GREATER SWAHILI – SWAHILI VARIETIES IN L2+ SWAHILI TEACHING

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In this paper, I focus on what we could call the 'myth of Standard Swahili' and its consequences for language teaching. Instead of distinguishing between 'standard' and 'deviant' varieties of Swahili, I suggest the term *Greater Swahili* to designate the whole of the varieties spoken in Africa and the African diaspora. Starting with some remarks on the 'ideal' Swahili speaker and the standardization of Swahili (a thoroughly political decision), this paper focuses on the challenge of using a Standard for teaching while language learners will meet mostly speakers of Greater Swahili. The diversity in the ways of speaking is not only a challenge for language teachers and learners, but also for speakers of the so-called *core area*. I will then discuss some examples to illustrate acceptance and comprehension of Greater Swahili by L2+ Swahili students. May aim is to underline the importance of Greater Swahili varieties for Swahili Studies.[1]

Introduction

> *At a recent Swahili cultural festival in Lamu […] a renowned Kiswahili scholar and poet Sheikh Ahmed Nabhani warned that the centre for learning Kiswahili was shifting from East Africa to the Diaspora. "If we are not careful, we might end up sending our own children to study Kiswahili in the US", Sheikh Nabhani warned.*
>
> (Njubi 2009: 125, quoting an article
> from *Daily Nation*, Nairobi, 8 Nov. 2001)

Prescriptions concerning language use, i.e. the way to distinguish between the 'right' and the 'wrong' way in using a language, are closely linked to ideology and power. The invention and codification of standard languages are therefore, on the one hand, scientific processes to simplify (written) communication and documentation, on the other they are political acts creating in-groups ('nation', 'educated peoples') and differentiating the 'Us' from the 'Other'. In this paper, I focus on what we could call the 'myth of Standard Swahili' and its consequences for language teaching. Although Swahili experts until today did not provide a complete linguistic basis for a standardization authoritative to the Swahili speaking East and central African regions (as this happened for instance for German in Austria and Germany), some elitist speakers strongly believe in 'true Swahili' which is not congruent with the actual language varieties used by most of the speakers. Instead of distinguishing between 'standard' and 'deviant' varieties of Swahili, I suggest

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[1] Paper presented at the Symposium "New Dynamics in Swahili Studies", Bayreuth, June 10-11, 2014. The content and the argument of the paper have not been modified thereafter. The paper has been proofread though.

the term *Greater Swahili* to designate the whole of the varieties spoken in Africa and the African diaspora.

Starting with some remarks on the 'ideal' Swahili speaker and the standardization of Swahili (a thoroughly political decision), this paper focuses on the challenge of using a Standard for teaching while language learners will meet mostly speakers of Greater Swahili. The diversity in the ways of speaking is not only a challenge for language teachers and learners, but also for speakers of the so-called *core area*. I will then discuss some examples to illustrate acceptance and comprehension of Greater Swahili by L2+ Swahili students. May aim is to underline the importance of Greater Swahili varieties for Swahili Studies.

Background

VOICE[2] (*V*ienna-*O*xford *I*nternational *C*orpus of *E*nglish), an international project hosted by the Department of English of the University of Vienna, offers a structured collection of language data of a wide range of English varieties spoken all over the world. The collection of data is based on the following assumption:

> In the early 21st century, English in the world finds itself in an "unstable equilibrium": On the one hand, the majority of the world's English users are not native speakers of the language, but use it as an additional language, as a convenient means for communicative interactions that cannot be conducted in their mother tongues. On the other hand, linguistic descriptions have as yet predominantly been focusing on English as it is spoken and written by its native speakers.

According to Njubi (2009: 106) and Mazrui and Mazrui (1999: 32) Swahili has become the most widely spoken African language in Africa and the African diaspora. And scholars have also taken note of this and have described numerous varieties outside the core area as numerous studies on varieties of Swahili show.[3] I argue, therefore, that Swahili varieties have been described away from the core area, but have not found their way into the teaching of Swahili. While on the one hand it is clear that teachers and learners need to have a standard to guide them, on the other hand it would be important to pay attention to the varieties in order to give learners a "backpack" of knowledge that prepares them to deal with "deviations" from the standard.

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[2] https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/ (lat visited 27-06-2022).

