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WHAT'S IN A WORD?

CODE-SWITCHING IN MOMBASA SWAHILI

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~ ABSTRACT ~

This project examines the phenomenon of code-switching in Mombasa Swahili, or the mixing of English words into Swahili conversation. Specifically, it seeks to relate a) how English words are used in Swahili, b) why they are used, c) how people react to this usage, and d) how this phenomenon relates to elements of discourse. The discussion is placed within the context of current issues in the literature, and attempts to add to the present discourse concerning: Swahili as a mixed, unstable code; the issue of Swahili's lexical impoverishment; Swahili's possible pidginization; and how code-switching relates to discourse-marking. The methodology consists primarily of interviews regarding how people use language, questionnaires concerning how people define language, and recorded and observed speech samples.

§1. INTRODUCTION

English is everywhere. If you are traveling, more likely than not, you will find yourself holding a conversation in English at one point or another. Over 1 billion people worldwide are learning the language at any given time. Kenya is no exception: English is the official language of the country, used as the medium of communication for business, government, and even education. Swahili[?] is the language of the people, the 'national' language, and most day-to-day affairs are conducted in it. Because there are over 40 distinct indigenous languages in Kenya alone, Swahili has become a lingua franca for the entire region, including Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and parts of the Congo.

Yet more and more one hears English used right alongside Swahili, even in everyday conversation, which until recently has been the realm of Swahili (and the indigenous languages) alone. Swahili speakers are quick to toss in English words for things, whether or not there is a Swahili equivalent. For one trying to learn the language, it can be frustrating to continually encounter English when it is the Swahili they are trying to learn. On occasion, Swahili speakers are even incapable of giving the Swahili equivalent of certain words.

One's first reaction (as was my own) is to say that the Swahili language is declining in the face of the new English influence. Speakers are forgetting certain Swahili words in favor of their English equivalents; they borrow English instead of coining new words for technology items and other new concepts. One is inclined to say that something is seriously wrong, and that measures should be taken before the Swahili language is lost entirely. As we shall see, this may not be the case.

So the issues are several: first is the idea of an unstable code, that English and Swahili are now longer distinct languages, but are mixing in the minds of Kenyan speakers. Second is the issue of borrowing and impoverishment—is borrowing a good thing or is it detrimental to the Swahili language? Third is the issue of pidginization, or simplification and mixing of the language. Is Swahili becoming a mixed pidgin-like language? Finally, an issue that has arisen post-factum during the analysis of my data is the possibility that language choice might correlate to discourse marking.

So it is the intention of this project to research the issues and phenomena surrounding the borrowing of English into Swahili, or switching from Swahili to English. Specifically, I had several objectives for this project:

First, what are the patterns of borrowing? How do the sounds of words change when borrowed? What are common types of borrowings? What parts of speech are they? Second, what are the reasons for these switches from Swahili to English? Is it conscious or unconscious? What triggers it? Third, what is the attitude toward this mixing of vocabulary? Are these borrowings seen as good or bad? Fourth and finally, what other facts become evident from the data? Does the data point to anything new or interesting? These questions form the axis of my study and this paper.

§2. THE LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

English and Swahili are *languages in contact*. This means that speakers of each language interact on a regular basis. Any time two languages come into contact, each undergoes certain changes, depending on the social and political factors involved; and the number of factors to consider in Kenya is immense.

For starters, Kenya is a bilingual nation. There are two versions of bilingualism: *state* and *individual*. Kenya has state bilingualism, meaning it is a bilingual state according to law. Individually, however, most Kenyans are trilingual or multilingual; they know their mother tongue (the indigenous languages), Swahili, and English. Kenya does have some individual bilingualism, but mainly on the Coast, where Swahili is a first language and English a second.

Bilinguals (multilinguals) are often catalysts for linguistic change (Bonvillain, 1993). Because the words of each language encode different semantic boundaries (i.e. have slightly different shades of meaning), bilinguals have a wider range of options to more precisely express their meaning. They incorporate other linguistic material into their L1 (first language), innovations which often spread beyond the bilingual community to others. In general, "bilingual speakers have more linguistic resources at their disposal than do monolingual speakers," and they utilize them often (Bonvillain, 1993; p. 352). The largest effect of this bilingualism is *borrowing*. Borrowing does not happen overnight. In order for a word to become part of a language, it has to *sound* like that language. Otherwise, the speaker is merely switching between languages—a very important distinction. Borrowing is the process by which words are taken from one language at adapted to fit another, usually through a serious of phonological (sound) changes. For example, the Swahili word *motokaa* (< English: 'motorcar') has undergone a series of phonological changes (deletion of /r/, lengthening of final vowel) to make it fit Swahili sound rules.

But when words are taken from an L2 (second language) without undergoing phonological change, the speaker is merely alternating or switching languages, or

'codes'. Depending on exactly how the speaker switches, this process is called *code-mixing* or *code-switching*, and sometimes the line between the two is a hazy one. Generally, code-switching entails a clear switch from one language to another, while code-mixing involves combining elements of each language. These can be taken in either a broad or narrow sense. Professor Abdulaziz (University of Nairobi) prefers to define them in a very broad sense. For him, any switch that occurs within a single sentence must be code-mixing. Code-switching can only occur on a larger scale, switching from one language to another for the length of entire utterances or periods of time. So, according to Abdulaziz, if two people meet for the first time and speak in Swahili, then discover they both are Kikuyu and begin speaking Kikuyu, they are code-switching. Central to Abdulaziz's definition is the idea that the code-switch is triggered by a change in the environment, audience, or subject.

For the purposes of this project, however, it serves best to take a narrower definition of the terms. If a speaker were to utter *ninaenda trip* 'I am going on a trip', he has made a clear switch from one language to another for the space of a single word. The word is still clearly English, and not Swahili, where it would be said <tripu>[?]. So this is an example of code-switching. Abdulaziz, however, would consider this code-mixing.

Code-*mixing*, for our purposes here, will be limited only to instances where the switch combines elements of syntax (grammar) or phonology (sound) from each language. For example, *tutameet* 'we will meet' is considered code-mixing because it adds elements of Swahili onto the English word 'meet' (Abulaziz's definition would call this code-mixing as well). Code-mixing also occurs if the switch causes a change in word order (e.g. if a speaker were to say *green sahani* instead of the natural Swahili word order

sahani green or *sahani la kijani*). However, if a speaker were to say *ninakumisi* 'I miss you' (< English: 'to miss'), it is not switching of any kind, but a complete borrowing, because the English word has undergone sound changes to adapt to the Swahili language (from <miss> to <misi>).

So code-switching and -mixing can be defined broadly (across sentences) or intersententially (within sentences). Since the focus of this project is to examine single-word switches within a sentence, I take the narrower definition.

Kenya is also home to a situation known as *diglossia*. Diglossia occurs whenever two varieties of a language (or two separate languages) serve different *functional roles*, meaning that each language has its own specific social context in which it is used and confined to. We have already noted that Swahili is confined to the realm of everyday social interaction, while English dominates all official realms—government, business, media, and education. However, this means that English has not been socialized to the same extent that Swahili has. In order for a speaker to function in this community, he must know and be able to use *both* languages. If not, he is incapable of participating in one or another social context. This specific situation is known as *bilingual diglossia*, where both languages varieties are necessary, so that neither can operate without the other.

As each code operates within different social contexts, this invariably means that one variety will have a higher prestige than the other, creating a 'high' language and a 'low' language (H-language and L-language)[?]. The H-language is typically associated with official realms, religion, education, and media to a varying degree. The L-language correlates with social functions and culture. Because of its official status and connection

to education, the H-language is typically learned *after* the L-language. In Kenya, the H-language is English and the L-language is Swahili. In fact, Kenya is technically in a state of tri-glossia, or double diglossia, between English, Swahili, and the local mother tongues. Each language variety is one step higher in prestige than the other.

