Documenting conversational conventions in Swahili
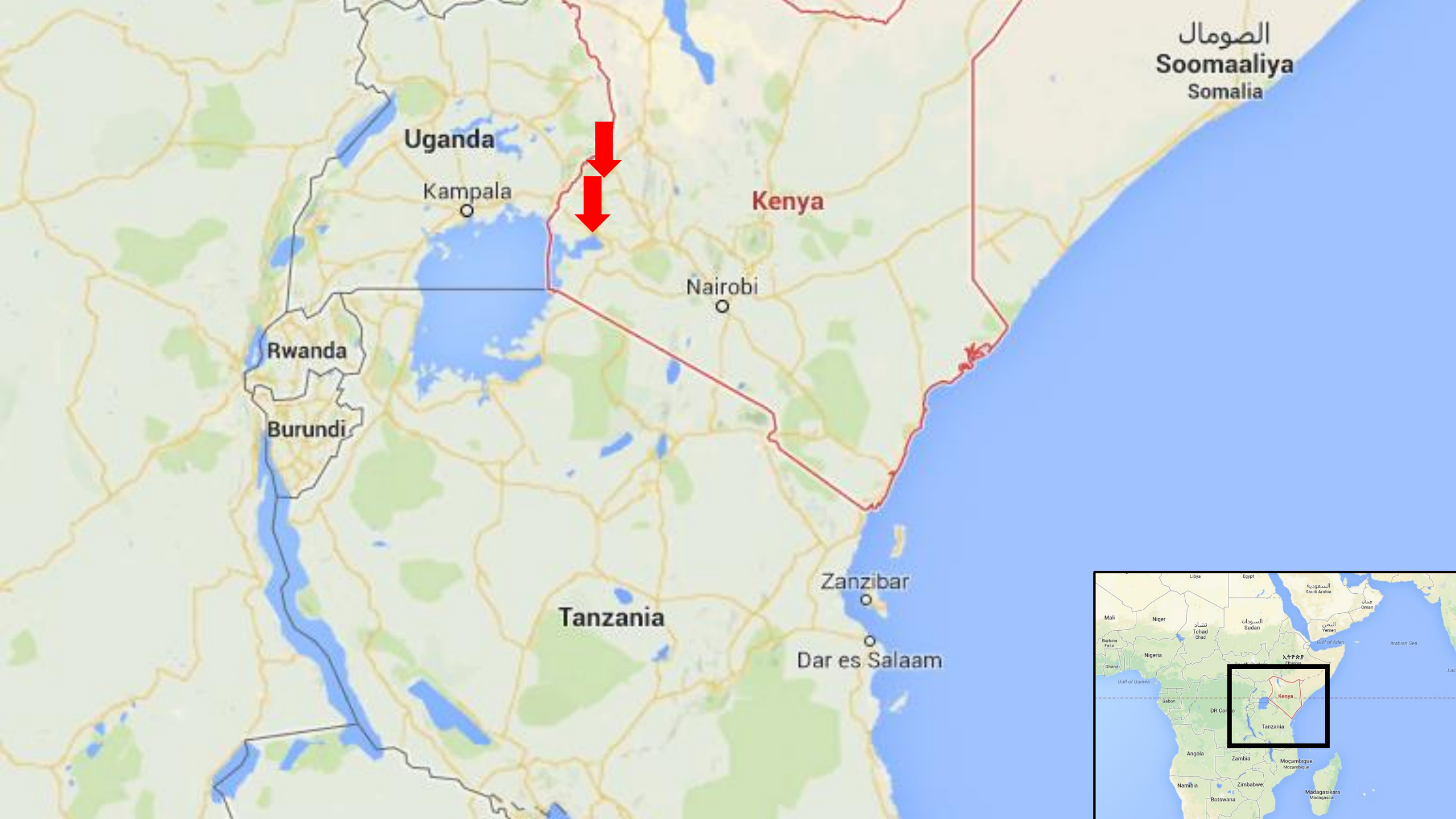
Daniel W. Hieber

University of California, Santa Barbara

Discourse Transcription

John W. Du Bois

Methodology

- 3 Features Examined:
  1. silence
  2. overlap
  3. hesitation

Transcription Notations Examined

..	short pause
(0.3)	long pause
[word]	overlap
wo:rd	lengthening
wor-	word truncation
word --	IU truncation
uh	semi-words

Short Pauses 🔊

HANIF; Hapa:,

ni mahali,

→   .. pengine mbaya sana.

(H) Mimi pia siku nilifika hapa,

ilichukua:,

→   (0.3)

#kazin- --

→   .. Nili- Nilikaa airport na:,

(H) Nilikuwa nikakaa kua-,

→   .. na kuangalia tu vile:,

vitu naendelea.

→   .. Ili pia,

karibu nisim- simbuliwa sana.

Here

is a place

sometimes very bad.

Me too the day I arrived here,

it took,

##

I did- I sat at the airport and,

I was sitting there doing

and just watching those,

things going along.

Also in order to

not be near to being very noticeable.

Long Pauses with Simultaneous Starts

HANIF;	[Ata:,	Even,
	nafikiri] sitaki kuwa Mmerika.	I think I don't want to be an American.
MTORO;	[Mmm. (Hx)]	Mmm.
	(H) Kweli. (Hx)	Really.
HANIF;	Uh huh.	Uh huh.
MTORO;	(0.2)	
	[A- Mi-]	I-
HANIF;	**[(H) Kwa-] --**	Wh-
PAUSES;	**(0.3)**	
HANIF;	Safari yako kutoka Kenya ilikuaje?	How was your trip from Kenya?

Overlapping Breath

MTORO;	Nilitoka Kenya mwaka mwezi jana. **[(Hx)]**	I came from Kenya this year last month.
HANIF;	**[Mwezi]** jana.	Last month.
	O: mzuri.	Oh good.

Truncated Words without Truncated IUs

Ul-
you (PST)

→

Ulitoka Kenyaː,
you (PST)

Ni- ni- ni-
l

→

nilichukua karibu saa ishirini na moja,
l

(H) **Ni- ni-**
l

→

Nikapata wakora wengine bwana. (Hx)
l

.. **ku-**
to (INF)

→

kutoka airport mpaka hapa bwana.
to (inf)

Pengine **wali- waliː-**,
they (PST)

→

walijua kama wewe si Mwamerika?
they (PST)

Truncated Words with Truncated IUs

.. **Nilip-** --
when I (PST)

→ Niː- **Nili**chukuaː,
I (PST)

Wali- U- --
they- (PST) you-

→ **Pengine wali- waliː-**
maybe they (PST)

Wali- Wali- --
they (PST)

→ **Niliwa**ambia mimi si Mwamerika.
I to them (1sg>3pl; PST)

#kazin-
?work

→ .. **Nili- Nilikaa** airport naː,
I stayed

Hiyo nim-
These (N-class) I've

→ .. **Niko na viyo.** (Hx)
I have those (KI/VI-class)

Some Conversational Practices in Swahili

1. Avoid overlap
   - Stop talking if you accidentally interrupt
   - Pause before beginning your turn (for 0.5s)
2. Silence is an acceptable form of planning or hesitation
   - Use short pauses when planning your own utterances
   - Use *um*, *uh*, and *eh* when hesitating in reply to another utterance
3. Use *mhm*, *mmm*, and *eh* for backchanneling
4. When doing self-repair, restart before the stem