[3] See for instance (and just to list a few): Ferrari, Kalunga & Mulumbwa 2014, Gysels 1992 and Mulumbwa 2021, on Swahili in Lubumbashi; the papers in Shinagawa & Nassenstein's special issue of Swahili Forum on variation in Swahili (2019); Nassenstein on Kisangani Swahili (2018), Swahili in Bujumbura (2020), Bose & Nassenstein 2016, on Kivu Swahili; Nassenstein & Dimmendahl 2019, on Bunia Swahili; Nassenstein & Bose's 2020, a comparative paper on morphological features of Kiswahili youth languages from Dar es Salaam, Goma, Lubumbashi and Nairobi.

Therefore, I evaluate Sheikh Ahmed Nabhani's concern of losing control over Swahili and its norms, which have been defined and uphold by the core area until today, as directly linked to the ideological approach of a minority of Swahili speakers facing a large number of Swahili speakers that are "outsiders". If we now add the varieties of Swahili that have been described (such as Nairobi Swahili), as well as the Swahili that is developing in the diaspora (e.g., the USA), then I summarise this under the term *Greater Swahili* to refer to the entire global community of Swahili speakers. I suggest to support an ideological change and focus on language users' efforts to understand the 'Other' and their general aim to make themselves understood as a valuable additional resource for language teaching and learning.

Myths of *Mswahili* and Standard Swahili

The debates around the standard of Swahili operate on two levels. On the one hand, the question of how the standard is characterized in terms of grammatical properties (especially lexicon and morpho-syntax) is discussed, and on the other hand, the concept of *Mswahili* is debated, which includes the idea of an ideal speaker and refers not only to linguistic properties but also to socio-cultural properties. I address some of the ideas of these debates below (without discussing the full range) because considerations of standard and ideal speaker are relevant to Swahili foreign language teaching.

Mswahili

A long-standing discussion in academic Swahili research, but also among speakers, deals with the ideal speaker.[4] This approach combines – often in a very non-reflected manner - different concepts of language, history and culture in its broadest sense to construct an ideal type of the speaker and an ideal type of a language. The result is the creation – "invention" or "imagination" in the words of Benedict Anderson – of an ideal *Mswahili*[5], defined not only by language, but also by religion, geographical location and sociocultural characteristics. The creation of an "imaginary *Mswahili*" leads to the exclusion of any speaker who does not have all the required characteristics. She or he is classified as not being *Mswahili* and thus not belonging to the core group - a typical process of othering.

The following two opinions (deliberately chosen to illustrate the main arguments on the (in)linkage of language with other properties of speakers, while of course it is clear that more

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[4] Another long-time discussion involves the language history itself. For a discussion of early Swahili language history, see Massamba 2012 and Nurse & Spear 1985. For reference to two opposite opinions about language origin see e.g., Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993 and Mazrui & Shariff 1994.

[5] Mswahili is the Swahili noun for a Swahili speaker or someone belonging to the original Swahili community. For a discussion of this topic see Eastman 1971.

complex arguments also exist) shall illustrate 40 years of discussion around the question 'Who is a *Mswahili*?' I consider these considerations important because the ideal speaker stands for the standard that is the basis for what should be taught.

Eastman (1971) states that L1 Swahili speakers[6] linguistically rarely define themselves other than being a *Mswahili*. She traces this general reference by Swahili speakers to the broad sphere of influence which is associated with Swahili and its varieties: "This is perhaps because the other person is almost always going to be a different kind of Swahili from oneself, even if different in only one or a few features of contrast*"* (Eastman 1971: 232). She also argues that the assessment of what exactly defines a *Mswahili*, is not based on linguistic criteria, but should mainly be seen as related to other aspects: "The people referred to as WaSwahili are not so called on a linguistic basis alone. The term MSwahili (pl. WaSwahili) varies with the time and place of reference apart from the individual using the term" (Eastman 1971: 232).

Also Caplan (2013: 32) – referring to the question of being a *Mswahili* while discussing the label of Swahili-ness and including additional key features of Swahili identity to the language itself – states: "[…] 'Swahili-ness' is not confined primarily to the East Coast and Islands, or even the Indian Ocean, but has expanded into a global diaspora, and in which the Swahili homeland itself has been subjected to multifarious external influences as it has experienced migration from further inland and elsewhere." Nevertheless, for her being a Swahili speaker remains one, but not the only criteria for identifying oneself as a *Mswahili*: "[…] if we were to use language as a referent of identity, there would be now many 'Swahili' in the form of primary speakers of that language, although not all would describe themselves as such" (*Ibid.*: 33). For Caplan Swahili-ness is possible even in the global diaspora outside the geographical core area, but what these people necessarily have to share is to be speakers of Swahili; but speaking Swahili only, without showing the other features of Swahili-ness, is also placing these people outside the core.

