

LANGUAGE SHIFT AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TANZANIA¹

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Introduction

Tanzania is a country of many languages. While Swahili is used by everyone in different situations, vernacular languages are restricted to the different ethnic groups and English is mainly used in education. Vernacular languages, Swahili and English are competitors whose fortunes are tied to the socio-political changes in the country. In the past fifty years the use of the Swahili language has increased tremendously in Tanzania. Virtually all Tanzanians speak Swahili today and Swahili has become an identity marker for Tanzanians. The use of Swahili has expanded so much that it is now replacing vernacular languages as the language of everyday interaction and is also replacing English as the language of education and government. In this paper, I illustrate that there is a process of language shift in Tanzania. I also show that due to different factors, Swahili has become the language of Tanzanian identity.

The Language Situation

In order to understand the dynamics propelling Swahili to such a position of prominence, one needs to look at the language situation. In this section I briefly discuss what languages are spoken and for what functions as well as how the different languages relate to each other.

The Languages of Tanzania

There are about 112 indigenous African languages in Tanzania (Grimes 1992). The majority of them (101 languages) belong to the Bantu language group. The other African language super-families are also represented. There are 4 Nilotic languages which include Maasai and Tatoga, 5 Cushitic languages such as Iraqw, and 2 Khoisan languages, Hatsa and Sandawe. The number of speakers for each language varies considerably ranging from 2,000 to millions.

More than twenty years ago, it was estimated that 90% of the population spoke Swahili and at least one vernacular language

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(Abdulaziz, 1971). About 10% were estimated in 1971 to be speakers of Swahili as their mother tongue. Apart from these indigenous languages, there is one very important foreign language, English. Although Tanzania is often characterized as English-speaking, a very small percentage of the population speaks English. Abdulaziz-Mkilifi (1972) estimated about 15% of the population spoke English and these numbers have not increased since that time. This is a language which is learned at school and is used mainly in schools. Today, only people who have more than 12 years of schooling are likely to be able to communicate in English. Thus, the "English-speaking" label is an erroneous colonial legacy and does not reflect the linguistic situation.

Language Use

The different languages are integrated in the use by speakers, as if they were only varieties of the same language used in different situations; as if they were registers. It has been noted by many (see for example Abdulaziz-Mkilifi, 1972; Rubagumya, 1991) that the vernacular languages are languages of communication at home, in the family, amongst relatives and close friends. When people interact with a person who does not share a vernacular, Swahili is used. In many cases it may even be considered rude to speak a vernacular or English in the presence of people who do not speak that language.

In the elementary schools, Swahili is the medium of instruction. In the author's experience, very few children learn Swahili for the first time at school where instruction begins immediately in Swahili. Swahili dominates all domains of public communication such as in the parliament, in commerce, in churches and mosques. Most mass media is in Swahili.

English is used in higher education, in foreign trade (and when dealing with foreigners in general), in the High Court and the Court of Appeal and to a lesser extent in commerce (Polomé and Hill, 1980). Rubagumya (1991) provides a summary of language use in different domains. This is further condensed into Table 1 in order to illustrate the general picture. In Table 1, plus signs indicate very regular and extensive use of the languages as the normal working language. The question is not one of whether a language is used exclusively or not. Rather what may be considered the norm. The languages are not mutually exclusive in the different fields of discourse.

Table 1: A Summary of Language Use in Different Domains in Tanzania

Domain	Vernacular	Swahili	English
Informal	+	+	
Culture (e.g. worship and literature)		+	+
Commerce		+	+
Education		+	+
Politics		+	
Administration		+	
Judiciary		+	+
Mass Media		+	+
Int'l Communication			+

One can easily see that Swahili dominates in almost all domains. This, however, is a synchronic view of the state of affairs. Vernacular languages are restricted to informal use, and are not used at school or in other public settings. In the next section data are presented in order to complement the picture outlined above. The data add historical perspective by looking at different age groups and their language choices.

The pattern of language use has been described using Ferguson's model of diglossia. The term triglossia was used by Abdulaziz-Mkilifi (1972:129) to characterize the language situation in Tanzania. This involves three systems of languages in Tanzania:

- (i) The indigenous vernacular languages which people use mainly for oral communication in different regions or localities.
- (ii) A local standardized lingua franca which is used in the education system, mass media as well as in government and administration. However, this language does not yet serve all modern demands of science and technology. Swahili is such a language for although it is extensively used, it is not yet widely used in advanced technology, higher education and science.
- (iii) A world language, English supplements Swahili where it is not widely used.

Clearly, different languages are used in different situations. This view of the language situation suggests a complementary distribution of the use of the languages in Tanzania. It suggests a harmonious co-existence of English, Swahili, and the vernacular languages. This picture lacks the dynamics that cause some languages to spread while others die, some communities to shift to another language while other communities maintain their languages. Conflict between the different language is the essence of language shift to which I now turn.

Languages in Conflict

The most conspicuous arena of this conflict is in the Tanzanian educational system. English and Swahili are competing in their functions in the schools. Indeed in the country as a whole, there is competition between Swahili and the vernacular languages as the medium of communication in some very traditional roles. In this conflict, Swahili is winning against both English and the vernacular languages.

