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Why did you Choose Runyambo instead of Ruhaya for your Research Project? By the way, why not Choose Kiswahili, the National Language? 'Forces' Acting upon the Choice of Language of Research in Tanzania

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Abstract

In this paper, I approach the choice of the language of study for a graduate research program. In a way, irrespective of the functionalist and generative warnings, I articulate the rationale for the choice of mother tongue language as the language of research by linguists. In the article, I caution that absence of existing research outputs is not a sound reason to allow straightforward research permit. Further, I point out that the main motivation of the selection of a research topic could be the contribution to an ongoing research in which the mother tongue of the researcher is staged to offer good evidence in favour or rejection of the existing claims available in the literature. This is the tradition in the scientific inquiry. Furthermore, I argue that comparative works can also engage the cluster of the languages to which the mother tongue of the researcher is affiliated. The motivation for the choice of the cluster should be to examine genetic affiliation rather than to allow the researcher to attract easy data collection practises. In the end, I open a discussion for more research on endangered languages of Tanzania, which is an open linguistic research area left to foreigners to date. However, I argue that an interplay of documentation and theory should be realised.

Key words: *Research, graduate students, language choice, mother tongue, Tanzania*

Introduction[1]

In this paper[2] I address motivation for the selection of a research topic in a given language, specifically the mother tongue language of the researcher.[3]Vaux and Cooper (2003) outline several parameters

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1 This paper was written during my sabbatical stay in the Department of African Languages at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. I am grateful to the members of the department for granting conducive research environment, as well as KuriaMdoe for checking my English grammar.

2 The first version of the paper was short in length and explanations brief. It is the highlights from the review desk which enabled the expansion and upgrading of the paper to the current shape. As usual, if the paper has not become more coherent despite the best effort of review, the fault is entirely mine.

3 Mother tongue research or dissertation is a blanket term for research work which is/was conducted for the language spoken by the ethnic affiliation of the researcher. The focus is Tanzanian languages, but not Kiswahili, the national language.

necessary to be adhered to when selecting a topic of research for a particular speaker community. In this article, I address matters related to the choice of language of research by graduate students. Much attention is paid to the challenges that young researchers face when defending their research agenda before examiners.

In the volume by Vaux and Cooper (1999), the choice of informants is discussed in detail. Nonetheless, in this paper, I discuss the prevalence of mother tongue as the language of research in Tanzania, as well as in other African countries, as Ameka (2015:21) points out, 'African graduate students tend to work on their own languages and most of them have as their native language a major rather than a minority language.' However, the selection of mother tongue as language of research by graduate students faces a challenge from examiners who always pause the question: as a speaker of Runyambo, why do you want to conduct research on your mother tongue rather than another Tanzanian language? In Tanzania, this question is always paused by specialists of African languages, as well as examiners who are engaged in other fields of linguistic research, for instance, discourse analysis, second language learning/teaching, communication skills, and English and French specialists.

Another challenge arises from the prestigious Kiswahili language in Tanzania. It is apparent that Bantu languages contribute to the development Kiswahili (Gromova, 2000). Also, it has come to our knowledge that dialects of Kiswahili spoken in Zanzibar indicate close genetic affiliations with the Bantu languages spoken along the coast in Mainland Tanzania (Hans 2014a, b; Mwashota, 2017). Nonetheless, some researchers in the Institute of Kiswahili Studies face a challenge on the choice of the language of research other than their mother tongues, which are Bantu languages as well. This means that the room for research on mother tongue's contribution to Kiswahili is limited, probably only to the coastal Bantu.

Following Muzale and Rugemalira (2008), I want to argue that although Kiswahili enjoys prestige of being official language and the medium of instructions in education cycles, there is a dire need for continued research on Tanzanian languages other than Kiswahili. As I highlighted above, during the course of participating in the examination of graduate students for more than seven years now, and in the course of conducting research in the country, one of the embarrassing questions which I think we have not managed to

obtain the perfect answer for is on the motivation for the selection of a particular language of research for the researcher. It is my assumption that other researchers in African languages face the same challenge and thus I want to offer some opinions.

In order to present my argument smoothly, after the introductory note, I organise this paper as follows. In section 2, I discuss the nature of linguistic inquiry. This section paves the way towards understanding the paradigms of research engraved in the field called linguistics. In section 3, I provide the brief data I gathered from graduate students in Tanzania. ThenI follow with the discussion of the choice of mother tongue in section 4. In this section, I answer the question: Why choose Runyambo, a minority language, and ignore Ruhaya, a majority language? I propose that such a question should not arise once the researcher has staged his/her research agenda properly.Moreover, following Rugemalira (2005), I argue that marshalling the largest army of linguists should not be a decision in favour of selection of a language. In section 5, I present the superiority of Kiswahili and the advancement of linguistic knowledge from both different dialects and varied approaches. In section 6, I present forces associated with funding and the call for indigenous researchers on minority languages. In the section, I highlight that endangered languages are not researched by Tanzanians. Also, I discuss the influence of funding agencies on the question of the selection of languages. I highlight some setbacks associated with the choice of a dialect to modernise. I underscore that a mother tongue speaker is likely to yield good results based on linguistically informed decisions.I provide the conclusion in section 7.