It is common for the L-language to borrow words from the H-language because the latter is the language of prestige. The added bilingualism further increases the likelihood of borrowing, so that the influence of English on the Swahili lexicon (vocabulary) is quite large—words are being absorbed into Swahili at a rapid rate. This bilingual diglossia (or even triglossia) is perhaps the most complicated result of languages in contact.

Unfortunately, this means it also one of the most confusing, and the dividing lines between one language and another, between one social situation and another, become hazy at best. In the next section, again following Abdulaziz, we shall see what this entails.

§3. BACKGROUND

In this section we will position ourselves in the discourse and the current literature on the topic. Specifically, this section will trace four of the major issues in the literature (the same mentioned in §1) and determine where the current debate stands. I will then expand upon that literature, attempting to add my own findings to the discourse.

Stable v. Unstable Bilingualism?

In diglossia, different codes are assigned to different social situations. In Kenya those situations are beginning to overlap. Speakers are less sure of the distinctions between when Swahili, English, and the mother tongues should be used. *Stable bilingualism* refers to situations where the acceptable social context for a language is clearly defined, whereas *unstable bilingualism* means that these social contexts overlap (Fishman, 1972). In Kenya, there is an 'unstable multiculturalism'. Each of the three language varieties (English, Swahili, and vernacular) are associated with its own culture. English becomes a marker of prestige, but also of social mobility. One can move from the culture associated with the vernacular (the low culture), through the middle culture (Swahili), and into the high culture (English). This mobility allows for an overlap of functional roles.

This entails an overlap of the languages in the mind. If social situations overlap, then the codes will overlap as well. I will attempt with my data to show that this is in fact the case, and that Kenyans have internalized a mixed code. This code is unstable, meaning it is a random, often unconscious, mixing of the languages. There is no *code maintenance*, or predictable separation of the two codes. In stable bilingualism, one can readily predict (based on social context and other factors) when one will be likely to switch codes. Writing also tends to maintain codes better than oral speech.

Interestingly, Abdulaziz tells us that this mixed code does not hinder Kenyans' mastery of Swahili. Much like creole languages, there is often a continuum of language varieties between the acrolect and the basilect (base language and mixed language), ranging from the standard on one end and the completely mixed variety on the other. Swahili speakers are perfectly capable of holding a conversation anywhere on this continuum, including a monolingual setting. However, I contend that this is irrelevant:

one can hold a monolingual conversation even with serious deficiencies in language ability—look at anyone learning a second language. So while I agree that Kenyans can function in a monolingual context, I would like to expand on the current literature by suggesting that the unstable bilingualism present in Kenya *is* detrimental to Kenyans' competence in Swahili, at least to a minor extent. I would also like to suggest that unstable code-switching is not entirely unpredictable, a point I will come to later on.

Hybrid & Impoverishment Theories

Rocha Chimerah's work, *Kiswahili: Past, Present and Future Horizons* (1998) is a survey of the history, present status, and the future of Swahili's development as a language. In it, she looks at such relevant topics as word coinage and borrowing. Specifically, she discusses what are known as the *hybrid and impoverishment theories* of Swahili (and language in general). This extremely controversial stand on language suggests that Swahili lacks the sophistication necessary for modern communication, and as such must rely on foreign languages, making it a hybrid code. They point to the large number of Arabic and English borrowings as evidence. Naturally, many argue against this.

The issue at the heart of the debate is how Swahili handles (or rather, should handle) the creation of new words needed to fill gaps in the lexicon. Most of these new words are technology words, as one might expect, and in fact the majority of new words in Swahili are *borrowings* from other languages to describe technology. However, Swahili scholars have coined a number of new words as well, based on Bantu or Swahili roots, such as *tarakilishi* 'computer' and *runinga* 'television'. They come, however, admittedly late in

the game, as the words *kompyuta* and *televisheni* have been in use for years. Even as far back as 1939, we know of words "adapted from English, but not in common use…in the absence of suitable Swahili words" (Inter-territorial Language Committee, 1939; Preface). The only difference is that now these words *are* in common use.

Proponents of Swahili-based words as opposed to English say that since there are already English loanwords, new Swahili coinages create synonyms which enrich the language. One camp, misleadingly called 'Anglophiles', want Swahili to have their own word for every concept, rather than using borrowings. Another group, called the Jungu Kuu or 'big pot', advocate growth from within. They argue that the Swahili equivalent of any English word can be found in one or another of its various dialects. The talk of Swahili's lexical inferiority is due to an overdependence on Swahili Sanifu (the standard, government-approved dialect), whereas the real lexical richness can be found in the local varieties of the language.

But Swahili's ability to coin words independently comes into question as well. Certainly, every human language is capable of productivity and inventing new words. However, it has been shown (Abdulaziz, 1989) that lexical compounding is much easier in English than in Swahili. English is also highly nominalizing, whereas Swahili leans towards verbal constructions. Unfortunately for Swahili, the majority of new technology words are nominals (nouns).

Since Swahili is not good at compounding itself, it borrows them instead, hence the large number of foreign loanwords (later, I myself will give specific evidence that Swahili borrows compounds, rather than coin them). But isn't borrowing just as powerful a tool as coinage? Indeed, the most powerful argument against hybrid and

impoverishment theories is to view borrowing as a strength, making Swahili capable of functioning in modern society.

To begin with, Swahili vocabulary is by some estimates 60% Bantu, 30% Arabic, and only 10% other, meaning English and all other languages combined. In comparison, English (which was originally a Germanic language) is only *20%* Germanic, and 80% foreign. Yet English is by general agreement the most linguistically rich and flexible language in the world. The reason? English's distinct ability to harvest words from hundreds of different languages, thus expanding its lexicon and giving it the largest TVC (total vocabulary count) in the world. Interestingly, Swahili's TVC is not as small as one might suppose—currently at 50,000. That figure is only half of the TVC of French, set at approximately 100,000. Swahili's outward focus is thus a benefit to the linguistic community. As Mazrui states in *The Political Culture of Language,* "The interplay between African, Arabic, and European languages reveals a basic receptivity in Kiswahili which is part of the secret of its impressive success" (1999; p. 45). Swahili's status as a lingua franca means it must be especially versatile, if it is to interact with so many different linguistic communities. In fact, Chimerah even suggests that Swahili is actually *too* complacent in its borrowing, and that it needs to intensify its borrowing if it wants to continue competing as one of the world's major languages.

With my data, I hope to contribute further to this debate by presenting information on Swahili borrowing, coinage, mixing, and speakers' attitudes towards these phenomena.

The Pidginization of Swahili

In “Sheng: Peer language, Swahili dialect, or emerging Creole?” Chege Githiora (2002) considers the possibility of Swahili forming a *pidgin*, a grammatically and lexically simplified mix of more than two languages, used as a lingua franca for a mixed linguistic community. She looks specifically at a variety called Sheng, spoken mainly among the youth in Nairobi, to determine whether it has the properties generally associated with pidgin languages. While this is an isolated phenomena, situated in Nairobi, it is rapidly catching on among the youth in all parts of the country, and other ‘mixings’ are appearing as well.

Swahili is certainly in prime position to pidginize. There is also evidence of some pidgin-like qualities. For starters, pidgins usually have a reduced lexical inventory. As we have already seen, there are those who would like to claim this is true—that Swahili has an impoverished lexicon. To compensate for this, pidgins usually have very broad semantic domains for each of their words (i.e. words serve a number of different semantic functions to make up for it). They also have reduced sound systems, with a syllable structure that is normally consonant-vowel, and simple sounds are used for more complicated ones. Epenthesis (the addition of vowels into words) and deletion of consonant-clusters are common ways of adapting new words to this sound system. As we will see from the data, all these are true of Swahili as well.