In a study I conducted in 1991², 1155 respondents of mixed backgrounds were asked to rank their Swahili proficiency on a scale of one to five. The results were as follows:

Table 2: Proficiency in Spoken Swahili

Very Well	68.18%
Well	22.50%
A Little	5.50%
Very Little	2.07%
None	1.73%

This table shows that over 90% percent of the respondents consider themselves as speaking Swahili well. 3.85% claimed to speak little or no Swahili. The figures are conservative, considering that the interviews were done in Swahili. Respondents who claimed they spoke no Swahili needed interpreters to explain what they had to say. But, during the interview they understood what was said in Swahili. They may have been too shy to respond in Swahili because they were not very proficient, as opposed to not speaking the language at all. Of the over 28 million Tanzanians, more than 26 million speak Swahili well. It is a language of extreme importance.

Indicators of Language Shift

The conflict between Swahili, vernacular languages and English can be seen in many aspects of language use in Tanzania. The result is that Swahili is in a favorable position, dominating all spheres of life with more and more people acquiring Swahili as a first language. Increasingly, functions are performed in Swahili.

In this section I look at a number of indicators of language shift in Tanzania. I show that younger people prefer Swahili to vernacular

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languages and that Swahili is increasingly becoming the first language for many people.

Language Shift

Fasold (1984:213) describes the process of language shift as an "encroachment of one language on the domains of the others." In a situation of societal bilingualism such an encroachment leads to an intergenerational shift. Fasold considered a number of factors such as the following: migration, industrialization and economic development, institutional pressures such as education and government policy, urbanization, differential status and the populations of the speakers of the different languages. It seems, however, his contention that language shift occurs as a consequence of a community's desire "to give up its identity as an identifiable sociocultural group in favor of an identity as part of some other community" is conceived as part of a minority phenomenon. Even with minority status, a community may lose its language without losing its in-group identity as the case of many minorities in the United States shows. When a shift occurs, it is to a language or variety that is associated with opportunities, prestige and greater use in vital domains of life such as in commerce, government and education. The shift, therefore, is a pragmatic change in the quest for a perceived better life.

Following Gal (1979) and Fasold (1984), I shall consider language shift as both an encroachment of one language on the domains of language use that were originally domains of the language shifted from; and this results in generational shifting from mainly using language X to using language Y. In either case, there is a very high correlation between the language chosen by individuals for different domains and for different interlocutors on one hand, and age on the other. Consider B to be a generation of parents, C as the generation of their children and A as the oldest generation, i.e. the grandparents of C.

A	B	C
Lx	Lx	Lx

In this scenario, all generations have the same L1. However, what we see in the Tanzanian case is increasingly an example of a different scenario which may be presented thus:

A	B	C
Lx	LxLy	Ly

This is a progressive shift resulting in L1 of A becoming different from the L1 of C. The first language of A is Lx while that of C is Ly. This illustrates a rapid shift in three generations. Imagine Lx is the vernacular language and Ly is Swahili. In this case, grandparents are using vernacular languages while parents use both vernacular languages as well as Swahili. Finally, children end up using Swahili only. This is indeed the situation in Tanzania, displayed by the language preference in different domains of discourse, language preference according to interlocutors, language acquisition and the language of choice for offspring.

Language Preference in Domains of Discourse

In this section data are presented that show that Swahili is generally the preferred language across domains of discourse. Different domains have different frequencies which indicate that different languages are preferred for different domains. The data will also show that there is a difference in what language is chosen according to age. Younger people prefer Swahili in all domains of discourse.

I administered a questionnaire to people in different parts of Tanzania and the responses of the 1,159 interviewees were grouped according to their age. In Table 3, raw figures are presented for the frequency of the language people in different age groups indicated they preferred using in different domains of discourse. The age groups were organized on the basis of convenience as I was unable to get an equal number of people for age groups in ten year intervals. The languages used are Swahili, vernacular languages, English and Arabic. For responses that indicated they preferred using Swahili and another language, it is shown in the table as *Swa+ x*.

First, it has to be determined whether Swahili is generally preferred across different domains of discourse. Using the figures presented in Table 3, it is hypothesized that Swahili is preferred. The null hypothesis was Swahili and other languages are randomly spoken. The critical value of the chi-square is 20.515 and the data showed a statistic of 307.14. The data is very significant at $p < .001$. This confirms the alternative hypothesis that Swahili is preferred across the different domains of discourse.

Table 3: Language Preference According to Domains of Discourse

Age Group	Language	Worship	Academics	Intimate	Jokes	Work	Casual Conversation
Children Below 18	Swahili	179	169	171	184	104	190
	English	3	18	13	7	8	3
	Vernac.	23	1	65	50	4	42
	Arabic	21	0	0	0	0	0
	Swa+x	10	26	15	24	7	36
	<i>n</i>	236	214	264	265	123	271
Young Adults 18 - 30	Swahili	205	153	121	185	162	213
	English	14	76	24	8	27	4
	Vernac.	43	0	129	53	32	36
	Arabic	24	0	0	0	0	0
	Swa+x	28	56	46	73	45	71
	<i>n</i>	314	285	320	319	266	324
Adults 31 - 45	Swahili	150	121	70	114	158	157
	English	3	24	7	6	8	1
	Vernac.	45	8	141	59	7	34
	Arabic	27	0	0	0	0	0
	Swa+x	24	43	36	73	41	63
	<i>n</i>	249	196	254	252	214	255
Older Adults Over 45	Swahili	147	122	43	57	130	101
	English	2	14	4	3	7	2
	Vernac.	95	27	216	167	40	134
	Arabic	26	0	0	0	0	0
	Swa+x	20	27	25	66	32	60
	<i>n</i>	290	190	288	293	209	297

From the raw figures in Table 3, the following graphs are obtained in order to visualize the trend. The differences between different age-groups are plotted on graphs. Each domain of discourse is done separately.