The Nature of Linguistic Inquiry: Function and Generative Approaches

The nature of scientific inquiry concerns the choice of topic of research, better choice of theoretical base to lean the arguments in the research, proper designing of methods for data collection, and appropriate reporting. According to Creswell (2014), the type of research will dictate the choice of theory, design and methods of collection of data and their analyses. In this line, the choice of topic for the graduate dissertation forms the core of research in universities.

In hard-corelinguistics[4], the central concern is the cognitive approach to the understanding of internal structures of the language. In this regard, the dichotomy of the functionalist and generativist approaches to the studies of internal structures of languages form the core of the discussion in this section. On the one hand, pertinent issues highlighted by functionalists, particularly publications by Michael Halliday (see Halliday, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), will become central of the perspectives on the choice of language of research in Tanzania. On the other hand, the generativist approach of Noam Chomsky (Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2002) guides the other perspective on the study of language.

The functionalist perspective developed in order to address issues that arose due to the advent of fieldwork encounters with the aboriginal people in the far world, in Australia, Oceania and Far East. Broadly, the functionalist approach subsumes two important issues, namely the language is acquired/learned in natural environment where it is used, and mastery of the structure of a language is at par with the mastery of the culture of the community in question. The mastery of the combination of the two that is what makes a proper understanding of a given language. As a result, linguistic inquiry is required to consider such facts when engaging in research on a given language.

The proponents of functionalism adopt the suggestion that language is a combination of facets, but primarily the role of environment in acquiring language remain central to the facets. In this regard, in understanding a language one would require to experience the language use in natural settings. Halliday (2004:187) points out that "in all human languages, the grammar construes experience in terms of figures." The reference to figure here entails the complex semantic unit in which humans process changes in the environments. Eventually, "the grammar transforms human experience into meaning" (Ibid:188). This process is consciously construed by humans. It means that an engagement in the real world experiences is central in the development of language. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:24) insist that "we use language to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people. This

4 Pertinent issues covered in this paper concern the hard-core issues in linguistics. The main fields of study involved include syntax (sentence patterns, semantics (meaning patterns), phonology, (sound patterns) morphology (word structures) and interpretation of texts (patterns of use). In the discussion in this paper, issues related to sociolinguistics and language in education are purposefully ignored because they might be examined in a quantitative fashion.

means that the grammar has to interface with what goes on outside language." The social processes become part of the system of the given language.

In acquisition or learning of language, using a mother tongue entails learning both the language and the culture of the society in question. Halliday (2004:197) highlights that "when children first learn their mother tongues, they are both learning the language and at the same time learning through the language." The mastery of the grammar of a language is really a combination of the mastery of language and society. Halliday (2004:206) summarizes it as follows: "The grammar of every natural language – its ordinary everyday vocabulary and grammatical structure – is already a theory of human experience." The central concern here is that internal structures of a language are learned by external experiences.

Generative studies of language constitute universal grammar as central in understanding a language. Universal grammar concerns the innate biological endowment of mankind to learn and internalise the language. A person who internalised a language (usually called I-language) becomes a native speaker who is able to execute competence and performance in a given language (Chomsky, 1995, 2000). Within the development of the generative paradigm, Noam Chomsky has remained at the centre of the generative approach to understanding of language. In this regard, this summary adopts ideas from his books.

The innateness hypothesis substantiates that human beings are endowed with internal biological ability to acquire and internalise a language. Chomsky (2000) points out that the human brain has the ability to acquire and develop a system of a given language. In generative approach, the mind is central in understanding the operation of a certain system of a given language. He points out that "the child acquires a specific language, making use of the resources of the initial state that determine a substantial part of the knowledge (competence) acquired." (Chomsky, 2000:53). Once a language is acquired, it develops natural systems which can be generalised for all languages. In this regard, Chomsky (2000:53) highlights that "the initial state can be regarded as a fixed biologically-determined function that maps evidence available into acquired knowledge, uniformly for all languages."

Two important components of generative approach are competence and performance. The former is associated with mastery of the language, and the latter with use of the language. On the one hand, Chomsky (2000:60) points out that "the mature state of competence is a generative procedure that assigns structural descriptions to expressions and interacts with the motor and perceptual system and other cognitive systems of the mind/brain to yield semantic and phonetic interpretations of utterances." On the other hand, Chomsky (2000:160) highlights that "accessed by performance systems, the internal representations of language enter into interpretation, thought, and action, but there is no reason to seek any other relation to the world, as might be suggested by a well-known philosophical tradition and inappropriate analogies from informal usage."

Both competence and performance are associated with internalised language (I -language). Chomsky (2002:27) points out that "the I-language is a property of the brain, a relatively stable element of transitory states of the language faculty." When a language is internalised, the speaker can execute ideas with it. In this line, Chomsky (2002:27) points out that "each linguistic expression generated by the I-language includes instructions for performance systems in which the I-language is embedded. It is only by virtue of its integration into such performance systems that this brain state qualifies as a language."

In order to execute a scientific inquiry in hard-core linguistics, some choices have to be made. The pertinent choice to make is to choose the language which will be the source of the data. Central to this choice is the mastery of the language itself and the need to conduct scientific research. This question is addressed partly in the subsequent methods part of this paper.

A Brief Methodology

My focus in this paper is on hard-core topics in linguistics (probably I should mention topics in phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and text analysis).The structures of the institutions of higher education in Tanzania have shown the presence of the departments of linguistics and/or Kiswahili being central in offering courses culminating to attainment of master or doctoral degrees. In this regard, I obtain first-hand information from the universities of Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Ruaha Catholic in Tanzania.