Standard Swahili

Standard Swahili is – like any standardized language – a normalization based on the idea of an ideal language that is based on a variety that was chosen by those in power. With regard to Swahili, there is also the fact that the standard was chosen by colonial political lobbyists, who mainly oriented themselves along cultural or historical guidelines and not on linguistic criteria. Leading voices were colonial powers as languages should be able to be mapped, used in administration and education (see Beck 2018, Irvine 2008).

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[6] Eastman refers to Swahili speakers from Tanzania, Zanzibar and Kenya.

In 1928, Kiunguja, the variety spoken in the city of Zanzibar, had officially been declared Standard Swahili, winning over Kimvita, the variety from Mombasa; a political decision, as Zanzibar was the commercial centre of the Western Indian Ocean (Khamisi 1991: 207). The Inter-Territorial Language Committee to the East African Dependencies, founded in 1930, supported this decision (Miehe 1991: 221). For Tanzania, Khamisi (1991: 207) explicitly refers to the political importance of Swahili:

> Standardization of Swahili was in response to Government's desire to have a medium for wider communications which was efficient as well as consistent in line with the latter's policy to use Swahili at some levels of administration and as a medium of instruction in primary schools.

Rombi and Alexandre, referring to language only, state that what they consider as Standard Swahili is a term used for Swahili as a Lingua Franca "*sous des formes souvent pidginisées*" (1982: 18), and that it is a sociolinguistic term for the language used by L1 Swahili speakers in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Congo, but in addition also by those from Southern Somalia, Northern Mozambique and the Comoro Islands. Other than Eastman, who refers to Swahili speakers from Tanzania, Zanzibar and Kenya only, Rombi and Alexandre include varieties from outside the core area. Still, they describe Standard Swahili as a sociolinguistic unit, while a linguistic definition of Standard Swahili is missing. The question of what actually is Standard Swahili remains unanswered.

Miehe (1991: 221) states that the Swahili Committee promoted the usage of a unified grammar. For a long period the orientation point for this was Steere's '*Swahili Exercises'* revised by Canon Hellier. In 1981 the new Standard Swahili Dictionary (KAMUSI) was published by the University of Dar es Salaam. Kapinga's 'Sarufi Maumbo ya Kiswahili Sanifu' (1983) was an accompanying publication.

> This grammar […] deviates in some points from the standard forms set up in 1934. Nevertheless, though submitted by the Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili (Institute of Kiswahili Research, the fully authorized successor of the former Swahili Committee) and in spite of the claim made in the title, "Kiswahili Sanifu", it seems that this grammar has not the same or a comparable standardizing authority as the 'old' standard grammar (Miehe 1991: 222).

Kipacha points to today's problem of two competing standards: "The most incoherent development was marked by parallel publication of monolingual standard Swahili dictionaries by Oxford University Press under titles of *Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu* (2004) and *Kamusi la Kiswahili Fasaha* (2010)" (2013: 209). Behind this is the driving force of (language) political claims to authority,

once from the mainland and once from Zanzibar, both with their own language planning agencies (TATAKI[7] and BAKIZA[8]).

Therefore, until today there is no generally accepted linguistic description of Standard Swahili, even though the term itself is extensively used. The concept of Standard Swahili is maintained by reference to sociolinguistic features and follows the ideal of a *Mswahili*. Therefore, even the KAMUSI by TATAKI or the dictionary by BAKIZA do nothing else than reproducing this myth onto a lexicon.[9]

A standardization of Swahili has therefore only been achieved as a primarily violent act to map the different demands, but not in the sense of a universal framework. However, it is important to keep in mind that language standardization is always a political issue. The idea of actually reducing varying language forms to a single standard form is only an attempt to gain and/or retain the control of the defining of norms.[10] As a consequence, we may conclude that Sheikh Ahmed Nabhani articulates the fear of conservative lobbyists to lose the controlling power over Swahili and its formal use. Less conservative scholars usually agree to the idea that Swahili is a language which goes beyond the status of being only the language used by a mercantile coastal society in Tanzania and Kenya.[11] Swahili is seen as a "unifying bond of a broad linguistic community" (Njubi 2009: 106). I will refer to this approach by using the term *Greater Swahili*.