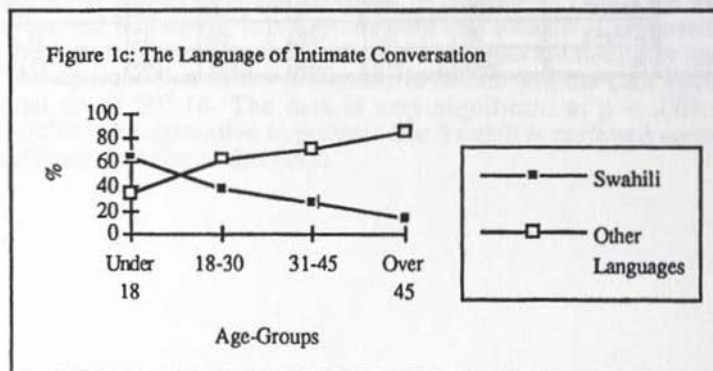
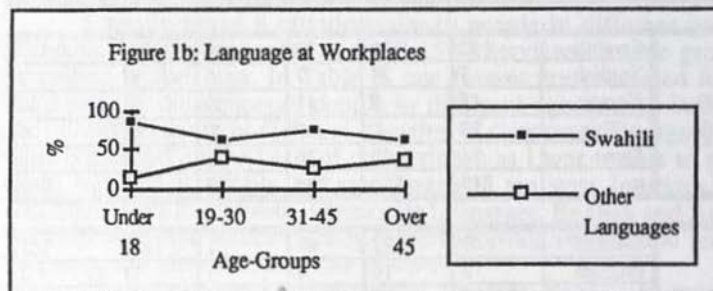
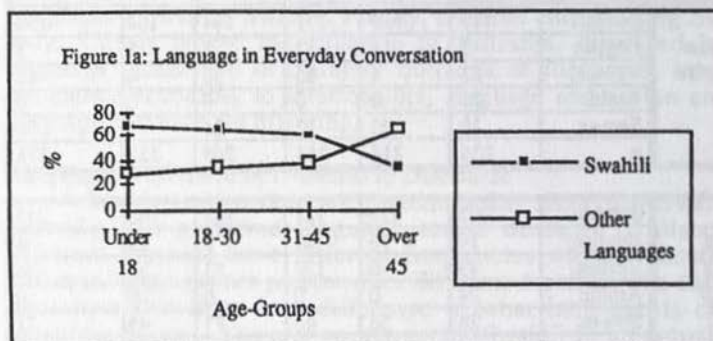


Figure 1d: Choice of Language of Academics

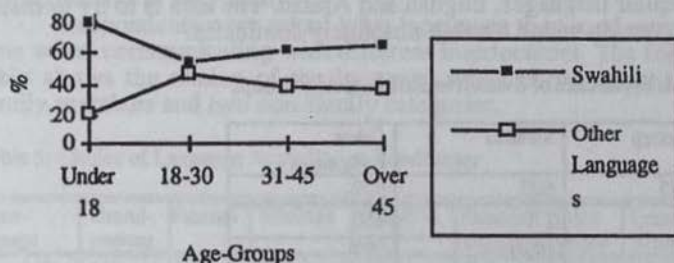
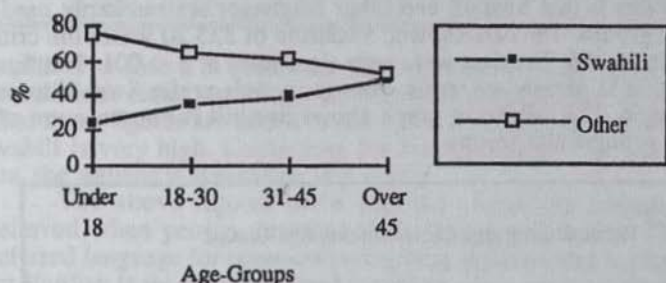


Figure 1e: Language Choice for Worship



In all the graphs there is a trend that shows a preference for Swahili which increases with the younger age groups. This preference is indicated by a falling Swahili graph as age increases. The other languages which are predominantly vernacular, are preferred by older people. This trend can further be shown in the following sub-section. For the language of academics and work, the graphs show fall-rise for the young adults. This is due to the fact that the "other languages" includes English. At this age, people would be at a higher educational level where the language of instruction is supposedly English as Table 3 shows.