The information that culminated into this paper partly arises from the intercourse[5] with graduate students from the three universities in Tanzania. Generally, Creswell (2014) highlights that a conversation with respondents generate data. Specific to fieldwork, Vaux and Cooper (2003) point out that a proper conversation with people engaged in the study of language is central to obtaining information. It is fortunate that I participated or continue to participate in the teaching of graduate studies in the three universities. In this regard, the outcomes of the conversation stand as the representative of the universities offering courses in linguistics.

Some purposeful intercourses were executed with students engaged in hard-core linguistics. Two graduate students studied at the University of Dodoma, six studied at Ruaha Catholic University, and eleven from the University of Dar es Salaam. This representation is not skewed rather it represents the size of the universities on the language-related graduate courses. The languages concerned are listed in Table 1. Notice that all respondents had ethnic descend to these languages.

Table 1: Graduate Students Involved in Research Intercourse[6]

S/No.	Languages	Number of Graduate Researchers
1.	Giha	2
2.	Iraqw	1
3.	Kihehe	4
4.	Nyakyusa	2
5.	Nyiramba	1
6.	Ruhaya	1
7.	Runyambo	3
8.	Safwa	1
9.	Sukuma	1
10.	Vunjo	1
	Total	**17**

[5] The review desk suggested that consultation of the examiners' reports would benefit the study. If find this suggestion useful. Nonetheless, in this qualitative paper, the discussion is primarily based on the interview with the graduate students, and secondarily on my encounters with the supervision and evaluation of graduate courses and dissertations. Further research would involve information contained in the examiners' reports and dissertations.

[6] The higher number of Kihehe graduate students does not entail a large number of researchers. Rather it reflects of the respondents from Ruaha Catholic University.

In the conversation, more of the reasons for the choice of mother tongue dissertations were rejected. In fact, six graduate candidates highlighted that examiners were satisfied with the rationale for the choice of mother tongue, while eleven graduate candidatesobtained objections. In the intercourse, the following rationales were given for the choice of other tongue research (Table 2).

Table 2: Survey Summary of the Graduate and Students with Mother Tongue Dissertations

S/No.	Reasons for the Objection of Mother Tongue Dissertations	Respondents
1.	There is need to make contribution to my mother tongue	9
2.	The issue of language mastered, hence easy to conduct research	6
3.	The knowledge of the research sites in the speaker community	6
4.	Abundance of resources (literature) on the mother tongue	3
5.	The mother tongue has not been examined by this theory	3
6.	The knowledge of the speakers hence easy research	2
7.	The need to satisfy Chomsky's approach which is proved good.	1
8.	There is need for comparative research rather than mother tongue dissertations	1

In the subsequent sections, I outline the rationale for the choice and/or objection of a given mother tongue dissertation and/or research. In the course of the discussion, I highlight points necessary to be adopted in defence of mother tongue dissertations.

Doing away with the Mother Tongue Syndrome

In the discourse with graduate students and graduate teachers, the main rationale for writing the mother tongue dissertations had been the mastery of the language. The assumption here is that research in mother tongue will become smooth because the researcher becomes the informant as well. In my opinion, introspection is an accepted technique therefore the choice of mother tongue becomes acceptable. However, this assumption is not always accepted if introspection technique is adopted withoutthe required caution.

It is also assumed, albeit erroneously, that research on language X will require mastery of the language. Some linguists assume that conducting research in another language will involve learning that language.[7] The reality is that one may engage in research on a given language without learning the language. Thus, competence and performance cannot be assumed to be required in conducting research in any language. Some researchers appear to have conducted profound researches on languages such as Kiswahili and Ruhaya but they don't speak these languages.[8] This means that they did not learn the languages in question.

This issue does not arise in universities alone. The mastery of language is assumed to be a paramount point in conducting good research in African contexts. It is the linguists from the speaker community who are assumed to provide good results (Ameka, 2015). This kind of thinking builds from Chomsky's (1995) idea of competence and performance in which a native speaker of a certain language will have marshalled most of the required grammar of the language in order to analyse it properly. As I will explain below, this kind of observation is not fully accepted by both examiners and researchers.

For the purpose of documentation projects, research by native speakers is required. In fact, the selection of mother tongue language as language of research is pointed out as important even for the purpose of writing grammar books in the same languages. Muzale and Rugemalira (2008:75) opine that "it will be important for some of these languages to produce grammars written in the native languages themselves. Needless to say, the realization of this ideal will require significant changes in the national policies and practices pertaining to language use." However, the language policy in Tanzania have prevented the promotion of ethnic community languages (henceforth ECLs) by banning their use in formal settings (Muzale & Rugemalira, 2008). But research in ECLs is required in order to obtain information that contributes to the general knowledge in the field of linguistics. Given this scenario, the

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7 I am grateful to the review desk for pin pointing this point.

8 Derek Nurse made tremendous contributions to tense and aspect in Kiswahili and Ruhaya. He also made tremendous research outputs on the history of Kiswahili. However, I am aware that he does not speak Kiswahili and Ruhaya. But this does not rule out the fact that other foreign researchers who speak Kiswahili made tremendous research outputs on the language. Here I would mention scholars of Germany descend, namely, Bernd Heine, Lutz Marten and ThiloSchadeberg.

selection of language of research has remained a challenge in Tanzania.