But are these qualities due to pidginization? It seems that lingua francae possess very similar features: “…when a language is used as a lingua franca it normally undergoes a certain amount of simplification and reduction,” this simplification consisting of an elimination of redundancies and irregular forms. In Swahili, this equates to the absence of any irregular verbs, the reduction of noun classes, and avoidance of complex syntactic

structures (Trudgill, 1995). These features could certainly make it appear as though Swahili is pidginizing, when in fact it is not. If Swahili has pidgin-like qualities, it is probably due to its status as a lingua franca, and *not* because of any foreign influx or mixing. To be sure, however, the two are likely related, as lingua francae borrow lots of words from the linguistic communities they unite.

However, because Swahili is an L2 for many speakers, there is a huge amount of linguistic diversity from region to region. And indeed, in many areas Swahili is little more than a pidgin used to communicate between language groups. On the Coast, since Swahili is an L1, the extent of simplification is very small. Yet what is prevalent is the random mixing of English words into Swahili, and this *is* affecting the language. My data examines this mixing, much like Githiora examined Sheng, to determine its qualities and speakers' attitudes towards it, hopefully adding to the discourse about Swahili as a 'mixed' language.

Discourse Marking

Carol Eastman, in "Markers in English-influenced Swahili conversation" (1970), examines the role of *discourse markers* in Swahili, and their relation to code-switching (in the narrow sense). She defines discourse markers as "particles empty of any syntactic function or semantic content," and in English they are words like 'but', 'so', 'and', etc. (p. 11).

While I (and many other linguists) take issue with her definition of discourse markers, Eastman presents a simple and clear account of a correlation between the use of discourse markers and code-switching in Swahili. Her eventual conclusion is that, while discourse

markers are not always followed by a code-switch, code-switches more often than not are accompanied by discourse markers, which she says serve as a pause enabling the speaker to chose the best word for the situation. She also suggests the possibility that these pauses are the result of forgetfulness or "loss of touch with Swahili" (p. 11).

I rapidly discovered that this was the case with my own data, and that many of Eastman's conclusions hold. In addition, I found evidence for an interesting addendum to her theory, which I will outline in §5.

* * *

For each of these issues, I have outlined how I intend to contribute to the discourse. All of these relate to the underlying issue of the influence of the English lexicon on Swahli. Abdulaziz talks of a mixed code, Chimerah presents the debate over borrowing as a strength or detriment, Githiora looks at mixed pidgins and the simplification of Swahili, and Eastman examines the way in which code-switching relates to discourse. My focus on the mixing of English and Swahili puts me in a unique position to comment, at least briefly, on all four of these issues, expanding upon and altering them where I can.

§4. METHODOLOGY

There were mainly two types of data needed for this project: hard speech data, meaning recordings, observation (listening), and linguistic data; and firsthand reports of language use, including data about how people use language and their attitudes toward it.

My primary source for hard speech data was observation (often participant) in the form of listening. I listened constantly, jotting down various expressions and words until I had compiled a list of frequently used English words, as well as a large database of linguistic data. Specific sources of observation included the Blue Room, Tradelight Internet Café, my homestay family and their various guests, and the staff at SIT (though this list is by no means all-inclusive). A useful source of data was also my interviews, where the subject would often volunteer data that he himself had heard.

Recorded speech samples were by far my most useful source of information. In addition to direct speech data and instances of code-switching, they showed me how these switches occurred in context, and analyzing them gave me general patterns of borrowing. I conducted 2 recording sessions, and had each subject give me two narratives (in Swahili)—the first on a time they had planned a party, and the second on how to use a computer to print an email. The first was meant to elicit talk of everyday social interaction, with little English, while the second was designed to target English borrowings for technology. The narratives were later transcribed and analyzed.

The methodology for procuring firsthand reports of language consisted of one focus group with a group of young boys in Kaloleni, 9 interviews with people of varying backgrounds, and a questionnaire (see Appendix I) administered to 10 people, designed to determine the way speakers define things such as language, dialects, slang, and code-switching, and the distinctions they make between them. The interviews and focus group were extremely helpful in determining attitudes toward mixing and borrowing.

Finally, I conducted what I called a ‘coinage exercise’ (see Appendix II) with 5 people to see how new words are created in Swahili (independent of English). This was

useful in understanding what aspects of coinage in Swahili were difficult, and how English borrowings might relate to that.

Limitations

There were a few limitations in my methodology that, though not insurmountable, were a hindrance and, given more time, I would have compensated for if I could. First, I was unable to procure any written speech samples, such as school essays, instant messages, emails, and others. Written samples tend to be better at code maintenance, so code-mixing in formal settings (such as school compositions) would have been strong evidence of a mixed, unstable code. Written data would have also been much easier to analyze.

Second was concern over my linguistic competence in Swahili. At best I rank an Advanced Mid on the ACTFL proficiency scale, which means it is still difficult for me to understand a great deal of the language. However, recordings allowed me to re-listen to data, and I found that I could usually simply ask someone to translate what they said for my benefit.

Finally, I did not discover the benefits of recorded speech samples until very late into the time frame for this project, worried that my linguistic ability would not be good enough to understand rapid, everyday speech. Fortunately this was not the case, and the speech samples became my most valuable data. Still, the limitation of time prevented me from obtaining more.

§5. DATA ANALYSIS

Patterns of Code-switching

Our first research question was to ask 'What are the patterns of English words in Swahili? What do these code-switches actually look like (or rather, sound like) in speech? This section outlines the various properties that such code-switches have.

Common borrowings from English include words for clothing items, units of measurement, technical terminology, scientific and mathematical terminology, government- and civil service-related terms, technology, and food and dining items. In addition, numbers are commonly code-switched from Swahili to English, especially years. Code-switching numbers is possible evidence for a mixed English-Swahili code with English used for numbers and Swahili elsewhere.

By a large margin, the majority of English loanwords in Swahili are nouns. There are very few adjectives, limited to colors, and no adverbs, prepositions, or other parts of speech. This may be due to Swahili's already complex verbal derivation processes, whereas its nominalization processes are lacking (see §1). One would expect the majority of code-switches to be nouns as well; however the code-switches are evenly distributed between nouns and verbs. The difference is that, while code-switching with nouns is fairly predictable, code-switching with verbs is random more often than not. Why?

First, of the 279 English words I compiled that were being consistently used in Swahili, 197 of them exist to fill a gap in the Swahili lexicon. That is, some new concept or thing was introduced to the community, and Swahili speakers coined a word by borrowing it from English. Now consider the fact that only 23 of the total 279 words were verbs. What this means is that the majority of the gaps in the Swahili lexicon—the

majority of things Swahili needs new words for—are nouns, not verbs. Swahili's verb system is fully fleshed out and extremely versatile, so it does not need to borrow as many words as the noun system does. And this may be a relatively recent phenomenon. In *Simplified Swahili* (1985), Peter Wilson includes a short section on borrowings from English that were at the time making their way into Swahili. Interestingly, he saw fit to include only verbs, and to add that "this tendency is also moving to nouns, especially technical words, for which there is no actual Swahili word" (p. 230). This echoes the sentiment of the 1939 dictionary forty years earlier, and agrees with the fact that the majority of borrowings work to fill gaps in Swahili's lexicon.

This explains the predictability of the use of English nouns in Swahili. As to the unpredictability of the verbs, this is extremely good evidence of a mixed code, or unstable bilingualism. One can hear the same speaker using *tume-round* and *tumezunguka* 'we went around' alternately in the same conversation, with the same meaning. However, as stated in §3, there is evidence that even this unstable code-switching is not entirely unpredictable. This will be discussed in the next section.