In the following, I will address the idea of a Greater Swahili speech community.

Greater Swahili Speech Community

In his contribution on Swahili and the Pan-African diasporic group[12] Njubi differentiates four groups of Swahili speakers:

> a) the core group, the traditional Swahili people who trace their heritage to the Swahili coast, though they may have migrated to other parts of the region;
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> b) a second and larger group that uses Kiswahili as a second or third language but does not self-identify as Swahili;
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> c) a younger postcolonial generation of East African who grew up speaking Kiswahili as a first language and are increasingly self-identifying as Swahili;

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[7] TATAKI = Taasisi ya Taaluma za Kiswahili, Institute of Swahili Studies, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

[8] BAKIZA = Baraza la Kiswahili la Zanzibar, Zanzibar Swahili Council.

[9] While in Sacleux's Swahili dictionary lexical entries are complemented with information to the variety to which the lexical item does belong.

[10] Milroy and Milroy (1985) state in their preface, that narrow forms of prescriptivism have even lost sight of the function of prescription in maintaining the Standard.

[11] For further details, see Horton & Middleton 2000.

[12] Njubi refers to diasporic groups in the Unites States of America.

d) and people of African descent in the United States who have adopted Kiswahili as the language of ritual and Pan-African solidarity (2009: 108).

The mentioning of the first three groups seems neither surprising nor controversial. As shown above, these Swahili using groups have been identified in the same or a similar way by other scholars. However, Njubi's recognition that Africans in the US using Swahili as tool of expression of Pan-African solidarity belong to the Swahili speakers' community is noteworthy. Although it comes not as a great surprise that Swahili has been chosen as one (of several) lingua francae in US (something similar could for sure be stated for African diasporic groups, for instance, in London or Jamaica), this assessment is noteworthy because Njubi explicitly adds a group of Swahili speakers which is not included in scholarly discussion. These Swahili speakers are neither necessarily L1 Swahili speakers, nor can they be defined by referring themselves to an identity as a *Mswahili* or to Swahili-ness. The only feature the members of this group share is the fact that they do use Swahili. Hence, these speakers should be seen as being part of the Swahili speech community. Greater Swahili is the language shared by a speech community. The members of this speech community can't be determined geographically; therefore, the speech community is considered neither to be determined by criteria such as ethnic belonging nor national or geographical boundaries. In other words, this speech community includes L1, L2 and L2+ Swahili speakers.

Teaching Swahili as a Foreign Language = Teaching Standard Swahili?

Students who learn Swahili as a foreign language learn that they are taught standard Swahili and that this is what their teachers are expected to teach. Eager to test their newly acquired Swahili language competence, students consult different sources on the internet and realize that the language they come upon does often not correspond to what they have learned. Teaching Swahili as a foreign language myself, I encourage my students to consult online resources, not only written in Standard Swahili, like it can e.g., be found on the websites of BBC, but also to watch *YouTube* videos to be exposed to different Swahili varieties.

From a teaching perspective, I am interested in students' perception of acceptance or non-acceptance of realizations in Greater Swahili. I therefore presented texts found on *YouTube* to my advanced Swahili students to test acceptance. I discuss some preliminary observations below to understand to what extent the inclusion of Greater Swahili into teaching Swahili is useful to explore the boundaries between variation and non-acceptance.

Samsom (1991) tested the acceptance, reception or absorption of car engineering terms standardized by BAKITA (the National Swahili Council of Tanzania). Samsom's test speaker is a 32-year-old male L1 Swahili speaker, with some knowledge of English and a formal education in his specialized field of car engineering. Samsom shows that only in one case BAKITA and the

speaker agree on the same Swahili term for a technical object, while BAKITA and the speaker in most cases show agreement in the use of loans. In addition, Samsom checked the Swahili terms (suggested by BAKITA) unknown to the speaker and stated that the speaker understood very quickly the system behind the calques.

Mietschnig (1988) analysed school children's essays. She collected the data in the city of Zanzibar, the core area of the alleged Standard Swahili. One of her findings shows that deviations from Standard Swahili were especially found in the orthographic realization. She argues that this deviation from Standard can be explained by differences in the realization of spoken Swahili, an observation related to variation in spoken Swahili from the very core area of Standard Swahili.