In the literature, it points out the call made by Africans in diaspora, Europeans and Americans want researchers from speaker communities in Africa toresearch and document African languages (see Essegbey et al., 2015). I want to add that mother tongue speakers should engage into discussion of a certain linguistic topic based on data obtained in their mother tongues. This has been the case in Tanzania, as I highlight below.

In a recent publication (Lusekelo, 2019), I point out that researchers in African languages, who obtained trainings in Europe and United States of America, researched on their mother tongues, which was the desired movement towards development of research skills by speakers of African languages. In Tanzania, prominent scholars did conduct research and promoted research on their mother tongues (Table 3).More research work continues to be conducted in these languages. The continued research on mother tongue is apparent for the current scholars in Ruhaya, Runyambo, Kisukuma and Shambala; but gaps are obvious for other languages, namely Chasu, Chindali, Ciruuri, Kiluguru, Nyamwezi and Sisumbwa.

Table 3: Researchers of the Mother Tongue Languages in Tanzania

S/No.	Languages	Researchers		
1.	Ruhaya	Ernest Byarushengo	Yunus Rubanza	Henry Muzale
2.	Kisukuma	Herman Batibo	BallaMasele	MasanguMatondo
3.	Runyambo	Josephat Rugemalira	Lea Mpobela	---
4.	Shambala	Ruth Besha	SaleheKaoneka	---
4.	Kivunjo	Lioba Moshi	---	---
5.	Kiluguru	Daniel Mkude	---	---
6.	Ciruuri	David Massamba	---	---
8.	Chindali	Imani Swilla	---	---
9.	Chasu	Abel Mreta	---	---
10.	Sisumbwa	KulikoyelaKahigi	---	---
11.	Nyamwezi	Clement Maganga	---	---

The continued research on the same language opens an avenue for more linguistic facts to be brought to the surface. The mass of literature marshalled by researchers in Kiswahili is a result of repeated research on the same subject matter, though with variations in approaches and dialects, as I will discuss in section 3.

The richness of Ruhaya, Runyambo, Kisukuma and Shambala is apparently useful to future researchers who will find it easy to trace weaknesses in the existing literature. I want to argue here that the answer to the question why Runyambo and not Ruhaya or Kiswahili can be answered easily by upcoming researchers as follows: I have found so and so gaps in the existing literatures, therefore, I want to conduct more research on the language in order to fill the gap on so and so subject matter.

In the course of the seven years as examiner, I have come to understand that most of the graduate students in Tanzania assume that the main reason to opt for a given language is lack of existing literature on the same topic for their mother tongues. I want to hastily say that such an answer is anomalous, indeed. Languages which obtained numerous research outputs presents a very good avenue to engage into debate with the previous researchers. It is the interrogation of the previous claims which makes the central point of significant in Tanzania: 'to contribute to the existing knowledge'. If a young researcher looks into uncultivated field, in my opinion, will be looking for a bad ground to engage into the existing literature. Consequently, the researcher may fail to offer the best outcome of research.

An underlying claim on the choice of language of research is that research should be conducted in the major languages, which contain the Bible in the languages, written grammar books, written story books, and dictionaries. I want to argue that this is a populist approach which, of course, arises from an assumption that the speaker community, which continue using the language for wider communication, will be the large consumer of the research output. I will use the South African case study to highlight how the formalisation of languages result into skewed research work. Webb (2013:177) highlights that "the setting up of language research and development centres to focus on nine of SA's 11 official languages: Sesotho saLebowa, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu." With the largest number of speakers, asSepedi, Sesotho, Isizulu and Isixhosa speakers outnumber the rest of the languages by millions (Webb, 2013:175), the market is not yet obtained. As a result, the publications of the books are required to be written in Afrikaans or English in order to fetch a large market (Motsaathebe, 2011).

A quick glance at the existing literature in Tanzania reveals that the major languages, which are areally superior (Batibo, 2005), have obtained major research outputs. In Table 4, I present a list of ten languages of Tanzania with majority speakers (LoT, 2009). The majority of the research outputs come from these languages (Lusekelo, 2019). For instance, Ruhaya contains many publications and gets used in most of the debates about Bantu languages (see Rugemalira, 1991, 1993a, b; Muzale, 1998, 2018, and references therein) and Nyamwezi and Sukuma are used in many research based debates (see Batibo 1976, 1991; Masele 2001, and references therein). Makonde obtains much research output in Tanzania rather than Mozambique (see Kraal, 2005; Amani, 2013; Rugemalira, 2013, and references therein).Maasai is at the centre of research outputs as well (see Payne, 2012; Karani, 2018, and references therein). Nonetheless, research in these favourably researched languages cannot be ceased because new theories emerge and further research is always required.

Table 4: The Areally Major Languages of Tanzania

S/No.	Languages	Speakers (LoT 2009)	Distribution of Habitation
1.	Sukuma	5,195,504	Mwanza, Shinyanga, Simiyu
2.	Giha	1,229,415	Kigoma
3.	Cigogo	1,023,790	Dodoma
4.	Nyamwezi	959,832	Tabora
5.	Ruhaya	833,214	Kagera
6.	Makonde	805,299	Lindi and Mtwara
7.	Maasai	803,457	Arusha and Manyara
8.	Kihehe	740,113	Iringa and Njombe
9.	Kinyakyusa	733,020	Mbeya
10.	Fipa	712,803	Mpanda and Rukwa

Out of these major languages, there are languages which have accumulated fewer previous studies and thus become open fieldwork grounds for future researchers. In fact, the claim above that languages in Table 4 are the majority and researched does not rule out the absence of outstanding research outputs in languages such as Cigogo, Kifipa, Kihehe and Giha, among others, except in a few publications (see Harjula, 2004; Rugemalira, 2009; Riedel &Patin, 2011, and few references therein). Based on lack of existing literature for an individual language, many researchers find it important to go into such an open field. However, some least researched and undocumented languages may not cast the required light on a given subject matter. In addition, as I pointed out above, it

is important that researchers interrogate the existing literature in order to obtain new research gaps. Therefore, the reasoning that I choose language X because it is an undocumented language does not sound good enough to allow a straightforward research permit.