Related to the idea that Swahili has difficulty in compounding and nominalization, there is sufficient support from the data to show that, where Swahili speakers have a choice between creating a compound in Swahili or simply borrowing one from English, they will borrow, *even when the Swahili equivalent exists*. For instance, speakers prefer to use *supamaketi* (< English: 'supermarket') and *shule ya sekondari* 'secondary school' instead of **supasokoni, *sokoni kubwa,* or **shule ya pili*[?]. The result is a number of English borrowings that occur only in compounds and never in isolation. To cite another example, it is unlikely one will hear the word **mota* 'motor' instead of the current word

in use, *mashina* ‘machine, motor’, even though one hears it in such words as *motaboti* and *motakaa* (‘motorboat’ and ‘motorcar’). Of course, this may change in the future. Even stranger, there are a few instances of Swahili speakers coining new words *in English*, and then using them as lexical items *in everyday Swahili*. A good example the two Swahili terms *sister-cousin* and *brother-cousin*. These refer to a female cousin and male cousin, respectively. Of course, we don’t use these terms in English, but Swahili speakers would rather coin a word in English for use in Swahili than use the more cumbersome *binamu wa kiume / kike* instead.

This is not to say that Swahili is incapable of compounding or nominalization. In fact, Swahili follows a fairly consistent pattern of making new nouns. First, the speaker names the thing being talked about with a single word, and then specifies it further with either the ‘–a of association’ or a verbal phrase. This usually results in a compound of three words—much more cumbersome than one-word English compounds. Other common techniques included referring to sayings or proverbs to describe a thing, creating verbal nouns, adding a modifier to further specify the meaning, circumlocuting (‘working around’ the word by using other words to describe it), and semantic expansion. This last one is especially important. Often, rather than making up new words for every concept, Swahili speakers will simply take a word already in existence and apply it to the new word as well. The word then takes on more than one meaning—an expansion of its semantic function. This is an extremely common technique for pidgins and lingua francae. Another common technique is reduplication (the repetition of parts of a word; for example, *kuzungukazunguka*), especially with verbs. And finally, there is compounding in the same way as it is done in English. These compounds tended to be noun-noun, such

as *pundamtu* ‘donkey-man’. However, this was far from being the most common technique.

Sometimes speakers even coin words on the spot, such as this example:

> uweza click, kwa uweza…ku…bofa kwenye…kiliki…kiliki…kilikezo
> ‘you can ‘click’, that you can…[verb]…press…the click…click…clicker [mouse]’

Here the speaker clearly took an English word, ‘click’, borrowed it into Swahili and, adapting it to the phonology (*kiliki*), then used nominal derivation to make the noun *kilikezo* ‘mouse’. What this shows us is that Swahili is just as capable of producing new words as English—it simply does so in different ways. Of course, it is not without its difficulties. In fact, the coinage exercise—where I had speakers create words—was one of the most frustrating portions of my project. Yet it was enlightening too, as there were patterns to what speakers didn’t like doing with their language. All speakers were adverse to altering or using alternatives to common proverbs or sayings, even when the alternative might be more efficient. They also refused to give specific names to things they viewed as ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ (cf. ‘donkey-man’, which was considered an evil spirit of sorts; it was extremely difficult to get a coinage for this word). And finally, they were adverse to break certain general patterns of speech common to Swahili (NOUN ‘–a of association’ MODIFIER, and NOUN VERBAL-MODIFIER).

Whatever the difficulties, these regular patterns of coinage compete side-by-side with borrowing, suggesting that Swahili is not impoverished after all—its lexicon can perform the same linguistic feats as any other language.

Returning to patterns of code-switching, one of the simplest and most common indicators of a code-switch was the placement of extra stress on the code-switched word,

usually accompanied by a slight lengthening of the vowel on the stressed syllable. However, it was rare for speakers to change the stress of an English word to fit the Swahili stress pattern (which usually stresses the penultimate syllable). Put very simply, speakers tended to enunciate more when using an English word in speech. This stress pattern was so unique, in fact, that I was consistently able to pick out code-switches based on stress alone, even when I failed to recognize the word as English.[?] I could then ask the person to repeat what they said and find the code-switch. Of course, this stress pattern does not occur with every instance of code-switching. In fact, it is far less likely to occur with code-mixing than code-switching. In code-mixed words, the stress *is* more likely to adapt to Swahili stress patterns, and to lack enunciation, such as *utaarrangía zote* 'you will arrange for everything' (< English: 'arrange'), where the stress falls on the penultimate syllable as one would expect in a Swahili verb. There was also no extra emphasis on the verb.

Borrowed words also undergo a number of sound changes, as already stated. Most common is the addition of vowels so that the word can adhere to Swahili's consonant-vowel syllable structure. Thus the word 'click' in English becomes *kiliki* in Swahili. Also, Swahili speakers have a trilled /r/ which is very different from the American glided /r/. Because of this, Swahili speakers have difficultly hearing the American /r/ when it follows a vowel, so it is usually deleted (e.g. <motorcar> changes to <motakaa>). Swahili speakers keep the /r/ when it is preceded by a consonant, but it becomes a trilled /r/ (e.g. <trip> changes to <tripu>).

This raises an interesting point: Swahili does not typically allow consonant clusters at the beginning of words, and yet in most cases these word-initial consonant clusters

(WICCs) are retained when borrowed into Swahili. There are some exceptions, such as *burashi* for 'brush' and *sumaku* (< Arabic: magnet). But even these seem to be changing. For instance, the 1939 dictionary lists only *sumaku*, while a 2004 dictionary lists *smaku* and *brushi*. Today, many of the words borrowed from English have these WICCs, and it seems Swahili phonology is changing to accept these. In one instance, a child having a conversation with his mother consistently pronounced the Swahili word for 'spring' /springi/, while his mother pronounced it /spiringi/, with an extra /i/ inserted to break up the consonant cluster. Of the 155 WICCs listed in the 2004 dictionary, approximately 96 are from English, and most of the remainder from Arabic. So English has a large influence on Swahili's phonology. These sound patterns introduced from foreign borrowings are called *accidental gap fillers*, because they fill 'gaps' in Swahili's phonology, or sound combinations that previously were disallowed (Massamba, 1996).

Sometimes pronunciation of borrowed words is based on spelling or orthography instead of the typical English pronunciation. This is understandable, knowing that most Kenyans don't have a great deal of interaction with native speakers of English. A common occurrence is the addition of a /g/ sound where there usually is none in English, simply because the word is spelled that way. *springi* /spri_gi/ and *kingi* /ki_gi/ are good examples. Speakers pronounce them with a /g/, whereas English speakers do not. If Swahili speakers were to follow the English pronunciation, the words would be spelled <spring'i> and <king'i> respectively, with no /g/. However, most instances are random, and don't follow certain patterns (e.g. /saibakaf/ for 'cybercafe').

There are also a number of 'larger' features that often accompany a word with code-switching—features of the entire sentence. Supporting Eastman's data about discourse

marking, many code-switches were accompanied by a pause beforehand, presumably to give the speaker time to think. But what Eastman's data failed to show was that there is often a pause *after* the code-switch as well, and usually the speaker will clarify the code-switch with Swahili. They will circumlocute, find the Swahili equivalent, or sometimes even coin new words on the spot, in order to clarify the code-switch. Consider these examples:

kwenda kule…niuniu…cashier…mwenye pesa
'go there to that…what…cashier…the money-person'

tukaalika…ma-…guests, eh!...aunti zangu
'then we invited…[begins to say a Class 6 word]…guests, eh!...my aunts'

Here the speaker coined the term 'mwenye pesa' for 'cashier'. What's more, he continued to use the term 'mwenye pesa' consistently after that, rather than use 'cashier', even two days later when I asked him (seemingly randomly) what the word for 'cashier' was in Swahili. Anyone else I asked would tell me the Swahili *kashia*. This was a fairly common occurrence, and suggests that maybe Swahili isn't absorbing as many English words as previously thought. Swahili speakers are certainly *using* English words, via code-switching, but they are not making all of them permanent parts of the lexicon. Sometimes the Swahili equivalent is found.

