting especially since such skills are not overtly part of the competition. This emphasis on western-style table manners, in combination with the known preference for standard, fluent English, shows that semiotic behaviors are neither judged, nor acquired, in isolation. In Tanzania, elite language skills are as likely learned from elite, transnational households as from a formal education, and in such households, an emphasis on European etiquette would also be likely. It is this cluster of features that is desirable for an upper-level beauty queen.

These observations point to extreme inequalities in Tanzania, inequalities stemming in part from language policies, language ideologies, and educational realities that offer few opportunities for upward mobility. Without the chance at even a secondary education, the majority of Tanzanians are limited to work on the farm or in the informal sector, barely earning enough to support a family (Al-Samarrai & Reilly, 2005). Those select few who have achieved a secondary education find themselves without work, both because of the paucity of good jobs (Al-Samarrai & Reilly, 2005; Stambach, 2000), and because they do not possess the single skill—standard English—that, more than any other, qualifies them for such jobs (Mohammed & Banda, 2008; Neke, 2003).

Similarly, inequalities in Tanzania are in part rooted in geography. While Dar es Salaam is full of citizens without enough money, it at the same time has the country's largest concentration, by far, of people with wealth and influence. The nation's glitterati, power-brokers, and intelligentsia reside in Dar

es Salaam, coming and going from the country regularly, bringing back ideas, people, and material goods from the rest of the world. It is also home to many of the nation's artists, designers, and musicians, creating their own art, style, and trends. While some of this aesthetic culture certainly makes its way to the hinterland via individuals and media, much of it does not, or at least, not in the same form. Of course, communities throughout Tanzania have their own influences on language, style, and taste independent of Dar, creating home-grown fashions and preferences that, locally, count at least as much as those known to be derived from the big city. But much of these innovations have little currency in the capital.

Rural Tanzanians, and even Tanzanians from the country's large cities, flock to Dar in order *kutafuta maisha* 'to look for life,' seeking opportunities they believe do not to exist at home. Many of them will find work, and some of them will find success. Yet it is primarily only those Tanzanians who are already members of wealthy, urban, educated families, most of which are located in Dar, who will themselves become the next generation of leaders and trendsetters. Through a combination of private and then tertiary education, and linguistic and other lessons learned at home and among their peers, it is this population who find themselves positioned to live their dreams, whether these are to become an international lawyer, or to become Miss Tanzania, or in the case of the crowned Sylvia, both.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

[1.] The centrally located city of Dodoma is officially the nation's capital, and it is home to key governmental and administrative activities. However, as a much smaller and less connected city, it in no way competes with Dar es Salaam in terms of its national and international prominence in matters of the arts, finance, education, business, diplomacy, tourism, and the like.

[2.] Miss Tanzania has only once, in 2005, placed highly at Miss World. This is a subject that occupies the attention of local newspapers, high-level pageant organizers, and contestants alike.

[3.] Duranti (1997), however, defines a speech community as "the product of the communicative activities engaged in by a given group of people" (p. 82). According to this formulation, a speech community, rather than pre-existent, is constituted entirely by acts of communication. This definition thus firmly rejects any notion that a speech community is rigidly defined or known a priori.

[4.] The widespread problems that teachers and students have with English have led scores of scholars of education in Tanzania to critique the country's language policy (e.g., Mulokozi, 1991; Roy-Campbell & Qorro, 1997; and Yahya-Othman, 1990, among many others).

[5.] Similar emphasis on recitation, memorization, and chorus-style instruction has been described in settings across Africa (Arthur, 2001; Hornberger & Chick, 2001; Moore, 2006; Wedin, 2010).

[6.] The connection between fashionable clothing and moral turpitude is twofold: On the one hand, people assume that the only way a young woman could acquire an array of stylish clothing is through the help of a sugar daddy. On the other hand, young women are blamed for using their self-adornment to lure men into unsanctioned sexual relationships. Stambach (2000b) points to another reason many Tanzanians are uncomfortable with women's fashion: Born-again Christians also consider young women who dress in contemporary fashions as needing instead to devote that attention to God.

[7.] Although private organizations, Tanzanian beauty pageants are monitored by BASATA (*Baraza la Sanaa*), the national arts council. It was BASATA that decided that contestants were not allowed to expose their upper thighs or groin area.

[8.] While limits are set on bodily exposure, this segment of the competition is still a major draw for spectators, who are generally not accustomed to seeing women in such outfits. A popular newspaper emphasizes the titillating nature of the beach wear portion of the competition:

> *walionekana kushangiliwa sana kila walipopita jukwaani kuonesha ma-vazi yao likiwemo lile vazi maarufu la ufukweni na la ubunifu na vazi la jioni.* (*Kiu, 2003*)

> 'the audience cheered wildly each time they walked on stage to show their outfits, the famous swimming outfit, the creative wear, and the evening dress.'

[9.] *Mitumba* literally means 'loads,' or 'bundles,' and refers specifically to second-hand clothing imported from Europe and the United States. The term comes from the fact that these clothes arrive at ports in large bails and then are redistributed across the country in smaller bundles. *Mitumba* clothing are appreciated by average Tanzanians for day-to-day as well as special occasion wear, as they offer the

wearer a selection and at least a perceived quality not otherwise available new and locally. Second-hand clothing is likewise popular across the continent, as documented, for example, in Hansen's (2000) work on *salaula*, as imported used clothing is called in Zambia.

[10.] See Stambach (1999) for a discussion of a very different set of indexicalities for women's hairstyles in Tanzania some twenty years ago.

[11.] These insults were uttered in English by a group of several young Tanzanian women who shared an expensive, $50-a-head table at the national competition. The women were dressed and groomed in keeping with international standards for stylish young women, and they kept themselves refreshed with several bottles of South African red wine. Throughout their conversations, they spoke primarily elite, fluent local English, with the occasional Swahili aside. The word 'bush' is particularly noteworthy here, as it can be very offensive in many African English-es (see, for example, Jackson & Amvela, 2000; Rosati, 2010), as it was certainly intended by these supercilious, privileged young women.

[12.] …*huku miondoko, tabasamu na mwanya wake vikimzidishia sifa*.

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Transcription conventions adapted from Gumperz & Berenz (1993):

.. pause of less than .5 second
= overlap
== latching of utterance to speaker's previous one
- truncation (self-interruption)
~ fluctuating pitch over a single word
{[ ]} non-lexical phenomena that overlay the lexical stretch
, slight rise, as in listing intonation (more is expected)
/ slight fall
// final fall
xxxx quiet audience applause
XXXX loud audience applause

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