Furthermore, I want to reiterate the point that the choice of mother tongue languages should be engraved in thereason of perpetuation of the existing debate. According to Lusekelo (2019), evidence points out that earlier researchers from Tanzania wanted to contribute to the general theoretical framework conceived in Europe and United States. For instance, the theory of argument structure, developed by scholars such as Fillmore (1968), Bresnan and Moshi (1990) and Dowty (1991) attracted the attention of Josephat Rugemalira. In his research outputs, arguments in favour and rejection of the claims advanced previously were made (see Rugemalira 1991, 1993a, b). But the question of why should the mother tongue speaker of Runyambo conduct research about his language may still linger because such contributions could also have been made using Hangaza (JD65), Kerebe (JE24) or Ruhaya (JE22), which are spoken in Tanzania and come from same Bantu cluster. This kind of reasoning may also water down the power of contributing to the existing body of knowledge using the language of the researcher.

Another case comes from David Massambawho examined tone patterns in Ciruuri under the influence of the autosegmentaltheory of phonology, propounded by John Goldsmith, his adviser. The contribution of Ciruuri to this theory is tremendously outstanding (Massamba, 1984). The contribution had been positive because one of the properties of the Mara Bantu is presence of tone, which is productive (Aunio, 2015). Now why did David Massamba choose his mother tongue as a language of research? Previously, Massamba (1977) examined the relatedness of Jita, Kwaya and Ruuri in the Mara Bantu. Probably contributions from Jita or Kwaya would have been equally outstanding. Thus, rather than choosing Ciruuri, his mother tongue, he would have opted for another language and eventually clear out the question of why not another language.

With the evidence from Ciruuri and Runyambo, which offered good theoretical contributions, the choice of mother tongue for research may not remain if we reason that language specific intricate matters could well be entangled when the researcher can command the language well, as Chomsky (1995) argues. Therefore, examiners

should be aware that the choice of mother tongue language, for the well-crafted research project, should be entertained.

Another reason for the choice of the researcher's own language had been to contribute to the comparative linguistics, which is assumed to be essential in African languages (see Massamba, 1977; Muzale, 1998; Mreta, 2000; Masele, 2001). Being a mother tongue speaker of Ruhaya, Muzale (1998) discusses the tense and aspect formatives in Rutara languages. Mreta (2000), a native speaker of Chasu, presents the linguistic and sociolinguistic evidence to display the influence of Chasuupon Gweno. Masele (2001) presents the relationship between Sisuumbwa, Kisukuma and Kinyamweezi. He was a mother tongue speaker of Sukuma. From the comparative linguistic point of view, all three studies were well staged for Bantu languages of the same clusters. However, the question of why choosing a class of the mother tongue of the speaker may keep looming because research in other Bantu clusters might also yield good results.

In case of the comparative Bantu, I opine that the presence of the mother tongue of the researcher also contributes to the better understanding of the patterns in the adjacent languages. The researcher goes out with the knowledge of his/her mother tongue, compares it with the other languages in his/her study. Again, I want to opine that examiners should be aware that the choice of mother tongue language for the comparative research project should also be entertained.

In summary, the choice of a mother tongue as a language of research should be motivated by the contribution to the existing debate on a given subject matter. This was well crafted, for instance, by Massamba (1984) for the autosegmental theory of phonology and Rugemalira (1993a, b) for the theory of argument structure. Current researchers may wish to engage in a debate using data from their languages without any hesitations. Nonetheless, the motivation for the choice of the mother tongue should be an engagement in an ongoing debate engraved in a given theoretical perspective; rather than just a choice of mother tongue for easy data collection.

In addition, the choice of a zone in which the other tongue of the researcher is located can also be opted for, as had been the case by Muzale (1998), Mreta (2000) and Masele (2001). The motivation for their choices, however, had been to compare systematically languages which are genetically related. Choices of Bantu zones,

however, can also contribute to the study of relatedness of languages, as had been pointed out by Aunio (2015).

Furthermore, the choice of mother tongue should not be concerned with easy research rather with abundance of informations which have not been unravelled by previous research. Instead of conducting research in languages with well-known linguists, e.g. English, Kiswahili and French in East Africa, attention should be paid to under-researched and under-documented languages. Therefore, researchers of mother tongues have linguistic goldmines in the language they have competence and performance.[9]

Circumnavigating the Same Topic in the Same Language: Lessons from Kiswahili

The university is known for being a home of international scholarship. In this regard, the choice of research on a certain topic requires to be motivated by the need to contribute to the international scholarship. In Africa, where universities strive to establish international recognition (Cardoso, 2019), the choice of a topic, requires to contribute to the international cycles. In sub-Sharan African linguistics, research in major languages have remained high in such languages as Kiswahili, Luganda, Bemba and Chichewa and (Lusekelo, 2019).