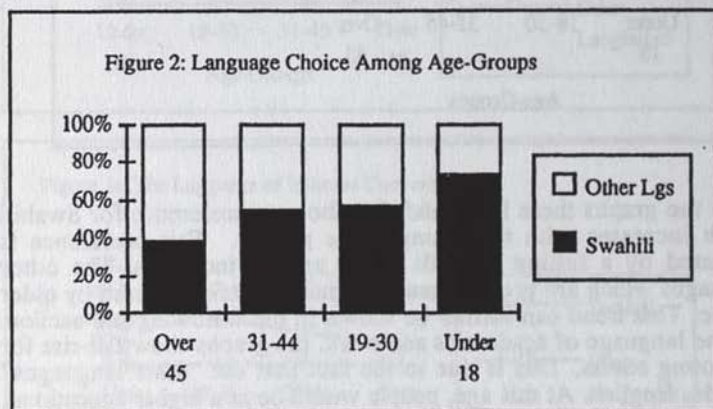
The following table presents the raw figures for the frequency of Swahili in relation to other languages according to different age

groups, combining the figures for all domains of discourse. These are essentially data from Table 3, above. However, here the figures for *Swahili + x* are added to *Other Languages* which includes also the vernacular languages, English and Arabic. The idea is to try to display the figures in which Swahili absolutely dominates.

Table 4: Preference of Swahili in Different Age Groups

Age Group	Swahili	Other Languages
Over 45	600	970
31-45	770	650
18-30	1039	789
Under 18	997	376
	3406	2782

In this subsection the hypothesis that Swahili is preferred across all age groups is tested using the chi-square. The null hypothesis is that Swahili and other languages are randomly used by all age groups. The data showed a statistic of 355.20 where the critical value is 16.266. The data were very significant at $p < .001$. The figures show that in percentage terms, younger people prefer Swahili to other languages. The following graph shows Swahili is chosen more often by the younger age groups.



Notice again that the shaded part of the bars, which represent responses that showed preference for Swahili, increases as the

population age decreases. This indicates that younger people have a stronger preference than older people for Swahili.

Language Use in the Family

Respondents were asked what languages they used most of the time when communicating with different interlocutors. The following table shows the choice of the language when communicating with family members and two non-family categories.

Table 5: Choice of Language According to Interlocutor

Language	Grandparents	Parents	Siblings	Children	Grandchildren	Sales people	Leaders and Admin.
Swahili	199	350	516	339	210	905	969
Swahili + x	126	239	321	223	97	158	65
Vernac.	698	527	284	146	81	72	35
English	1	4	16	6	0	3	6
Arabic	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
	1026	1122	1138	714	388	1138	1075

Swahili + x refers to responses by respondents who felt they used Swahili with either vernaculars or the foreign languages. In any case, when these figures are added to the Swahili figures, the percentage of Swahili is very high. Comparing the family data and the non-family data, the statistic is significant at $p < .001$.

The above figures show that the vernacular languages are preferred when people converse with their grandparents. The least preferred language for communicating with grandparents is English. In fact English is the least preferred language when communicating with any of the interlocutors. The figures for Swahili rise with younger relations and they are the highest for grandchildren. The numbers choosing vernacular languages falls with younger relations.

These figures illustrate that Swahili is becoming a very important language even with communication within families. The vernaculars may no longer be the most viable identity markers in which young ones grow and through which the children are socialized. Thus, Swahili is taking over as an identity marker. It represents the national identity rather than ethnic identities.

There are two ways of interpreting the figures and graphs regarding the language preference according to the interlocutors or domains of discourse. One is to say that as people get older, they prefer their vernacular languages. This means the figures do not tell us about language shift but change of preference which comes with age.

However, such a shift has no historical significance. Another interpretation is that the four age groups represent different eras. Thus, more than 45 years ago, the people who are now in the category of old people were young and they grew up in a pattern that preferred the vernacular languages in different contexts. Swahili has progressively become the means of communication for most functions and most young people as the higher percentage with the younger people shows. This second interpretation has historical significance in terms of language shift.

The first interpretation, however, goes against other facts. Swahili use has increased due to a number of reasons outlined below. As a language of commerce and trade, education, administration, academics and worship it is difficult to conceive an older generation changing to their vernaculars after many years of Swahili use. It is only logical that even the older people are being exposed to more Swahili-speaking situations and easily using even more Swahili. Data for acquisition support the contention that there is a shift to Swahili as the next section will show.

Acquisition of Swahili as L1

Respondents were asked what language they learned first. The responses were organized into three categories: vernacular, Swahili and foreign languages. In the following table, the foreign languages are listed as *Other*.