In the second example, the speaker was clearly looking for a word in Swahili (hence the Class 6 prefix 'ma-'), and corrected himself after the typical pause. This time, however, the clarification was also English, suggesting again a mixed code.

But it is interesting to note that the English comes to mind before the Swahili does, again evidence for a mixed and unstable code. In fact, during a coinage exercise where I had speakers invent Swahili words for new and made-up concepts, speakers across the

board first thought of an English description, before finding a Swahili equivalent (if not always a word-for-word translation), even when the prompt was given in Swahili.

Code-switches are also sometimes accompanied (and caused) by certain trigger words. Consider this case:

> Unamwambia 'nataka kuprint something'…'nataka kuprint kitu'
> You tell him 'I want to print something'…'I want to print something'

Here the use of the word 'print' triggered English in the object, 'something', as well. In addition, we see here that the speaker clarified by correcting himself, the same phenomenon noted above.

Finally, one thing that switched readily are units of speech called *discourse markers*. These are meant to show relations between ideas in discourse (and are not simply 'empty' as Eastman says); in English, they are words like 'and', 'but', 'so', as typically are present during pauses as well. In Swahili, these discourse markers will often be code-switched. In one recorded narrative, every single instance of discourse marking in the passage was English. To illustrate what I mean:

> wanapenda kukaa na mimi, so nilikuwa…nina…just going…kama nyumbani nyingine
>
> 'they like to stay with me, so I was…I'm…just going…like different houses [from house to house]'

Here the speaker used 'so' instead of the usual Swahili *kwa hivyo*. In addition, this seems connected to the code-switch which immediately follows. Also notice that the speaker once again clarifies his meaning after the code-switch, and it is both preceded and followed by a pause. Code-switching with discourse markers works in the reverse direction as well. That is, a speaker will pause, followed by *kwa hivyo*, and then switch to English. It seems that discourse markers form natural boundaries at which code-switching

occurs. This makes a great deal of sense, considering that discourse markers also serve to separate different clauses, which are semi-independent units of discourse. It seems that discourse markers are closely linked to discourse marking, and the next section looks at this explicitly.

Language Choice & Discourse Elements

Clearly there is some relation between taking time to think about words (pauses in discourse), the discourse markers that usually accompany them, and the code-switches that often go hand in hand. Unfortunately, none of these are strict correlations. A code-switched discourse marker can occur without causing any of the discourse around it to switch as well (such as our one speaker who used 'so' in the middle of many Swahili sentences, while those sentences themselves contained no code-switches at all). But the tendency is there. It seems as though English comes forth when speakers pause to think about the discourse. Discourse markers themselves are abstract entities, somewhat 'above' the conversation. This might explain their correlation to English. Consider this example:

> …kwa sababu kompyuta—I mean…tarakili hapa za hapa…
> '…because the computers—I mean…the computers around here…'

This was the only time the speaker corrected the word 'kompyuta', a borrowing from English. So clearly, his other uses of the word (which were many) were, a) unconscious, b) conscious but considered sufficiently explained with the clarification of 'tarakili', or c) whether conscious or unconscious, considered an appropriate use of the word and thus requiring no explanation (despite the first use being seemingly inappropriate, i.e.

requiring clarification). Also, ‘kompyuta’ triggered a code-switched discourse marker, ‘I mean…’. Interestingly, while this use of ‘kompyuta’ was pronounced with typical Swahili sound rules, indicative of a word that has been completely borrowed into the language, it also was pronounced with that unusual emphatic stress unique to code-switches. In other words, he enunciated the word as if it were English, despite it being clearly Swahili. For some reason or another, this particular utterance of the word seemed to him like English, which is why it triggered the discourse marker, code-switch, and pause followed by a clarification.

Another related factor is that of *discourse topics*, or simply, the topic of conversation. Naturally, the discourse topic changes rapidly throughout the course of a conversation, and often speakers will deviate from it before coming back to hit upon it again. The process of following this flow of conversation and re-accessing previous discourse topics is called *discourse tracking* (or more colloquially, keeping up with the conversation). Discourse topics, once established, become rather abstract entities, referring both to the concept and to previous discourse on the topic. And because English is associated with ‘meta-conversation’, so to speak, it seems discourse tracking is related to English as well.

Since this requires some illustration to make sense, consider the following situation: I found myself talking to my homestay brother about “creating words” one day in the sitting room. Soon, his mother joined in, and they began speaking to each other in Swahili. Over the course of that conversation, my brother continually used the verb “create”, rather than the Swahili equivalent (*kufanya*), saying things like “unahitaji [you need to] create a word,” instead of perhaps *unahitaji kufanya neno*. It seems that, since the discourse topic is now a slightly more abstract entity, it has triggered code-switching

into English. That single-word code-switch in the above example then triggered the following English (just like the example *kuprint something*). This time, however, there is no clarification, as the concept has already been clarified in previous discourse.

I propose that the process happens something like this: a discourse entity associated with a discourse marker or pause is established in the course of conversation, and so is usually accompanied by a clarification. The purpose of this clarification is to establish the discourse topic. So the clarification either a) becomes the discourse entity and accepted way of referring to the concept (e.g. 'mwenye pesa' for 'cashier'), or b) merely clarifies the original word used, so that, now fully clarified, that word can be used to represent the discourse topic. The fact that this discourse entity is a 'new' concept (new in the sense that it needed explaining) makes it almost a mini-coinage within the discourse, or rather, establishes a definition for the word. That term is then assigned to the pre-defined discourse topic, and sticks with it over the course of the conversation.

Of course, if you leave the topic of conversation long enough, the association fades. During one speech recording, a speaker said "mobile…simu ya mkono" ('mobile…a hand phone [cellphone]'), executing a code-switch followed by a clarification. This clarification then became the accepted mode of referring to the concept CELLPHONE. He used it consistently for the remainder of that narrative. Several minutes later, however, during the second narrative and thus in light of an entirely different topic, he used 'mobile' instead. But this time he did not feel the need to clarify with Swahili. He knew that the term had already been clarified in previous discourse, and now that the previous discourse was 'distant' enough, he was able to switch the term he chose to represent it.

What this data suggests is that language choice for bilinguals is related to the discourse topic. The language of a discourse entity is carried along with it from one section of discourse to another. So abstract concepts, proper nouns, or things given a special status trigger one-word code-switches. Even ignoring the concept of discourse tracking, there is a tendency for official, abstract, or pre-defined subjects (i.e. previous discourse topics, or concepts that have been given clarification) to be in English. The combined effect is that commonly, the most relevant words of a conversation tend to be English. While this is not a conversational norm, it is certainly common.

Motivations for Code-switching

Having examined exactly what constitutes code-switching in Swahili and the properties associated with it, we now turn to the reasons behind the phenomenon. We have already stated one: discourse tracking during conversation. Re-accessing previous discourse entities often triggers a switch to English. Also, we have seen how abstract, official, or meta-discourse elements also seem to trigger English. The fact that when Swahili speakers 'step outside' the discourse they tend to do so in English is another good indicator of a mixed Swahili-English code.

Other motivations have also been mentioned: one English word often serves as a trigger for others (cf. "kuprint something"). The idea of a mixed and unpredictable code, mentioned many times, means that some aspects of the speakers' language are simply English, and not Swahili (numbers and years, for instance). In addition, continual exposure to English means that speakers are constantly 'primed' for the language. This is much like American students learning Swahili, who often say 'sawa sawa' while

speaking English instead of the usual ‘okay’. But this language priming doesn’t necessarily mean that the two languages have merged in their heads. It simply makes them more receptive to use of the L2.

