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BORROWING IN TANZANIAN NGONI LEXICON: SOME SEMANTIC TRENDS IN A LANGUAGE CONTACT SITUATION

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BORROWING IN TANZANIAN NGONI LEXICON: SOME SEMANTIC TRENDS IN A LANGUAGE CONTACT SITUATION

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ABSTRACT

The Tanzanian language Ngoni has interacted for long with Swahili, which is the more prestigious and dominant lingua franca in Tanzania. This language contact situation affects Ngoni, which frequently borrows terms from Swahili, both for concepts which are new to the Ngoni speakers, but also terms which replace existing Ngoni vocabulary. This paper investigates how borrowed words are integrated, based on a framework including semantic generalisation, specialisation and shift. The study is based on fieldwork conducted in the Songea District in the Ruvuma Region of Tanzania, in the three villages of Peramiho, Kilagano and Mhepai. It was found that borrowing was most frequent in the semantic fields 'modern world', 'food and drink' and 'clothing and grooming'. Additive borrowing was found to be more frequent than substitutive. Only semantic widening of borrowed terms was attested. However, combined with a tendency of replacement of old Ngoni terms with both Swahili and Ngoni hypernyms, it indicates that speakers' competence of the language is waning. This loss of competence may additionally be linked to a more general attrition of Ngoni culture and traditions, which may affect language maintenance.

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE LANGUAGE AND THE CONTACT SITUATION

The Tanzanian language Ngoni has interacted for long with Swahili, which is the more prestigious lingua franca in Tanzania. Swahili has for more than a century been present in the Ngoni communities of south-western Tanzania. This language contact situation affects Ngoni, which frequently borrows terms from Swahili, both for concepts which are new to the Ngoni speakers, but also terms which replace existing Ngoni vocabulary. Recent research (Rosendal and Mapunda 2014) has shown that borrowing affects even basic vocabulary.

In the light of this contact situation, the aim of the study is to investigate how borrowed words are integrated, based on a framework including semantic generalisation, specialisation and shift. The current paper only deals with lexical borrowing, and not syntactic changes. Data collection was not based on individual lexical items, but on extended spoken data elicited by using thematically selected photos. Therefore, the study contributes to the understanding of the vitality of Ngoni in the present contact situation with Swahili. The paper discusses integration processes of loanwords found in the data. These are illustrated, with a special focus on semantic changes in the Ngoni lexicon. Additive borrowing and substitutive borrowing are treated, in addition to semantic accommodations which have taken place or are found to be taking place through the borrowing process. The aim of the study is to show trends and changes in the Ngoni language and not to primarily provide diachronic morpho-syntactic developments, even if the few older sources which exist have been consulted to establish the original Ngoni term, when possible. When relevant, these changes are discussed in the light of the contact situation, but also in relation to age and extra-linguistic factors such as changes in lifestyle.

Before illustrating the trends which were found in the data, an overview of the language situation is given, followed by a summary of the theoretical basis of the paper. Finally, before going through the results of the study, data collection and methods used for the analysis are summarised.

1.1 The sociolinguistic setting

Ngoni N12 (Guthrie 1948, 1971) is spoken in the Southern Highlands in the south-western part of Tanzania (see Figure 1), where Ngoni speakers settled at the beginning of the 19th century. Ngoni-speaking groups are believed to originate from the area of today's South Africa, and particularly from the Nguni-speaking languages. Along the way to the Ruvuma Region in Tanzania, contact with other linguistic groups

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was made and war captives were incorporated into the group, bringing with them their lexicon, phonological traces and culture. Today the Ngoni language is quite distinctive from the Nguni languages of South Africa (Ebner 1955; Miti 1996; Moser 1983; Ngonyani 2003; Nurse 1988; Rosendal and Mapunda 2014; Spiss 1904).