Table 6: Languages Acquired as L1

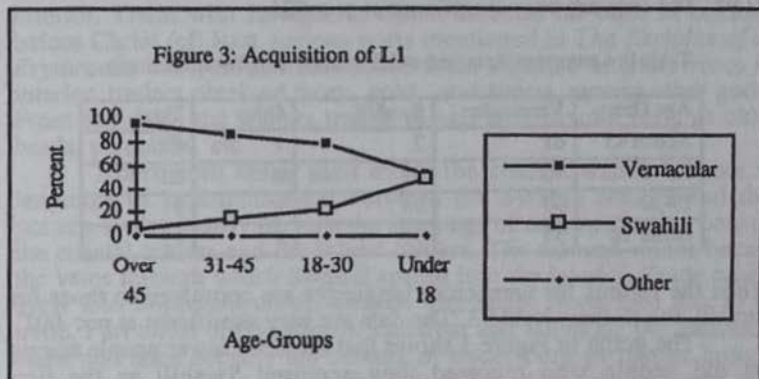
Age Group	Vernacular	%	Swahili	%	Other	%	Total
Under 18	139	51.8	127	47.4	2	0.8	268
18-30	256	77.2	76	22.5	1	0.3	332
31-45	214	85	37	14.6	1	0.4	252
Over 45	283	93.7	17	5.6	2	0.7	303
Total	892	77.3	256	22.2	6	0.5	1154

The figures for other languages refer to English in five cases and Arabic in one case of the over 45 age group. If these foreign languages are put aside for the moment, we can focus on Swahili vs. vernacular situation. First, the null hypothesis is tested: Swahili and the vernaculars are randomly acquired across the different age groups. The statistic obtained is 156.56. This means the data is very significant at $p < .001$. If the vernacular languages and Swahili are grouped together as indigenous, the sample for the foreign language does not tell much. The statistic for the H_0 that the foreign language figures are

random is 0.7646. The data are not significant at $p > .5$. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted.

If the data are taken as representative, it can be seen that over 22% of the people speak Swahili as their first language. Compare this with the figure mentioned earlier by Abdulaziz (1971). Assuming that both estimations are accurate, it can be said that Swahili is increasingly becoming the first language for many people in Tanzania.

The raw frequencies are plotted on percentages in the following line graph in order to provide a visual representation of the trend. Figure 3 below presents three lines, one for vernacular languages, one for Swahili and one for the foreign languages combined.



The figures for vernacular languages start very high (93.8%) and go down to 51.8%. This means that in the sample of old people, 93.8% responded by indicating that the first language they learned was a vernacular. Only 5.6% said they learned Swahili first. The percentage changes with age, such that the children have the lower 51.8% of the respondents who report they acquired the vernacular first. The Swahili graph is the rising graph. From the low figure to almost equal to vernacular for under 18. The figures for Arabic and English are very low with no discernible trend. Bearing in mind the alternative interpretation of the figures in the preceding section, it can safely be argued that the figures of both preference and acquisition show that there is a shift to Swahili.

The figures are not the same for the rural population as they are for the urban population. The urban population

generally has higher Swahili figures, while the rural population has higher vernacular figures.

Table 7: Languages Acquired as L1 in the Rural Sample

Age Group	Vernacular	Swahili	Other	Total
Above 45	222	10	1	233
31-45	175	14	0	189
19-30	172	33	0	205
Under 18	128	74	2	204

Comparing the vernacular and Swahili, the statistic obtained is 92.95. The data are very significant at $p < .001$.

Table 8: Languages Acquired as L1 in the Dar es Salaam Sample

Age Group	Vernacular	Swahili	Other	Total
Above 45	61	7	1	69
31-45	40	23	0	63
19-30	60	36	1	97
Under 18	35	59	1	95

When the figures for vernacular languages are compared to those for Swahili, the statistic is 45.93. The data are very significant at $p < .001$.

The graph in Figure 3 shows that there are fewer people among the old people who reported they acquired Swahili as the first language. With the younger age groups, the graphs show a steady rise in the percentage of people acquiring Swahili as their first language.

When these results are compared to those for preference in different domains of discourse one finds compelling evidence to suggest that the earlier results, which showed that younger people prefer Swahili, do not simply reflect a changing habit as people age. Instead, it reflects what languages they are socialized to use in different situations. The increased use of Swahili in such personal domains as intimate conversations indicates a shift in language use in favor of Swahili.

The data on language shift just presented is only descriptive. An interesting question is what factors bring about this shift. This question is interesting because of the lessons that can be learned for the benefit of vernacular languages, lingua francas and for different nations struggling with the question of multiple languages.

Causes of Language Shift in Tanzania

The same general factors responsible for the spread of Swahili are also responsible for language shift. These are urbanization, trade, education, the spread of new religions and the politics of popular participation, and various forms of institutional support. These factors took different forms at different times. In this section, I draw a great deal from the work of Chiragdin and Mnyampala (1977) and Whiteley (1969).

Trade

The East African coast has had a long history of trade among the different settlements and with outsiders and the people of the interior. Trade with foreigners, which dates as far back as centuries before Christ (cf: East African ports mentioned in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*), further stimulated trade with the interior. From the interior, traders obtained ivory, gold, and slaves, among other goods. From the coast the traders traded in salt and imports such as cloth, beads, porcelain, etc.

Apart from being used along the coast, Swahili became the language of communication between the Swahili traders and their porters. It also slowly became the language of communication between the coastal traders and the inland traders. The caravan routes became the veins through which Swahili spread into the interior. Trade centers grew into important cities. Coastal city states developed due to the trade. Port cities of Bagamoyo, Zanzibar and Kilwa on the Tanzanian coast and isles became the centers of trade. Foreign traders brought their goods to these cities. The Swahili traders who brought their merchandise from the interior also brought them to these port cities. Important trading centers in the interior included Urambo and Ujiji which also became centers of Swahili.