Sharifa Zawawi published the well-known Swahili teaching book '*Kiswahili kwa Kitendo – An Introductory Course'* in 1971, a book that provides a Swahili course for "first year students in colleges and universities" (Zawawi 1971: xi). This course is designed for US students even though it is not explicitly mentioned. This is visible in the names and topics chosen for the talking exercises. For instance, place names *Manhattan, Bronx, Queens*, etc. point to this assumption. Apart from this, all 40 units of the course are referring to a topic related to life in East Africa, or more explicitly to Tanzania, Kenya. The units provide an excellent overview of cultural, agricultural and daily activities, and therefore sociocultural activities congruent to the life of an ideal *Mswahili*; but the language examples chosen do not always correspond to the Standard Swahili. For instance, in the third lesson questions about wellbeing are introduced. The question *'U hali gani?'* is used to illustrate the question to a single person, sentence *'M hali gani mabibi/mabwana?'* illustrates the question addressed to several persons. In Standard Swahili *u* (you, 2sg) and *m* (you, 2pl) could not be used as freestanding personal pronouns as they are used in these examples.

Summarizing we may conclude: Standard Swahili is neither always used by speakers of the core area, nor is the form taught by core area speakers necessarily corresponding to the Standard.

Data

The following data have been found on *YouTube*[13]. The examples discussed are comments of users to *Mama watatu* who published (among many others) a video illustrating *Mapishi ya samaki (tilapia)*, how to cook tilapia[14] fish. The title of this video is in Swahili and therefore can only be found by someone searching for these words or searching for tilapia. It is therefore very likely that the viewers of this video are either familiar with Swahili or with the terminology of the fish eaten

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[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zgCd3iQjEo (last visited 15-04-2014).

[14] Thlapia is a Bantu word, very often used as a synonym to fish. In this video Mama watatu illustrates the cooking of (deep fried) tilapia fish.

in East Africa. *Mama watatu*'s linguistic realization will not be analysed at this point[15], only the comments on her performance.

The text genre of users' comments is of course a specific one and shows characteristics which cannot be ascribed to Greater Swahili but only to the genre itself, such as briefness, incomplete sentences, abbreviations, flexible punctuation, the tendency to use colloquial lexemes, etc. Because Swahili students are confronted with exactly these comments once they struggle with the language used in the video itself, I consider it meaningful to have a closer look at examples from this text genre.

What all these comments share, beside the language(s) used, is that it is neither possible to geographically localize the whereabouts of the text producers nor to determine whether the text producers are L1, L2 or L2+ Swahili speakers. We also do not know whether the text producers – they most probably do – have also other languages in their linguistic repertoire. As a consequence, I argue, we only have one speech community which is defined by the sole fact that each member understands *Mama watatu* and each member uses Swahili in the broadest sense (Greater Swahili?) to write her/his feedback to *Mama watatu*.

The following users (their names are in bold and English copies[16] are underlined) gave the following comments to *Mama watatu*:

1. **Internushka Al-adawy**

   nimependa kila kitu <u>the way</u> unavyotaharihsa na unavyoongea <u>so nice ur not that serious coz</u> uwa inaboa mtu akiwa <u>serious</u> inaboa kabisaaaaa

2. **anjiwike1**

   asante sana mami <u>for all the lessons</u>... nilipika ndizi na chapati <u>follow ur lessons</u>. Yani sijapika mda mrefu sana <u>so its nice to get reminders on how to make my fav foods</u>...

3. **Cymah Wandelt**

   naenda kuandaa mama watatu, ubarikiwe sana

4. **fey12**

   <u>nice n simple dish</u>, safi sana

5. **mozaltha ahmed**

   jaman napenda mapishi yako <u>plz apld</u> kila wiki

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[15] The linguistic features of Mama watatu's Swahili usage point to those of a L1 Swahili speaker or someone with a very long socialization in Tanzania. In addition, many other cooking videos by Mama watatu can be found on youtube, many of them showing specific Tanzanian dishes.

[16] I will define copy further below.