Ngoni is one of about 150 languages or dialects of Tanzania (Muzale and Rugemalira 2008, 80). As a part of Tanzania's long-time language policy aiming at achieving national and linguistic unity, Swahili, which has official status, has been promoted and is today used as a lingua franca all over Tanzania. A recent quantitative study (Rosendal and Mapunda 2014) on the borrowing of Ngoni within this language contact situation, clearly showed that Ngoni is affected by the extensive use of Swahili, even in remote areas. Code-switching and use of borrowed Swahili terms, even for basic concepts which are regarded as less borrowable, were found to be solidly established not only among the young, but even used by elderly persons within the Ngoni community – and additionally among subsistence farmers in typically rural settings, where Swahili was found to be penetrating deeply into oral communication.

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1.2 Theory, methods and data

The 2014 quantitative study of borrowing in Ngoni (Rosendal and Mapunda 2014) showed that not only additive borrowing for concepts related to modern life has taken place. Even basic vocabulary concepts were found to have been replaced by borrowed Swahili terms. This earlier study clearly indicated that changes are taking place in the Ngoni vocabulary. The present study focuses on semantic changes. Even new terms for concepts which already exist in the Ngoni vocabulary, have been found to be introduced through borrowing from Swahili. Borrowed words and old terms normally do not exist side by side with the same meaning, without a specialisation, i.e. a broadening or a narrowing (Weinreich 1953, 54–55). Thus, in the present language contact situation with ongoing extensive borrowing from Swahili into Ngoni, a study of both analogical and non-analogical semantic changes illustrates integration processes. At the same time it contributes to establishing the vitality of Ngoni, as a complement to other studies on the effects of language-contact-induced changes from a language shift perspective.

The present paper mainly discusses generalisation and specialisation, in relation to superordination or subordination, as defined by Geeraerts (2009). These semantic changes are termed broadening, narrowing, and shift, using Weinreich's (1953) terminology. *Generalisation* covers Bloomfeld's term semantic widening − defined as a broadening, widening or extension − and the term *specialisation* equals Bloomfeld's *narrowing*, which describes semantic restriction as a result of such a transfer (Bloomfeld 1933). *Shift* or *loanshift,* as defined by Haugen (1950, 219) as a term for lexical innovation, is employed to describe loss of former meaning or

to describe that a term has taken on a partially new meaning, which is a semantic extension.