Notice that in the data presented in Table 5 it is evident that a very high percentage of people prefer using Swahili when interacting with sales people. Therefore, trade interaction among people of different areas of East and Central Africa helps in the spread of Swahili in those areas. This sets the stage for language shift.

Urbanization

The development of trade resulted in the development of city states along the coast. The language that was in use in all the city states was Swahili and the more people there were in the cities, the bigger the Swahili speaking community.

Urbanization is one of the factors of language spread and language shift today. I have pointed out that the spread of Swahili earlier in this millennium is partly attributed to the development of city

states along the East African coast. Today there is rapid growth of urban populations in Tanzania as the following table shows.

Table 9: Urban and Rural Population in Percentages

Census Year	Urban (in %)	Rural (in %)
1967	6.39	93.61
1978	13.78	86.22
1988	18.33	81.67

Source: Bureau of Statistics. *Tanzania Demographic Health Survey*. Dar es Salaam, 1993.

By themselves the figures do not tell much. But if they are considered in the context of other features, they shed some light on the subject. Recall, for example, that the figures of language acquisition in Table 9 show a rapid increase in language shift in the city sample compared to the rural sample. A rapid growth of urban populations is sure to give a large overall increase in acquisition of Swahili as the first language and therefore a faster shift.

Urban centers are melting pots of diverse cultures and people. People from different linguistic backgrounds live together and work together in a situation where the medium of communication is Swahili. Villages, on the other hand tend to be more homogeneous. Interactions among the urban population, be it business discussion or casual interactions on buses or with neighbors, takes place in Swahili. In other African countries of equally diverse ethnic populations, they have other languages that serve this purpose. It may be a foreign language such as English, French or Portuguese which becomes a second language to many, or it may be an indigenous lingua franca such as Lingala in Zaire and Congo.

As children grow up, they may learn their vernaculars which are restricted to their homes. Subjectively, they learn the value of Swahili which is spoken everywhere, at school, at the market, in the church or mosque, in the buses and even with the next door neighbor. In this way, more and more children become attached to Swahili rather than to the vernacular languages. Villages, on the other hand, tend to be more homogeneous. The same language tends to be used by all the people although in public domains like school, worship and market, Swahili still dominates.

Institutional Support

Before the partition of East Africa, the growth of Indian Ocean maritime trade brought an influx of traders especially from the Middle East. The people of Middle East brought their culture and Islam was one of those institutions that came with the Arab traders. After Islam

was introduced to East Africa, it became part of the culture of the coastal communities. Religious teachings were conducted in Swahili. Wherever the Muslims spread their religion in East Africa, the medium of communication was Swahili. Indeed for many people in the interior, Swahili was the language of the Muslims. As late as the beginning of this century, missionaries in Uganda opposed Swahili arguing it was too close to Mohammedanism and moral degradation (Mazrui and Zirimu, 1978). The Swahili dialect that developed in southern Zaire became known as Kingwana, that is the language of gentle folks, or in this case, Muslims. Opposition and prejudices of the missionaries apart, the fact remains Islam has been an important factor in the spread of Swahili.

Christian missionaries also contributed significantly to the spread of Swahili. Christian missionaries who worked in different parts of the country mainly used Swahili, although in a few areas such as Mbeya and Njombe in the Southern Highlands, missionaries used vernacular languages. In such areas, the speakers of the vernaculars constituted large populations. However, the majority of the missionaries used Swahili in most parts of the country. Their work continued during British Rule and after independence.

The partition of East Africa resulted in four, and later six, colonies: Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. The language policies in the colonies differed. During the colonial period, Swahili became incorporated in the school system and in the administrative and political systems. During German rule in German East Africa (1885-1918), Swahili became the medium of instruction and the language of administration. Local administrators were taught in German schools and sent to different parts of the country. At first they were people from the coast, the Swahili. It was very convenient for the colonial government to make use of the language which was already widely spoken in the colony. A considerable amount of work was done to write grammar books and dictionaries by missionaries and other administrators. Officials going to work in the colony were taught Swahili in Berlin.

When the British took over the Tanganyika colony, they found that Swahili was widely used. They made use of this situation. Administration and business was conducted in both English and Swahili. English was spoken by a few who had been to school, but the majority of the people did not speak English, they spoke Swahili.

Perhaps the most significant development during British rule was the formation of the East African Inter-Territorial Language Committee in 1930. This was formed by the governments of the four East African colonies in order to standardize Swahili and to help in the publication of Swahili materials. The Zanzibar dialect was selected as the basis of Standard Swahili (Whiteley, 1969). Many newspapers and

magazines started publication, nearly all of them were in Swahili. The Tanganyika Broadcasting Service was established and most of its programs were in Swahili.

To sum up, pre-independence Swahili use increased due to trade, urbanization, education, institutions such as the Inter-Territorial Language Committee, mass media, and religious activities of both Muslims and Christians. Political institutions also helped in the spread of Swahili and in the shaping of Tanzanian national identity.