Some research topics have received much attention by Tanzanian researchers, as well as foreign experts. For instance, research on object marking and argument structure of Bantu verbs, tense and aspect in Bantu, and the structure of the noun phrase have been repeatedly examined in languages of Tanzania; see Muzale (1998) and Mreta (1998) and their graduate students on tense and aspect; and Rugemalira (1993b) and his students on verbal extensions, noun phrase structure, and object prefixation. At a point, it was assumed that no more research on argument structures and tense and aspect should be entertained. However, new research works have continued to be produced on tense and aspect and argument structure, albeit with a different theoretical orientation and from outside Tanzania (Bernander, 2017; Persohn, 2017; Riedel, 2009).

The point I want to make here is that researchers can repeat the same topic in the same mother tongue language but employing different methodological and theoretical approaches. The approach of

[9] I am grateful to the reviewer for highlighting this point.

grammaticalisation has now taken shape in African languages, mainly after the many contributions by Bernd Heine and his colleagues on the grammaticalisation of indefiniteness (Heine, 1997; Heine &Kateva, 2002), reciprocals (Heine & Miyashita, 2008) and recently nominal and verbal compound elements (Heine, 2019). I underscore here that the same research agenda could be approached differently, and of course results will also be different.

Probably I should draw an example from Kiswahili. The morphosyntax of object prefix in Kiswahili appeared in Wald (1979, 1995), Rugemalira (1991), Krifka (1995) and Riedel (2009, 2010). The exemplary cases continue to linger in the many publications by Lutz Marten (see Marten, 2000; Marten et al., 2007; Marten & Kula, 2012). This is a vivid evidence that a topic of discussion cannot be closed when it is topical. Researchers continue to conduct research on the same subject matter though with variations in approaches and tools of research. I want to argue that researchers can continue conducting research in their languages provided that the advance a good research tool which does not repeat the previous paradigm.

With regard to the choice of the same languages, I want to expose the last example from Kiswahili again. The question of language variation is paramount in the discussion about a certain subject matter. Kiswahili is a very good case in this regard. For instance, while Kipacha (2003) discusses the properties of the coastal dialects of Kiswahili in Tanzania and Kenya, Nassenstein (2015) presents vivid cases of Kiswahili data from Congo. Variations between standard Kiswahili is being reported by Kipacha (2012), while variations between Congolese Kiswahili appeared in (Nassenstein & Bose, 2016). Both scholars conduct research in Kiswahili, but the variation is on the dialects. The details contained in each of these two exemplary cases would have been unattained in case examiners were to argue that research on the same language should be avoided.

Hans (2014a, b) presents a case in which the dialects of Kiswahili spoken in Zanzibar may have historical relationship with the Bantu languages spoken in mainland Tanzania. In an effort to affirm this claim, Mwashota (2017) developed research agenda to examine the relationship between Kiswahili (Kimakunduchi dialect) and Kimakonde (Kimalabadialect). This is a kind of research which is encouraged because the more recent research looks into the previously made claims and establishes their validity.

Getting into Endangered Language for an Interplay between Documentation and Theory

The research on mother tongue appears to discourage the need for research on some smaller languages. In Tanzania, research on Kiswahili is preferred. Scholars (Batibo, 2005; Legère, 2006; Muzale & Rugemalira, 2008) highlight the demise of ethnic community languages on the face of Kiswahili in the country. The minority Tanzanian languages remain in a bad position as far as research on mother tongue is concerned. Some scholars (see Legère, 2006; Muzale& Rugemalira, 2008) point out that researchers in universities outside Tanzania have focused on endangered languages of Tanzania. I highlight in this section that Alagwa, Gorowaa, Hadzabe, Mbugwe, Nata, Ndengereko and Vidunda have been researched upon because they are endangered. I also highlight that documentation projects lean their work on some theoretical guidelines.

The movement towards research on endangered languages have not yet yielded good attention of Tanzanian researchers. This phenomenon is reported by Batibo (2005) and Legère (2006). However, in the external world, the promotion of endangered languages has yielded more interest on smaller languages in Africa (Ameka, 2015). As I highlighted, in Tanzania, attention by foreign researchers have been paid to the smaller languages mentioned which have fewer number of speakers. This subject matter has not attracted the attention of graduate students in Tanzania. The exception is JoashJ. Gambarage whose interest on Nata have resulted into documentation project (Gambarage et al., 2017). However, he has been influenced from outside Tanzania.[10] In this section, I outline the merits and dangers of engaging in endangered languages of Tanzania by the graduate students in the country.

The choice of an endangered language for a research project is predetermined by the level of endangerment of certain languages in a given country. One of the parameters is the number of speakers. Another parameter is the pressure exerted by Kiswahili. Both Batibo (2005:83) and Legère (2006:101-102) mentioned the languages which are highly endangered in Tanzania. In Table 5, I present the most endangered languages of Tanzania with population from LoT (2009).

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[10] I am not suggesting that the external influence is not regarded as a bad one; rather I am underscoring that the endangered language research works have not yet gained ground in Tanzania.

Some research work and documentation projects have taken off for some endangered languages, with research being conducted by foreigners, e.g. Akie (Ndorobo) (König et al. 2015), Gorowaa (Harvey, 2018), Hadza (Tindiga) (Sands, 2013), Manda (Bernander, 2017), Mbugwe (Aunio, 2015) and Vidunda (Legère, 2007), among others.