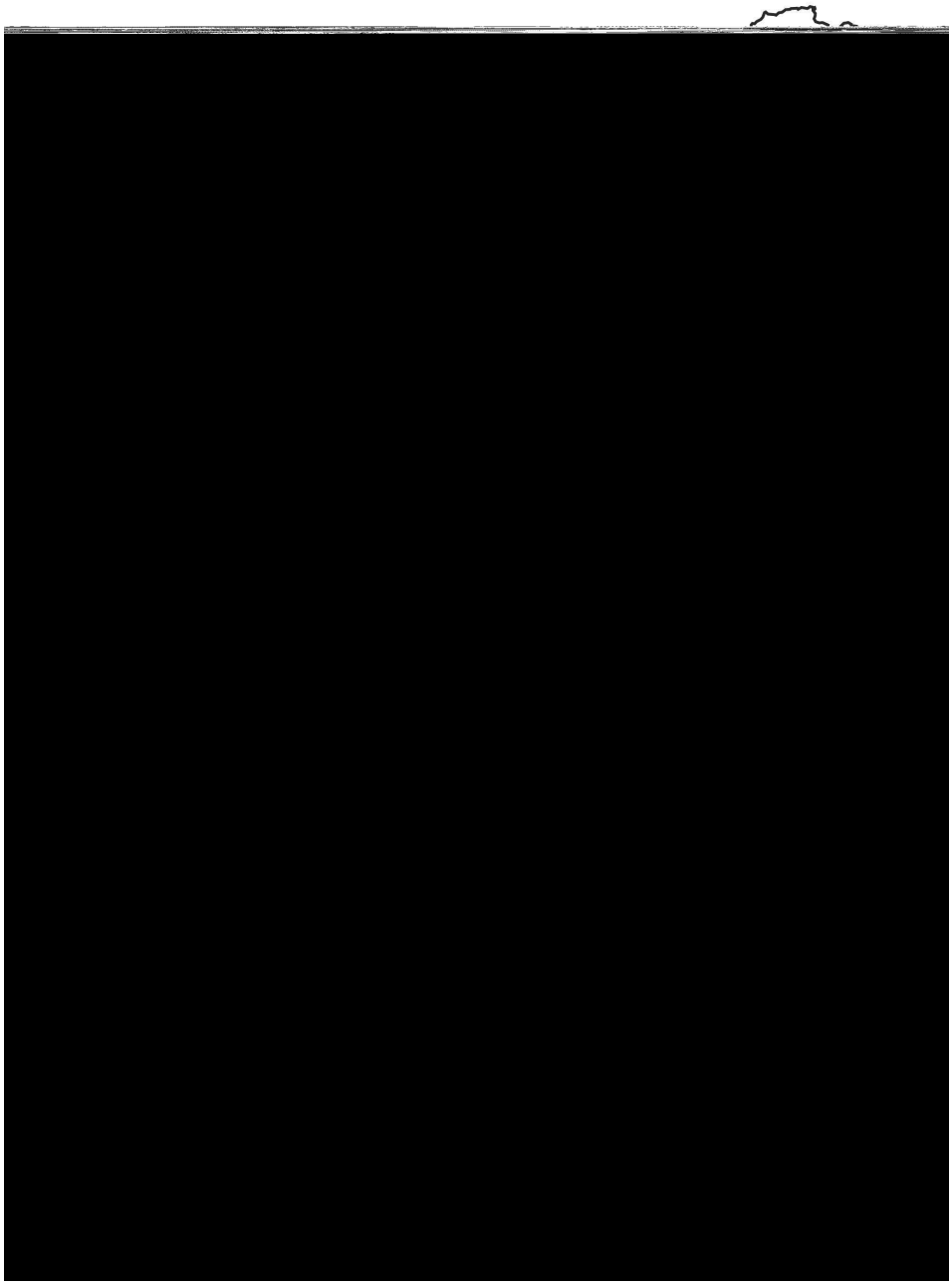


Figure 1: The Ngoni speaking area

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The semantic hierarchical relationships found in the data, are complemented (whenever relevant) by a discussion of hypernymy. Semantic lexical relations are furthermore exemplified by some terms affected by the current language contact situation, using Saeed (2003, 68) and Cruse's definition of hyponymy as a relation of inclusion in a superordinate form (Cruse 2004, 148).

Before presenting these trends in the data, a short overview of data collection and methods used is presented. The fieldwork was conducted in the Songea district of the Ruvuma region of Tanzania, in three villages, Peramiho, Kilagano and Mhepai, which are situated in the middle of the Ngoni-speaking area, see Figure 1. Recordings were made from speech elicited by using photos which were produced locally. These photos included 63 concepts from three themes: 'farming', 'cooking' and 'modern life'. A total of five hours of recordings from 24 informants in three age groups (15–30 years; 31–50 years; and older than 51 years) from Permiho and Mhepai were recorded. This elicitation was later supplemented by elicitation of six informants living in Peramiho and six in Kilagano[1], based on photos of 23 old artefacts. In addition, elicitations of four elderly persons living in Michungwani village in Tanga region near the Kenyan border (where Ngoni people emigrated and settled around 1950 to work on plantations) were recorded. The last group was recorded the same way as in the Ruvuma region to provide insight on language use before 1950, as a comparison to the present language use in the Songea district.[2]

During the recordings the informants, after an introduction in Ngoni, talked freely about what was found in the photos and what the items are or were used for. The recorded speech was subsequently transcribed by native Ngoni speakers.

Additionally, three focus group interviews and eight individual interviews about semantics were conducted. One focus group was recorded in Kilagano, one in Peramiho and the third in in the village of Michungwani.