The use of Swahili in campaigns for political independence was a tremendous boost for Swahili. It became the language of solidarity between the educated campaigners and the masses. From 1962, it became the language of business in the parliament (Whiteley, 1969). In a way, one can say the then popular Arusha Declaration of 1967 was easily identified with Swahili because of the focus on the masses. Numerous programs on the radio and columns in the papers and magazines popularized Swahili as did the terminology coined in the various political campaigns. The result was, apart from education and business, politics gave Swahili its mark as a high-status language competing with English. English did not feature at all as the language of politics in Tanzania after independence. Swahili was the language through which the ideals of self-determination and self-reliance were expressed.

Therefore, the development of language shift in Tanzania and the development of Swahili owe much to institutional support such as education, various institutions specifically charged with developing Swahili such as the National Kiswahili Council, the Directorate of Culture and National Language and the Institute of Kiswahili Research. Extensive use in the political sphere in such areas as the parliament, mass education, mass media, political rallies and campaigns, gave Swahili not only wide use, but also a high status to compete with English.

Supra-ethnic Language

I pointed out earlier that Tanzania is a country of many different languages representing all four super families in Africa. There is a very small percentage of the Tanzanian population which belongs to a Swahili ethnic community which reside predominately in the islands and few coastal communities. The overwhelming majority of the people on the mainland belong to different ethnic groups and are not Swahili. Therefore, in terms of relations between people of these diverse ethnic communities, the Swahili language is the language for all people. It is supra-ethnic. Indeed the majority of speakers now are not Swahili by ethnic background. It is very much like English or Spanish. The majority of the English speakers today are not British, neither are the majority of speakers of the Spanish language Spanish.

This feature gives Swahili a great advantage over the ethnic languages. This is particularly true for the past hundred years when it has ceased to be the language of coastal traders or slave traders and shifted to the language of everybody. It is not the language of the oppressors or dominant group. There are a lot of economic and political advantages associated with Swahili in Tanzania. Consider that it is the language of most interactions such as trade, politics and education. All people have access to this language.

This situation can be contrasted with one in which Swahili arouses a lot of negative sentiments. In Uganda, Swahili was used in the colonial army and by the police force. It was also used to some extent by the working class of the cities (Mazrui and Zirimu, 1978). By and large Swahili was not widely used. The Swahili language came to be identified with the oppressive colonial army and police. What is more, many of the soldiers came from the north thus underlining the ethnic dimension. The tyrannical regimes of Idi Amin and some of his successors in which the armies terrorized the people throughout the country did not help the image of Swahili as the language of tyrants.

Indeed this is not the only factor that helps explain why Swahili did not get a firm grounding in Uganda. It does however help to put into perspective the advantages that Swahili had in Tanzania. Much of its institutional support in the last 35 years has been through politics and education. This kind of support helped in enhancing a common identity for Tanzanians, forging a solidarity between common people, the peasants and workers, and politicians as well as others such as business and other middle class people.

Swahili and Self-Determination

Swahili has been instrumental in uniting people of different ethnic backgrounds as well as between the educated and the uneducated majority. In this section, I discuss the role of Swahili in the growth of the Tanzanian nation.

National Unity

The colonization of Africa created nationalities with total disregard for the cultures, nations and boundaries that existed before. The Maasai in the Maasai Steppes were divided, leaving some in Kenya and some in Tanzania. The destruction of the Yao kingdom in the south divided them into three sections, a Tanzanian section, a Mozambican section and a Malawian section. Different social political systems were placed under one rule. To make matters worse, regional imbalances gave some nationalities and languages advantages over others. Schools, roads and other infrastructure were concentrated in areas which produced important cash crops such as coffee. The result

was that more people from those areas became educated. People from Kilimanjaro, Bukoba and Mbeya went on to fill most positions in the civil service. This imbalance created disunity and a lack of trust among people of different ethnic backgrounds.

During the struggles for independence and after, most African countries tried to unify the different nationalities. Often, language is one of the distinguishing features of these different nationalities. The fact that at the time of nationalist struggles for independence Swahili was spoken throughout the country was a big advantage as Swahili became a medium through which the people were to be empowered, not just the educated few or the advantaged ethnic groups. The people could easily identify with nationalist leaders who spoke to them directly in an indigenous language and not through interpreters in a foreign language. Swahili bridged the gap not only between the educated and the uneducated masses, but also between ethnic groups.

Swahili became the language of solidarity among Tanzanians at least until the 1980s. The form of address, *ndugu* (Swahili for brother/sister) became the hallmark of Tanzanianness, a form of solidarity address. Swahili became "our" language for the people of Tanzania, and no longer the language of the coastal peoples. With Swahili, it does not matter whether one is educated or not, whether one is from the north or south, or from a relatively developed area or not. This was enhanced also by various efforts by the nationalist government to eradicate regional imbalances in education and other areas.

After independence, the nationalist leaders promoted involvement of the masses in the political process. Political education classes in Swahili at all levels of education, the TANU directives, *Mwongozo*, (TANU, 1971) were meant to promote popular participation. Parliamentary business has been conducted in Swahili since 1962 (Whiteley, 1969), people have always been able to follow the debates and discussions as they are aired on radio or published in Swahili newspapers. Whatever its problems, CCM (and its predecessors, TANU and ASP) was able to mobilize from the grassroots because the Swahili-speaking politicians could easily communicate to the people in their language.