Everyday Swahili *is* a mixed code, however, and as such certain words are constantly ‘primed’, if you will. I call these ‘easy-access’ words, because these are the words that come most quickly and easily to a speaker of the language. In most cases, the speaker has learned the English first, and the Swahili second, so that while he may know the word in both languages, the English is more readily accessible to his mind. Data from my interviews supports this idea: time after time, Kiswahili Sanifu was described as hard, ‘something you have to think about’. On many occasions, I was told that only those who “go deeper into the [Swahili] language” know certain words that the majority of people use English for. Scholar-created words such as *runinga* ‘television’, *tarakilishi* ‘computer’, and *rununu* ‘phone’ are good examples (instead of *televisheni, kompyuta,* and *mobile*). The reason for this seems to be that English is used in the school systems from an early age, so students will acquire English words before getting the Swahili equivalent. On one interesting occasion, the subject used the phrase *ana record* to mean ‘he has a good memory’ [in context: ‘he is smart’], and when I asked why he used *record* instead of the Sanifu *akili,* he explained it was so that the children who were present at the conversation would understand. *record* they knew, he said, but *akili* they didn’t. *akili* was described as *mufti* (‘elegant’) and Sanifu, or pure. The children, when asked, confirmed his statement.

So issues of access and language priming contribute to code-switching. Also at play is a lack of precision in some Swahili words. Now this by no means suggests that the

impoverishment theory is correct—Swahili is a complete language with a fully fleshed-out lexicon. But when comparing *any* two languages, one or the other will have certain words that often more precisely indicate one's desired meaning. As already stated, bilinguals have more options than monolinguals do. If a word in their first language doesn't express their meaning quite the way they want it to, then they'll pick from another.

Related to the concept of precision in choosing words is Swahili's tendency to use English compounds over its own Swahili compounds (see the first section under Data Analysis). Because English has so many compounds and colloquialisms, these are seen as somewhat more precise than their Swahili equivalent. For instance, one speaker used 'family friend' in the course of a narrative, presumably for preciseness of meaning. In English, 'family friend' is a much more colloquial term than *rafiki ya familia / jamii* is in Swahili, so it more exactly hits on the meaning he wanted (it is also worth noting that this code-switch was preceded by a pause to give the speaker time to find the best word to express his meaning).

The function of certain code-switches also reveals a great deal about the reasons for using them. Related to precision is the idea of a *division of semantic space*. Sometimes words are borrowed into a language, not to replace other words, but to stand alongside them with a slightly different shade of meaning. For example, one speaker uttered the phrase *ninaenda trip* ('I am going on a trip'). When I asked him why he didn't use *safari*, he said it was because *safari* and *trip* had different meanings: *trip* meant to go and come back, while *safari* meant to go and stay for a while. This is common, but by no means ubiquitous. Of the 279 commonly used English words I compiled, I could only call 15 of

them a division of semantic space with any surety (though I am sure the number would have been larger if I had been able to discuss each word with native speakers). There are many other common ways in which borrowings change the semantic boundaries of words, but this is just one of the more interesting examples which the data happens to support.

Another common but again isolated phenomenon is English words that have come to entirely replace words in Swahili. Of the 279, there were only 21 sure instances of this (again a conservative estimate). An example would be the replacement of the word *takwimu* 'calendar' by the word *kalenda*. But by far the most common type of borrowing is words that have been introduced to fill a gap in the lexicon (197 of 279).

Sometimes too code-switches occur in order to clarify the Swahili. Of course, this only happens with those English words that have become so common in Swahili that they have replaced their Swahili equivalents, or when the Swahili word is not in common use. So it is not uncommon to see words in Swahili clarified by English in parenthesis, and once I heard a tour guide clarifying in the same way.

These are just some of the many reasons why speakers utilize code-switching in everyday speech. In addition to these are all those reasons that go along with code-switching in *any* context, not just the ones supported by the data I have here. These are such things as social situation, subject, audience, etc. A speaker is more likely to code-switch into English, for instance, when he begins discussing hard science, simply because of the tremendous association with English in those fields.

The combination of these various reasons also brings one to think that perhaps unstable bilingualism isn't entirely unpredictable after all. Many of the random verb

code-switches we mentioned earlier, for instance, can be explained by the way discourse topics can trigger a code-switch (indeed, this explains the majority of verb code-switches in my data). Perhaps once we have a full-enough understanding of the factors involved, unstable bilingualism will no longer be unpredictable at all.

Attitudes toward Code-switching

Now that we've seen how and why English is used in Swahili, we need to ask ourselves, 'how do people feel about this phenomenon?' This final section examines those attitudes people hold toward the mixing of their two languages.

In order to determine what people think about their language, we need to understand how they view it—their perspectives and definitions of the language involved. For instance, it does us little good to speak of dialects in Kenya, as the majority of people simply don't have this term or view language variation in that way. To most, the different dialects are simply different "languages", in a very broad sense of 'ways of speaking'. It is in this context that we must examine code-switching. Using my terminology questionnaire (see Appendix I), I tried to classify the way Kenyans look at language.

Kenyans typically only make 2 or 3 distinctions when speaking about their language. Every speaker distinguishes Swahili Sanifu as a class of its own. Across the board, this is described as "pure" Swahili, unmixed, without "corruption", etc. Sanifu is never conflated with other linguistic terms like Sheng, loanwords, slang, or dialects. After that first distinction, the situation gets more complicated. At least one other form of language is distinguished from Swahili, and for some speakers two. But most people do not exceed a total of 3 distinctions.

For those with 2 distinctions, there is Sanifu, and then everything else, variously called ‘local’ language, ‘Sheng’, or simply other (i.e. lacking a distinct name). Whatever the name for the second variety, it is seen as non-standard, ungrammatical, corrupt, and generally socially inferior to Sanifu, the ideal variety. Those with 3 distinctions generally differentiate between Sanifu, ‘local’ varieties, and ‘Sheng’ (the lattermost being an extremely flexible term, as we shall see). The meanings of each of these change from person to person, and sometimes contradict entirely, but the pattern of distinctions remains the same for all: there is the standard variety (Sanifu); then there is the acceptable deviation—deviations from Sanifu that are seen as the ‘standard’ and acceptable way of speaking for specific regions. These are what we might call dialects; lastly there is unacceptable deviation—typically Sheng, and sometimes English-Swahili mixings. Some, however, would classify code-switching or English borrowings as acceptable local varieties, or even Sanifu. So while the definitions of the distinctions vary, they all break down in the same way—a trichotomy between Sanifu and acceptable and unacceptable deviation. People merely vary on what they view as acceptable.

The distinction in the treatment of nouns and verbs we discussed earlier also shows up in these distinctions. When I asked participants to classify code-switched English words as one or another language variety, verbs were predominantly viewed as English, while code-switched nouns were seen as some form of Swahili. In fact, not a single participant classified verbal loanwords (even when in Swahili phonology) as acceptable Swahili. At best, it was classified as Sheng. It was clear from the data that speakers are much more willing to accept nominal borrowing than verbal borrowing. The ones who didn’t make the noun-verb distinction simply shunned the borrowings in general, refusing

to classify them as any form of acceptable Swahili. Therefore, it seems that the English influence is limited to nouns, and even then tentatively so. Unsurprisingly, this is again consistent with Swahili borrowing nouns to compensate for its own lack of a nominalization process.

Speakers also tend to make a distinction between borrowing words for new concepts and borrowing words for concepts/words that already exist. The former are generally seen as more acceptable borrowings (explaining the extremely high percentage of words borrowed to fill gaps in the lexicon). As one participant put it, "How can we have a name for something we don't have? We just use the English."

The terminology questionnaire also revealed a number of basic associations and attitudes. First, there was a consistent association of Sanifu with increased difficulty, a correlation we have seen once already. Sanifu consists of many "hard words," and "you have to think about it a lot." This latter reason was also one boy's explanation of what constitutes a "hard" word. Concerning the scholarly words (e.g. *runinga, tarakilishi*), these were also called Sanifu, but all agreed they weren't well-known (despite knowing the words themselves). While it is probably not the case that the people don't know these words (most of them do), this misconception certainly suggests that they are used infrequently, if at all. Sanifu is also associated with the elderly, who by general consensus are said not to 'mix' the language (with English).