Loans may constitute additions to the lexicon of the recipient language, replacement of words already existing in the recipient language or semantic reinterpretation of lexical terms. In the following section these processes will be discussed and exemplified.

2. LEXICAL INTEGRATION AND SEMANTIC CHANGES

Most of the loans found in the data of the present study were what might be labelled direct loans, i.e. both semantic content and phonetic form have been borrowed, with varying degrees of accuracy, from the donor language.

Borrowing tends to be more common in some fields than in others. As an introduction to the present analysis, Figure 2 gives an overview of borrowing and the semantic fields defined by Buck (1949) and Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009a), based on the elicitations of the 63 concepts described in the methods section. A total of 532

terms describing the targeted concepts are in Figure 2 categorised as either loanword (LW), a lexeme that is transferred from the donor or source language to the recipient language (Haspelmath 2009, 37) and which is morphologically or phonologically integrated into the borrowing language, or as code-switches (CS), i.e. not integrated.

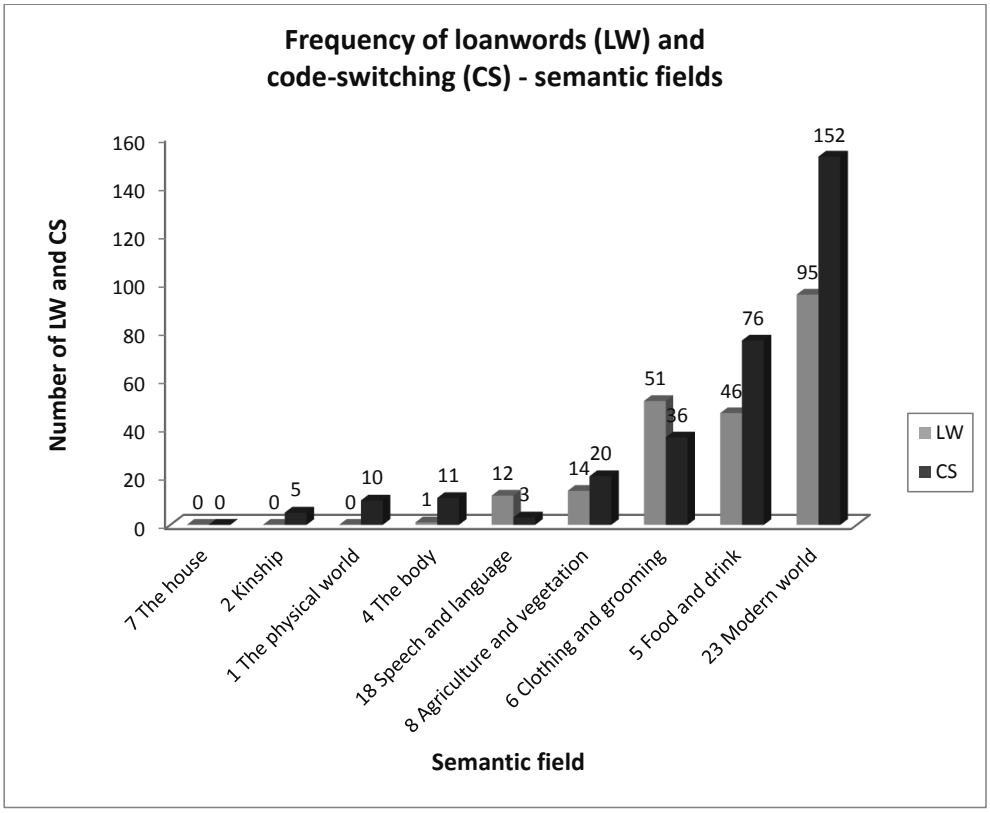


Figure 2: Borrowing and semantic fields

As seen, most borrowing takes place in the semantic fields 'modern world', 'food and drink' and 'clothing and grooming'. In this study, as is the case for other studies of lexical borrowing, see for instance Mous and Qorro (2009), more insertions, i.e. additive loans, than substitutive loans were found. The additive borrowings were mostly gap-filling borrowings in the semantic field 'modern world'. Before discussing these additive loans, some interesting instances of substitutive borrowing which were found to have taken place will be discussed, with a special focus on borrowing which affects basic vocabulary, i.e. concepts which are considered more

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resistant to borrowing than other vocabulary (Haspelmath 2009; Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009b; Tadmor, Haspelmath, and Taylor 2010).