Table 5: Most Endangered Languages of Tanzania (LoT, 2009)

S/No.	Languages	Speakers (LOT 2009)	Distribution of Habitation
1.	Doe	7,944	Tanga
2.	Nata	7,050	Mara
3.	Hacha	7,008	Mara
4.	Nindi	5,689	Ruvuma
5.	Kami	5,518	Tanga and Coast
6.	Shashi	4,449	Mara
7.	Surwa	4,394	Mara
8.	Kwavi	3,004	Arusha or Manyara
9.	Akie (Dorobo)	1,152	Manyara and Tanga
10.	Wandia	182	Songwe

Both Manyara and Mara Regions happen to contain many endangered languages in Tanzania. The endangered Bantu languages within the JE40 cluster called Mara Bantu include Ikizu (JE402), Ikoma/Issenye/Nata (JE45) and Shashi (JE404) (Batibo, 2005; Legère, 2006). According to Aunio (2015:359), 'the massive changes in the living areas and livelihoods during the past hundred years, of which the establishment of Serengeti National Park has probably been the most significant, have made the situation even more complex.' Given this complexity, Mara Region becomes an open area of research on contact linguistics and other language specific topics.

Research on individual languages in Mara Region appeared. In Tanzania, native linguists from the speaker communities research on languages such as Nata and Kuria. The researchers cover topics related to morphosyntax of the nominal structure (Gambarage, 2013) and verb extensions and arguments of the verb (Charwi, 2017). These two researchers have opted to conduct research work on their mother tongues. The challenge of the absence of the mother tongue speakers will continue to linger for Hacha, Zanaki, Shashi and Surwa.

Gambarage et al. (2017) presents a unique case of Nata. Apart from writing about a specific topic on Nata, he managed to establish a team and develop a research project to document the language. Two

issues are pertinent for Gambarage's case. On the one hand, an individual person had been treated as a source of data. This is a typical case of generativist outlook in which a person with I-language may be consulted as the resourceful informant representing the entire community. In fact, some endangered languages with very few speakers will benefit from this decision. On the other hand, the Nata project wants to connect the findings to existing theory. Therefore, the contribution of even a documentation project of endangered language has to interrogate some of the existing theories.

Moreover, Mara Region also remains an important research area due to the convergence of the Nilo-Sahara and Niger-Congo languages. Aunio (2015:359) points out that apart from many Bantu languages, 'there are also languages from all three branches of the Nilotic languages. Of these, Southern Nilotic Datooga and Eastern Nilotic Maa have been in the area for hundreds of years, whereas Western Nilotic Luo is a more recent addition.' Research on Datooga had been conducted focusing on Barbaig dialect spoken in Manyara Region, except Rottland (1983). The Maasai have received attention from Doris Payne but on comparative cases for all Maasai dialects (Payne, 2012). Research on these languages still linger on the absence of indigenous speakers, except Michael Karani, whose interest is on Arusa and Parakuyo dialects of Maasai (Karani, 2017). It is not a unique case because this linguist has Arusa for a mother tongue.

Manyara Region is at the heart of the Tanzanian Rift Valley, which is a zone of convergence of numerous languages from the four language phylum in Africa (Kiessling et al., 2008). Batibo (2005) and Legère (2006) mention these endangered languages from the Rift Valley area: Burunge, Hadzabe, Isanzu and Mbugwe. This area attracted a lot of researchers from beyond Tanzania and many publications appeared for the last two decades. For instance, sociolinguistics and lexical borrowing is covered in Kiessling (2001) and Lusekelo (2015) for Burunge and Hadza respectively, language documentation in Gorowa is dealt by Harvey (2019) and description of Mbugwe is offered by (Wilhelmsen, 2018).

Research by Wilhelmsen (2018) provides an exemplary of a crafty work. Her research is descriptive in nature. However, she underscores that there is no study that runs without theory. Thus, to fulfil this need, she employed the basic linguistic theory. In the course of analysis, various theoretical guidelines are applied. For instance, tone issues in chapter three are approached from the

guidelines outlined by prominent scholars such as Larry Hyman and David Odden. This choice allows the candidate to allow proper international scholarship. Therefore, even research on under-described and endangered languages may yield a contribution to the existing theories.

I pointed out in the foregoing discussion that one of the setbacks that engulf these endangered languages is lack of mother tongue speakers trained as linguists. The bad consequence is that research on these languages is carried out from the perspective of documentation, which is the focus on many funding agencies today. However, there are setbacks associated with the documentation projects, as outlined by Ameka (2015). I recapitulate three most acute for research in Tanzanian languages.

The first setback arises from the standardization of African languages. Ameka (2015) highlights that most of the research works involve the production of materials in standard language. There is always the pressure upon the selection of the dialects to be used as the benchmark. Usually, the language of the researcher is assumed first choice. In Tanzania, in other cases, the language of the paramount chief is chosen as the standard dialect. Madumula (1995) points out that the standard Kihehe may be assumed to be primarily spoken in the villages adjacent to Chief Mkwawa's enclave. The claim that the royal family holds the proper dialect may not always be the case. As a result, Madumulla (1995) admits that the varieties of Kihehe which are spoken in Iringa and Mufindi Districts in Iringa Region are what have to be regarded as proper Kihehe. With this backdrop in mind, the decision of a good source of data would be made relatively well by the mother tongue researcher of languages like Kihehe.