Swahili, and particularly Swahili Sanifu, have a strong association with the Coast. The Mombasa and Lamu dialects were both described as being extremely close to Sanifu (a false misconception), and Mombasa Swahili is considered more proper by pretty much everyone. It is also seen by some as the "original" Swahili, and thus the "real" Swahili, as

opposed to Sanifu, which has been Westernized and its Arabic sounds. This attitude is likely due to the historical context of Swahili originating on the Coast. Finally, Sanifu is associated with both schools and rural areas (the latter because of the presumed lack of English in those areas).

In terms of attitude, it should not be surprising that 'mixing' (of English into Swahili, i.e. code-switching) is sometimes viewed as improper or a "corruption". This is a fairly typical attitude toward non-standard language varieties. So again, we should expect English to be associated with unacceptable slang varieties of the language. Interestingly, Kenyans call all forms of slang 'Sheng', whether or not it actually is. This conflates the concept of slang with the specific dialect of Swahili that exists in Nairobi. Naturally, this creates a great deal of confusion around the term 'Sheng'. For those who know the dialect (i.e. the youth from Nairobi), Sheng is a specific language variety, just like Mombasa or Lamu Swahili. It is often called Kinairobi, just as Mombasa Swahili is Kimvita and Lamu's is Kiamu. Interestingly, it was clear from the terminology questionnaire that Sheng speakers did not have a significant association of Sheng with English. It is simply a (very unique) Swahili dialect.

For everyone else, 'Sheng' refers to any version of slang or unacceptable deviation. Indeed, the questionnaire showed a strong association between Sheng and English for those who were unfamiliar with the dialect. To them, Sheng was any mixing of English and Swahili (code-switching included). For non-Nairobians, the concept of Sheng has broadened to refer to all non-standard varieties of Swahili. They will often cite examples of this more global sense of "Sheng", but which in fact are really nothing more than English code-mixing, instead of specific vocabulary from the dialect.[?] However, all

participants identified Sheng as a private code (or "code of secrecy", as one participant put it).

Whether they call it Sheng or not though, everybody acknowledges the mixing of English and Swahili: "We use English so much…;" "we just mix them;" "everybody uses English." One would suspect an unstable mixed code on the basis of these reports alone. A number of people even expressed the sentiment that it was this mixing that makes Sanifu so hard: "We just use the English." I interviewed one young male in Tanzania who said that "Kenyans talk improper [Swahili]," and reasoned independently that this was because there was 'more English than Swahili there'. Yet this same speaker advocated the use of code-switching. "Our language is not complete," he says. New words are needed. Thus mixing is a generally accepted phenomenon. Sure, most people you talk to will call mixing bad Swahili or make it clear that it is not entirely acceptable, or that it's ungrammatical; often they are embarrassed to admit that they do it themselves. But they accept it nevertheless, and the attitude is not generally a negative one. "I'm not against these things," says one participant. He says it creates harmony between English and Swahili speakers. Perhaps this agreeable disposure is due to the prestige that English carries. Some even go so far as to predict that the mixing, or global Sheng, will (and even should) spread across Kenya in the next decade or so.

There are instances when this is not the case. Using too much English is sometimes resented, and seen as "putting on airs," flaunting wealth, and showing a desire to cast off local roots (Bonvillian, 1995; p. 349). It is, after all, the language of social mobility. Attitudes towards English-influenced Sheng were unfavorable at times as well. Sheng is usually associated with disagreeable lower-class social characters known to get in

trouble, cause problems, or be of otherwise negotiable virtue. “Let’s see, how do I put this politely?” said one woman when asked who speaks Sheng. Others described Sheng as what you speak when “you want to talk like a gangster.”

As the definition of Sheng broadens to that of a global Sheng, it may become commonplace enough to lose much of the social stigma it has acquired, especially since the “Sheng” that most people know isn’t really Sheng at all.

Mostly though, mixing is acceptable because of the prestige associated with English. Consider part of the conversation from the focus group in Kaloleni (translated):

Interviewer:	Why do you mix?
Participant:	Because we’re with our peers. They want to know English.
Interviewer:	And why do you want to know English?
Participant:	To get better jobs here in Kenya.

When asked if mixing (termed Sheng, in the global sense, by this participant) was a corruption of Swahili, he quickly replied that yes, it was, but that it’s easy to understand and so it’s okay. Clearly this is justification enough for him. This was such a positive and beneficial feature of “Sheng” that he predicted most of Kenya would be speaking a mix (i.e. a pidgin) with the next decade. If speakers themselves are predicting an *entirely* mixed code, it can only because they are already seeing the trend.

It seems impossible to deny at this point that Swahili has become a semi-mixed code with English as a result of the bilingual diglossia in Kenya. Evidence from every aspect of code-switching we’ve covered so far has pointed to it. The only question now is, will this mixing continue into the future, or will Swahili continue to slowly find adequate equivalents for words, making this present influx of English merely an era in history?

* * *

One final note regarding Kenyans' perspective of their language: Over the course of this paper, we have switched between talking about borrowings and talking about code-switching. Even in §2, I was careful to note the importance in distinguishing between the two. So why then do I now conflate the two terms? Certainly to try and encompass both at once would be beyond the scope of this paper. Why not a narrow focus on one or the other? Why not make the distinction?

The answer is because Kenyans themselves do not make the distinction. To the average Swahili speaker, there is no such thing as code-switching or borrowing. To them, it is all one in the same phenomenon—'mixing'. And the issue is by no means an insignificant one to them; it is often the point of heated debate, and Kenyans are concerned about the future of their language.

So if one wishes to examine the issue of 'mixing' in Kenya, he can not afford to ignore certain types of data on the basis of a few idealized terminological distinctions in the jargon.

§6. CONCLUSION

In §1, we set out several objectives for this project: to analyze patterns, reasons, and attitudes of code-switching, as well as present any other facts the data seem to suggest. In §3, we looked at these objectives in light of several issues that are currently being

debated in the discourse, and highlighted exactly how this project relates to the literature. In §4, we met our objectives by analyzing the way English is used in Swahili, positing the motivations behind it, and the attitudes toward it. Additionally, we showed how the data suggests an interesting new way of looking at discourse elements. In the process of meeting these objectives, (we hope) we have added to the discourse outlined in §3 in a small but meaningful way. Namely: by giving evidence of a mixed code while at the same time showing it is not entirely unpredictable; by comparing Swahili coinages to English borrowings regarding the issue of impoverishment; by discussing the possibility of Swahili becoming a pidgin-like mix of English and Swahili; and finally by expounding upon Eastman's theory of discourse-marking and code-switching.

In conclusion, we have attempted a brief survey of the phenomenon of code-switching in Swahili in a way that we hope serves as a stepping stone for those who follow.

§7. Recommendations for Further Study

For anyone interesting in continuing where this project leaves off, rest assured this paper is far from comprehensive. One could take future research in many different directions. He could pick any one of the 4 objectives of this paper, for instance, and focus an entire project on that one question alone, exploring the smaller questions that constitute it. Alternatively, one might choose to concentrate on one of the issues currently being debated in the discourse, such as Swahili as a mixed code or the pidginization of the language. Also, a great deal of work could still be done to flesh out Eastman's reflection on discourse-marking (as well as my own).

As far as advice goes, recorded speech data is invaluable, especially if you have a language consultant to help analyze it. At the same time, don't forget that people like talking *about* language even more than they like using it. Listen to what people have to say about what they say. And most importantly, assume nothing about your data—our preconceptions often keep us from seeing the treasure right before our eyes.