6. **Cymah Wandelt**

   mama watatu Mungu akubariki sana, nimetoka kuandaa ndo nakula jamani tamuje. Najua wanangu wanapenda sana nawatengenezea na mr. ubarikiwe

7. **Rocket Nelson**

   smaki mimi sili leo labda kesho

8. **matawa08**

   napenda <u>video</u> zako. <u>upload more pliz</u>

9. **hamisi farahani**

   Mama watatu napenda sana <u>program</u> zako.mafundisho mazuri sana .na mimi sasa najua kupika samaki.hasante sana

As one can notice quickly, none of these comments is written in what would be taught as Standard Swahili. Therefore, at a first glance, these texts do not serve as appropriate texts for Swahili teaching. From the perspective of Standard Swahili there are wrong spelling of words, wrong split ups of word boundaries, loans from English, irregular punctuation, Non-Standard verbal realizations, etc.[17] In other words, most of these texts would be classified as 'wrong' if students of Standard Swahili in university courses would produce them. Still these texts mirror the reality of the Swahili speaking community, which consists of persons who share the wish of being understood and making themselves understood.

In the following, I analyse the examples by their characteristic features and highlight the potential of using Greater Swahili in classroom teaching. I will discuss questions of variations and the often-ambiguous boundaries between accepted and non-accepted forms. In foreign language teaching – whether under the label of *error analysis*, *interlanguage hypothesis* or *contrastive analysis*[18] – the analysis of inferences drawn from L1 to the foreign language remains to be an effective way to optimize the acquisition of the foreign language.

In six out of nine examples, Swahili as well as English are used. To linguistically describe the usage of more than one language several models have been developed[19] as well sociolinguistic models to explain the function[20] of language change often described as Code Switching (CS), language alternation or language transfer. I follow Johanson's (1998, 1999, 2002a, 2002b) code-copying model and consider CS as *copies* from another code which are used. The code-copying model implies that the *codes* used cannot be classified as dominated and dominant code

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[17] The creative use of abbreviations in English will not be analyzed here.

[18] For further reference see Kielhöfer 1975, Königs & Szulc 1989.

[19] For further reference to models for description of language change see Auer 1984,1999, Clyne 2003, Lehmann 2013, Lowi 2005, Myers-Scotton 1993a, Poplack 2004.

[20] For further reference to models for description of function of language change see Appel & Muysken 1987, Auer 2000, Banaz 2002, Blom & Gumperz 1972, Grosjean 1982, Gumperz 1964,1982, Myers-Scotton 1993b, Riehl 2009.

respectively. Instead, a new code, the so-called *basic code,* is formed by using elements of different codes. For the analysis of the examples, I consider neither the question of dominating or dominated codes nor the question of the sociolinguistic function of switches to be relevant. I start from the premise that the new *basic code* is corresponding to Greater Swahili. I hereby follow Matras' (2009) idea of a *plurilingual* mode, where speakers switch between codes and use those lingual resources, which they consider useful for a successful communication.

Manner

In (1) the usage of the English 'the way' to express manner is redundant in Standard Swahili[21] as the relative concord of class 8 *-vyo-* fulfills this task.

> *(1) nimependa kila kitu <u>the way</u> una**vyo**taharihsa[22] na una**vyo**ongea <u>so nice ur not</u> <u>that serious coz</u> uwa inaboa mtu akiwa <u>serious</u> inaboa kabisaaaaa*

Nevertheless, this example of a structural loan from the code English by double marking manner was fully understood by my advanced Swahili students. This 'deviating' example proved to be a good basis to clarify the marking of manner by solely using the relative concord of class 8 *-vyo-*.

The following example shows the usage of *-je* as a grammatical particle realizing question mode. In Standard Swahili the post positioned particle *-je* marks the questions and may add the semantic feature of quality or manner and can only be added to verbs, e.g., *umefanyaje?* 'how have you done (it)?'.

> *(2) mama watatu Mungu akubariki sana, nimetoka kuandaa ndo nakula jamani **tamuje**. Najua wanangu wanapenda sana nawatengenezea na mr. ubarikiwe*

This blogger expresses that (s)he has tried out the recipe and that *jamani tamuje* 'my God, how good (sweet) this is!' The adjective *-tamu* 'good/sweet' is combined with the interrogative particle *-je*, and used syntactically as a verb, but not to realize a question but to express the manner of how good this fish actually is. This unusual realization provides a good example of an inference from English to Swahili to discuss with students a) the expression of questions and b) the realization of manner.

Subjunctive, expression of wishes

In Swahili subjunctive constructions are used to express wishes or uncertainty. The usage of subjunctive to e.g., express wishes is a crucial topic not only because of the realization of the

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[21] In some varieties *namna* and *jinsi* 'kind, way' are used to express the redundant 'the way'; whether this would be considered as Standard Swahili remains an open question.