Rhetoric of Nation-Building

After disastrous wars of resistance to colonial rule waged largely by ethnic groups separately, the ability of nationalist leaders to regain independence gave a tremendous boost to their image. Leaders who mobilized the whole country on non-ethnic grounds were able to speak to them directly and "force the colonial government to leave" and had won the confidence of the people. The leaders promised to work with the people to solve their problems of poverty, ignorance and

disease. That is why there were numerous programs such as expansion of the education sector, health services, housing, and cooperative farming, amongst others

The Arusha Declaration, which was the blueprint for the building of an egalitarian society based on socialism, was perceived as "people oriented". There were campaigns run in Swahili by the media and in the schools to educate the people on the ideology. The enthusiasm of the people was at its all time high in the years following the Arusha Declaration. *Ujamaa* villages and cooperative ventures mushroomed, many self-help schools were built, hospitals, roads were built. This was also the time when Tanzania reasserted its determination to be self-reliant and non-aligned. In his *Ujamaa Essays*, Mwalimu Nyerere (1968) warned specifically against dependence on foreign assistance. This resulted in molding a way of thinking for the Tanzanians in which they took greater pride in Tanzanian achievements and endeavors in spite of their poverty. Tanzanians read and sang about Tanzanian and African history from the perspective of Tanzanian nationalism. Even traditional dances and songs are in Swahili and not just in the vernaculars, especially when the songs dealt with national issues. A genre of Swahili poetry, *ngonjera* (polemics), became very popular and became one of the forums for articulating political messages.

The emphasis on communication was the national language. Swahili was the language of politics, business, administration and culture in general. It even became fashionable to ridicule people who spoke English in public. It was considered a *kasumba* (colonial hangover). In my opinion this was just an extension of a norm that had been established: it is considered rude to use a language in a community where some do not speak the language. Therefore, Ndendeules would not speak Ndendeule if they were in the midst of other people such as Nyakyusa or Hehe. Exclusion of some people in discourse has to be avoided, even though there was no policy on this. It was necessary to maintain the togetherness and *undugu* (sisterhood/brotherhood) of all Tanzanians.

Disillusionment

For all these efforts and achievements, the economy began to decline in the late 1970s. Performance in the parastatals created after the Arusha Declaration and the public sector in general took a nose-dive. Rampant inefficiency and corrupt leadership destroyed the confidence the people had in their leaders. Things went so badly that people in general lost confidence in all that had been achieved. The people lost confidence in themselves. The economy had been set on a roller coaster of foreign dependence; the very thing Tanzanians wanted to avoid.

Corruption has intensified since, for top level decision makers, foreign deals have a 10% commission in foreign currency. It is no surprise that foreign experts are more important than local experts who will want local initiative and the society to be self-reliant. Tanzania has become so dependent on foreign assistance that even its recurrent expenditures depend largely on foreign aid. Now the country is dependent on foreign assistance. More and more blunders are committed. In order to correct them more aid is required. Even collecting taxes is no longer important since foreign assistance is available.³ The house cannot be set in order until foreigners say so. The country has lost a sense of priority and direction.

The loss of pride in our achievement takes a special shape in particular crises. One such crisis is the problem of the medium of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools. The policy requires English to be the medium of education in secondary and higher education. The reality is that English has ceased to be the medium of education (Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1987), Cripser and Dodd (1984)). Instead of striving for workable solutions such as bilingual education where the divide between English and Swahili is irrelevant, or changing to a Swahili medium, or the reduction of the number of years for learning Swahili in elementary schools where they don't have enough teachers, people insist on more English. We are stuck with the idea that English is in danger in Tanzania and forget that the real danger is confronting the students in schools and our identity as a nation. Tanzania has moved from a society-oriented curriculum to the yearning for "international standards", whatever they may be. In spite of obvious problems in education, the solution seems to be to ask foreign assistance to solve the problems, rather than to address them with local initiative. These problems are all symptomatic of the loss of national self-esteem and a rejection of our identity as a Swahili speaking community that can work more efficiently in Swahili.

Conclusion

This paper has presented descriptive data showing the conflict between Swahili and the vernacular languages. Swahili is the winner, as indicated by the preference of younger people for Swahili. It has been illustrated that that this preference is not a reflection of changing language habit with age. The data show that more and more people are acquiring Swahili as their first language. The higher rate of increase in this percentage is in the cities, and as more and more people are

³ In 1994, donor countries from Europe, America and the World Bank, IMF suspended aid to Tanzania after it was revealed the Tanzanian government failed to collect substantial amounts of taxes.

urbanized we can expect to see an even higher percentage of people acquiring Swahili as the first language.

I have briefly traced the history of the spread of Swahili language arguing that the same factors for the spread of Swahili are actually responsible for language shift today. But the most important factor today is the institutional support accorded Swahili especially in politics and education. Swahili has become the identity marker of Tanzanians and a symbol of national pride.

Changing attitudes towards Swahili and English in education today is only a symptom of the political and economic crisis in Tanzania. People blame Swahili for the decline in education while the actual causes are the neglect of the education system and the empty rhetoric of politicians insensitive to people's needs. The desire to bring English back is symptomatic of the dependency syndrome so evident in our economics.

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