~ APPENDIX I ~

Terminology Questionnaire

This questionnaire was structured to understand how speakers distinguish between different varieties of Swahili. Particularly useful was asking them to classify various words into one language variety or another. The way in which they classified English loanwords was most indicative of the distinctions they made in the language. Often, my questions had to be altered to adapt to the fact that people didn't use terms like 'slang' or 'Kimvita', and so instead I would substitute whatever terms they used, and classify words according to their own taxonomy.

Terminology Questionnaire

Name: Date: Location:
Age: Sex: Time & Duration:
Other information:

1. What is Kiswahili Sanifu?

2. What is Kimvita?

3. What's the difference between Sanifu and Kimvita?

4. What is slang? Can you give some examples?

5. Is Kimvita slang? [build off definition from #4]

6. What do you call it when people use English words while speaking Swahili? Slang?

?

~ APPENDIX II ~

Coinage Exercise

This was a very simple exercise, in which I would describe each of the twenty words or concepts to the participant, and he would then be required to create a new word to describe it. I tried for a variety of parts of speech, but focused on nouns and verbs. A few of the prompts, as you might imagine, were extremely difficult, and had to be abandoned. It was also difficult to explain exactly what I wanted with this exercise, and even when I had explained it, the results weren't at all what I expected, causing frustrations at times. Still, in the end this was a very useful exercise that helped contribute to my project.

Interview Guide: Coinage Exercise

1. INANIMATE – a new technology (perhaps a watch) that lets you slow down time
2. ANIMATE – person who makes towels for a living
3. ADJ – a way to describe something as being like your mother (if something is like your mother, it is _____)
4. ANIMATE – a person who always has to be at the front of the queue/line
5. INANIMATE – a new kind of shoe that has special jets that let you jump 50 feet in the air
6. VERB – to spin around in circles 3 times
7. INANIMATE – a book where you keep a list of every email/letter you've ever sent
8. ADJ – a way to describe things you only see at day but never at night
9. VERB – to do all the things you normally do when you wake up in the morning (shower, brush teeth, eat breakfast, etc.)
10. VERB – to call someone by the wrong name
11. ANIMATE – a mix between a human and a donkey
12. ANIMATE – a person who says 'hakuna matata' all the time
13. VERB – to do something 'haba na haba' (bit by bit)
14. ADJ – a way to describe something as being long and thin
15. PLACE – a place where time travelers stop to rest while traveling between different times.
16. ADV – to do things like you always know what is going to happen in the future (if you always act like you know the future, you are acting how?)
17. VERB – to almost remember a word or name but not be able to.
18. INANIMATE – a small device you keep in your pocket that beeps whenever someone nearby thinks something bad about you.
19. ADV – a way to describe always doing things three times in a row (if you do things three times in a row, you do them _____)
20. ANIMATE – the person whose job it is to put stamps on every piece of mail sent by Parliament.

~ APPENDIX III ~

Glossary

bilingual diglossia – diglossia where speakers must know both codes in order to function in different aspects of society

borrowing – the act of adopting words from another language, usually accompanied by phonetic changes in the word

code maintenance – the ability to operate in a single code without switching or mixing

code-mixing – when a word from a foreign language is combined with elements of grammar of the first language

code-switching – when a speaker switches languages in the course of conversation

diglossia – a situation in which different codes are assigned to different social contexts and functional roles

discourse markers – words which relate different parts of the discourse to each other

discourse topic – the topic of conversation

discourse tracking – the ability of a speaker to follow the discourse topic as it changes during the course of conversation

division of semantic space – the introduction of a new word in a language which specifies a slightly different shade of meaning from its equivalent in the first language

functional roles – the social context associated with one variety of a language in diglossia

H-language – the high language of a diglossic situation, usually given more prestige and associated with official contexts

hybrid and impoverishment theories – the idea that Swahili has an impoverished lexicon, forcing it to become a hybrid mix of foreign languages

individual bilingualism – when the individuals of a state are bilingual, regardless of the state's language status

L1 – the first language of a speaker

L2 – the second language of a speaker

languages in contact – when speakers of different languages interact on a regular basis with each other

lexicon – the complete set of vocabulary for a language

L-language – the low language in a diglossic situation, usually given less prestige, but associated with everyday social interaction and culture

phonology - the sound rules of a language

stable bilingualism – bilingualism in which each language variety has a clear association with specific social contexts, and those contexts do not overlap

state bilingualism – when a state is bilingual *de jure*

unstable bilingualism – bilingualism in which there are no clear-cut lines of demarcation between when to use one or another language variety in certain social contexts

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~ LIST OF INTERVIEWS ~

Jennifer Coffman, Professor at James Madison University. August 18, 2006 @ 9:00 a.m. EST. *Daily Grind* – Harrisonburg, VA. The linguistic situation in Kenya from an American perspective.

Kazungu, SIT staff help. September 4, 2006 @ 7:00 p.m. *Blue Room* – Mombasa, Kenya. The linguistic situation in Kenya from a Kenyan perspective.

Silvia, teacher at Watamu pre-primary school. September 8, 2006 @ 10:30 a.m. Watamu, Kenya. How English is taught at Kenyan schools.

Lawrence Kingi Karisa, head teacher of Standard 5. September 8, 2006 @ 11:00 a.m. *Watamu Primary School* – Watamu, Kenya. Swahili's future potential as a langage.

Yusuf Aboud, personal tutor and teacher. September 14, 2006 @ 12:00 p.m. *Shela Primary School* – Shela, Kenya. English and Swahili school compositions.

Anne, Swahili teacher for SIT. September 29, 2006 @ 9:15 a.m. *Milimani House* – Lamu, Kenya. Sheng and language attitudes.

Prisila Mlingi Moiso, English teacher. September 30, 2006 @ 4:30 p.m. Lamu, Kenya. Sheng and language attitudes.

Jackie, hotel staff. September 30, 2006 @ 7:30 p.m. Lamu, Kenya. Sheng and language attitudes.

Maodi, hotel staff. November 9, 2006 @ 2:30 p.m. *Victoria Guest House* – Stone Town, Zanzibar. Comparing language situations in Kenya and Tanzania; mixing languages; language attitudes.

~ ISP REVIEW SHEET ~

1. Your topic – suitability, development, accessibility

A fairly easy topic in terms of accessibility – anyone who speaks Swahili is a good subject. Written data, however, is much harder to procure (though worth it if you pull it off). This is not a topic I would recommend for anyone without some linguistic background. Also, since language touches on so many aspects of life, expect your project to become really broad really fast. Be open-minded and willing to shift directions while trying to narrow it down. The more specific the phenomenon you're studying, the more detailed you can be.

2. Location of field study

Stayed with my homestay, for Ksh 700/day, for 28 days, all meals included. Mombasa was extremely familiar, which was helpful in making contacts. Good informants are shopkeepers in tourist shops (on Mbarak Hinawy), and you can thank them by buying a gift for someone back home from their shop.

3. Nuts and bolts – where to get water & food, where to stay, etc.

I bought a 5 L bottle of water from the shop on Mbarak Hinawy every other day (Ksh 100), and made two trips to Nakumatt to stock up on food (for when I didn't feel like eating homestay food). You can always fall back on Hinawy House or Athman's if you're having problems wherever you're staying or need a getaway. Tradelight internet café on Makadara has the cheapest prices and is generally the most pleasant, and is open late (good when typing ISP). Mohamedi's Ice Cream is also right across the street when you need a break.

4. Other noteworthy comments

The benefits of staying with your homestay family during ISP are great – food, company, and a homey feeling. Just be prepared for cultural frustrations at times, and establish a place to escape to. However, you can't beat the independence of your own apartment – the Luxury Apartments are down the road from Blue Room, past the Mobile station on the left. They're cheap and they've got AC – just ask Hamisi for details.

Feel free to contact me with questions: dwhieb@gmail.com