[22] I am tending to think that it is a spelling mistake and that the verb *-tayarisha/-taharisha* is meant.

grammatical form itself but also because wishes (or blessings) are an important part of sociocultural language competence.

The first of the following two sentences (2) does not show any difference from Standard Swahili. The verb *-bariki* '(to) bless' is used (also in (3)) to express that *Mama watatu* should be blessed, grammatically realized by adding the subject concord *u-* for the 2nd singular (you), adding the passive derivation morpheme *-w-* and realization of subjunctive by realizing the verb final vowel as *-e* if the final vowel is an *-a*. This is true also for *-bariki* as in passive form the verb does change to end vowel *-a*: *-barikiwa* '(to) be blessed'.

> *(3) naenda kuandaa mama watatu, **ubarikiwe** sana*

> *(4) mama watatu Mungu **akubariki** sana, nimetoka kuandaa ndo nakula jamani tamuje. Najua wanangu wanapenda sana nawatengenezea na mr. **ubarikiwe***

Both bloggers wish *Mama watatu* should be blessed. In addition, these blessings carry a religious component, which wouldn't usually be expressed in comparable communication settings in German or English. In addition, in (3) the same wish is expressed also in an active form: *Mungu akubariki* 'God bless you'.

Non Standard verbal realizations

In the following sentence, taken from comment 1, the blogger expresses that s(he) does like that *Mama watatu* is not too serious in her behaviour.

> *(5) <u>ur not that serious coz</u> **uwa inaboa mtu akiwa** <u>serious</u> **inaboa** kabisaaaaa*

The sentence was indeed difficult to understand for my students (and myself) due to several Non-Standard Swahili realizations. Nevertheless, the discussion focused on the verb *-wa* '(to) be' and the use of the verb *-boa*. *-boa* could be derived from the English verb 'to bore' or also from the form *-boeka* 'be boring' as used in Kenyan Non-Standard language practices. The first challenge for learners is the realization of the predicate *uwa*. It includes the verb *-wa* '(to) be' that is used differently here from Standard Swahili by using the verb with the subject marker. In Standard Swahili, *-wa* is realized in the present tense (or more precisely in unmarked tense which is neither past nor future tense) with the invariant copula *ni* in the following way: *wewe ni* 'you are'. A second challenge lies in the analysis of *mtu* 'human being'. Does it belong to *uwa inaboa mtu* and mean 'it bores a person'? Or is *mtu* the subject of the subsequent verb construction *akiwa* 'if s(he) is'? Then the remaining part *mtu akiwa serious inaboa kabisaaaaa* could mean 'if (s)he is serious, it bores totally''? The discussion of what was possibly meant was suitable to discuss the topic of the usage of the verb *-wa* '(to) be' as well as the way loan verbs are used.

Difference in spelling

Several Non-Standard spellings occur in the comments[23]. Deletion of vowels is very common in oral realizations as well as informal writing practices such as on social media. Speakers from the core area are confronted in school with Standard orthography (like all pupils who have to learn a Standard language), even though they sometimes struggle due to differences in oral realizations, as illustrated above by referring to Mietschnig's study. The bloggers' statements are ideal examples to discuss the process of deletion of vowels and the challenges for those using Greater Swahili without being exposed to the pressure of fulfilling orthographic norms:

> *(6) mda mrefu*
>
> *(7) jaman napenda mapishi yako*
>
> *(8) smaki mimi sili leo labda kesho*
>
> *(9) hasante sana*

Examples (6), (7) and (8) all share the same very common phonetic weakening of vowels as can be found in spoken Standard Swahili too: *mda* 'time, period' would be realized as *muda* in written Standard Swahili, *jaman* 'my God' as *jamani* and *smaki* 'fish' as *samaki*. In written Swahili the weakening of the vowel becomes visible as deletion of the vowel.

Example (9) *hasante* 'thank you (sg.)' proved to be an ideal case to discuss the aspirated and non-aspirated realization of the vowel /a/ in word initial position. In Standard Swahili two different orthographic realizations can be found: *asante* and *ahsante*. It could be that the person wanted to spell the word in the second version (*ahsante*) and that this might just be a typo. The topic of the often-occurring hypercorrection in spoken Swahili, like e.g., the deletion of word initial /h/ in negation is closely connected with the aspiration or non-aspiration, like e.g., in the Swahili of Lubumbashi: *apana* 'no' instead of *hapana* (Schicho 1990: 52).