The second impediment concerns the development of orthographies which turn the African languages as tools of literacy. But Ameka (2015: 25) cautions that 'most endangered language communities in Africa are oral cultures yet various stakeholders, including especially, the speakers, in the documentation enterprise tend to see the production of written literacy materials as a tangible outcome of language documentation.' Although writing a language is required, written documents have not been proved useful tools to safeguard endangered languages in Africa (Ameka, 2015). The choice of orthographic representation in a given language needs linguistic

information, which could be obtained from the researchers who are mother tongue speakers.

The other setback is associated with development of orthographies for the pure language as spoken by ancestors. Ameka (2015:28) points out the 'tension between the goals of language documentation which seeks to record actual language use including all the contact features and the desires of speakers who wish to preserve an authentic, traditional and ancestral form of the language.' The mother tongue researchers usually opt to use elderly speakers as important sources of their data. The disparities and disagreements between elderly and the youths are obvious in Tanzania (Petzell & Marten, 2016). This kind of choice generates new tension because examiners assume that languages change and no language has remained as was used by ancestors.

The presence of trained linguists can help to draw informed decisions on some of the linguistic issues paramount to the development of a language. For instance, languages in Tanzania come into contact with Kiswahili. As a result, lexical borrowing is attested in almost all Tanzanian languages (see Kiessling, 2001; Batibo, 2005; Amani, 2013; Petzell & Marten, 2016; Lusekelo, 2017, among others). Issues of language contact, such as code switching and lexical borrowing (Ameka, 2015), become part of the target languages, therefore, they should be incorporated, though with caution as none nativized ones need to be removed. This is the part in which the mother tongue speaker may come in and use his or her training to make proper decisions.

Conclusion

In this piece of research work, I outlined four main points which arise from the difficulties in choosing the language of research for postgraduate students. The first point I make concerns the staging of the current research on the existing body of knowledge. Researchers are required to interrogate the existing literature and pinpoint research gaps that will attract further research. The research gaps are well outlined in relation to the on-going changes upon a given theoretical background and the explanation therein. When the research agenda is well-crafted, the language choice become irrelevant because the research gaps will dictate the selection and no questions can be paused as to the choiceof language X over language Y. In fact, the crafting of the research gap and then filling in information is the nature of the scientific inquiry. I argue that

mother tongue dissertations in Tanzania should strive to open gaps and fill the gaps with outstanding research based claims. In this way, the rationale for mother tongue dissertations will be defended as required.

The second point I advance herein concerns the second point of saturation of research on a given language. Much research in Bantu languages of Tanzania surround Kiswahili, Ruhaya, Kisukuma, Shambala and Runyambo. This does not rule out the possibilities to conduct further research in these languages because there is no point of research saturation of an individual language. The case of object marking in Kiswahili began as far back as Wald (1979) and continued the conversation through the 1990s (Rugemalira, 1991) and debate goes on until now (see Marten & Kula, 2012). As I said above, graduate students should interrogate the present literatures and come up with a new paradigm for the same subject matter.

The third point concerns new approaches to research. In the course of the discussion in this paper, I pointed out that the opening of the new theoretical guideline such as grammaticalisation approach by Bernd Heine (Heine, 1997, 2019) should be treated an opportunity to interrogate previously established claims on tense and aspect, indefinite and definite noun phrases, reciprocal and reflexives. Thus, graduate students should venture into new areas of research instead of remaining into the old fields of research which shaped the thinking of the examiners. Knowledge becomes fascinating when new findings come to surface.

Lastly, I highlighted that research upon endangered languages of Tanzania is still premature. Researchers in Tanzania have to identify an undocumented language and conduct research upon a given subject matter. A word of caution also looms. The funding agencies have prescribed guidelines which the awardees have to adhere to (see Essegbey et al., 2015). Nonetheless, a nice topic can be selected for a given endangered language of Tanzania. Research of such kind will make double impact. On the one hand, the output will help improve the documentation of the language. On the other hand, contribution to the existing body of knowledge, which is central in basic research, will be achieved. An appropriate case is already provided and defended by Gambarage (2017) on the nexus of documentation and contribution to theory using the Nata language of Tanzania.

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Volume 13, Number 2 (2019)
Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education

Table of Contents

Fulfulde as a Vehicular Language: An Opportunity or a Threat to Minority Languages in Maroua?
James N. Tasah 1

Why did you Choose Runyambo instead of Ruhaya for your Research Project? By the way, why not Choose Kiswahili, the National Language? 'Forces' Acting upon the Choice of Language of Research in Tanzania
Amani Lusekelo 22

Ninogeshe: Strategic Selection of Value Adding Terms in Advertisement and Slogan Creation by Corporations in Dar es Salaam
Norbert Mtavangu 50

The Phonetic Manifestation of *-ile* Suffix across Bantu Languages: The Case of Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor
Nichodamus Robinson 66

Variation in Subject-Verb Agreement Marking in Two Kibena Dialects: The Highland Dialect and the Lowland Dialect
Perida Mgecha 90

Speaker-audience Convergence and Divergence in Tanzanian Campaign Discourse
Kelvin Mathayo 116

The Enactment of Male Mothering in Clark's *The Wives' Revolt*
Adebayo Mosobalaje 141

The Relationship between Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Vocabulary Knowledge among Tanzanian Learners of Chinese
Cyprian T. K. Kilangi 162

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