Swahili from Lubumbashi

All examples discussed so far were realized in a multilingual setting with English being one of the languages within the speaker's/writer's linguistic repertoire. Hence, frequent use of English lexemes is common. We encounter a different situation when we also look at another Swahili first language area, namely Lubumbashi in the DR Congo.[24] Without going into too much detail, it can be summarized that contemporary Swahili in Lubumbashi is characterized by influences of French

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[23] I only mention those who have not yet been discussed in the examples above.

[24] Swahili has existed for a long time in the Eastern parts of the Congo, as well as in the region of Katanga and its capital city Lubumbashi. It has been spoken in this region since at least the arrival of the Arabs. For a description of the history of Swahili in Lubumbashi and its role, see Fabian 1983, 1986a, 1986b, Ferrari et al. 2014, Gysels 1992, Schicho 1980, 1992.

lexemes and accordingly, French knowledge must be assumed for learners in case of using data from Lubumbashi Swahili (or translated accordingly by the teacher). In addition to the phonological features specific to Lubumbashi Swahili I argue that the morphology of Lubumbashi Swahili is particularly noteworthy for sensitizing learners to different modes of realization: e.g. marking of the present tense (the prefix -ko- is then inserted into verbal forms), the use of prefixes of the locative classes as prepositions (*mu dunia nzima* 'in the entire world') or the usage of demonstrative pronouns in relative forms entirely replacing the Standard Swahili synthetic relative forms, as well as the relative forms with *amba-*, to name but a few.[25]

Different lexical realizations or semantic meanings also occur and can provide a valuable source to discuss questions of identity and history with students. The following example provided by Kahola, Kakudji and Kalaba Mutabusha (2008: 59) shall illustrate this:

> (10) *Shipendi bucafu, umu ni mukizungu, bitu ya kupori apana umu mwetu mu Lubumbashi, mu **bulaya**.*
>
> ('I don't like insalubrity, this is civilisation, savagery has no place in our civilised city.')

In this sentence, *mukizungu* is used with the meaning of 'civilisation' thus replacing *ustaarabu* as it would be realized in Standard Swahili. *Ustaarabu* is a loan from Arabic, thus considered by Swahili speakers in Lubumbashi as being terminology exclusively used by the Waswahili at the coast. Thus, the word is seen as an inherent part of a Muslim identity, which most speakers in Lubumbashi do not share. Speakers of Lubumbashi instead realise this meaning based on the root of *-kizungu* ('European'[26]). It is an analogy and displays the influence of the former European colonial power. Belgium had set out to impose the Belgian ideology as civility on various levels. The speaker also uses *bulaya* for 'civilised city', while in Standard Swahili *Ulaya* 'Europe' is usage as a term to describe the geographically intended continent.

What can we gain by discussing Greater Swahili examples in classroom teaching? What is it that we wouldn't discuss otherwise? Concerning the lexicon and orthography the discussion allows us to include all those realizations, which didn't find their way into dictionaries due to the normalization power of the authorities of the core area. Concerning morphology and syntax reviewing examples deviant from a (pretended) Standard Swahili offers the possibility to discuss certain Standard rules, differing realizations in other varieties of Greater Swahili, and the sometimes-incongruent realizations in oral vs. written language production. Talking about these differences also improves students' ability to identify the boundaries between accepted and non-

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[25] See De Rooij 2007, Schicho 1980.

[26] I am aware of the different readings of *kizungu / mzungu*, etc. For the clarity of the argument, I have used the translation 'European' here.

accepted forms. These boundaries though are often cloudy, not only to students: not all speakers or even institutional authorities have the same acceptance.

Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned examples it can be concluded that data taken from resources providing information in Greater Swahili enhance the possibilities for classroom teaching. Dealing with Swahili in this broader sense enables students to understand and analyse Greater Swahili forms and to discuss the border between accepted variations of Swahili and faulty realizations. And still, a larger linguistic competence and knowledge on and in Swahili will finally support them to write and talk Standard Swahili. If it is true what Mazrui and Mazrui state that "there will come a time when future generations of those who are today non-native speakers will themselves be native speakers" (1999: 32), then it might be wise to sensitize our students (and ourselves) for the use of Swahili with a more global attitude. There is room for a new language ideology that overcomes the myth of a Standard.

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