2.1 Substitutive borrowing

The basic vocabulary targeted in this study belonged to the semantic fields 'the physical world', 'kinship' and 'agriculture and vegetation', see Figure 2.[3] The concept 'hair' may serve as an example of such a substitutive borrowing of basic vocabulary. The trend of the elicited data is that the Ngoni term *njwili* is now being replaced by its Swahili cognate *nywele*, as a general term for all kinds of hair. However, a semantic shift is taking place. The earlier distinction by using *mayunju* for uncared for, long or not properly cared for hair and *njwili* for short traditional-style hair, additionally seems to be disappearing. Both terms are replaced by the Swahili term *nywele,* which in this way also includes long or uncared for hair. This is a semantic widening through lexico-semantic borrowing. Even the Ngoni term *njwili*, which was not frequently used, is a hypernym which refers to all kinds of hair, even pubic hair, *mayeha*. In the past the hyponyms were all used. Today, *njwili* has become a hypernym but now *njwili* is also being replaced by the Swahili term *nywele*, which, as *njwili,* is the all-inclusive hypernym. It would have been expected that a clashing of old and borrowed words would result in a specialisation (Weinreich 1953, 55). Instead, interviews with elderly informants showed that hyponyms are being lost.

Additionally, some substitutive borrowing in the basic vocabulary was noted regarding for instance the concepts 'woman' (the Swahili terms *mwanamama, mama* were used) and 'man', where the Swahili term *baba* was used by young and middle-aged informants. Furthermore, the word for 'soil' in Ngoni is *ludaka* [ludáka, rudáka]. Middle-aged and older informants were found to frequently use the Swahili term *ardhi* instead of the Ngoni term, without any change in meaning.

Substitutive borrowing affecting basic vocabulary was also attested regarding the concept 'tree'. The Ngoni terms for 'tree' are *libihi* or *libiki* (NC5/6), which were used by most informants and are dialectal variants of the same term. However, the terms *limuti, muti* and *chimuti*, from Swahili *mti,* were also frequent in the elicited data.[4] The integration of Swahili *mti* into class 5 (li-) can be regarded as a case of paralexification (cf. Mous 2001), also discussed in Rosendal and Mapunda (2014). The borrowings are morphologically integrated into the Ngoni NC system (li.muti, NC5, and chi.muti (NC7) and phonologically adapted by insertion of an epenthetic vowel. Only elderly informants (between 76 and 95 years old) tended to perceive the normal sized tree in the photos employed for elicitation as small and used the diminutive form *chimuti* (NC7), while middle-aged and young informants used the NC prefix /li-/. The tendency to use diminutives is possibly caused by vision problems due to old age, but further studies are needed to establish this usage.

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Even existing Ngoni terms within the field 'agriculture and vegetation' were found to be replaced by Swahili terms. Some illustrative examples of this substitutive borrowing are given in the following section.

There is for instance a Ngoni term *matosani* for 'Irish potatoes' (semantic field 5: 'food and drink') which older informants claim has entered Ngoni from the Matengo area. This term, which was established in Ngoni at least before the 1950s (Cosmas Mapunda, personal communication, 6 September 2013) is today frequently replaced by the Swahili term *kiazi* or *viazi vya mviringo/viazi mviringo*, literally round or circular potatoes. Additionally, a replacement was observed regarding the term for sweet potato. Sweet potatoes have traditionally been grown in the area (Ebner 1955, 187). Earlier a Ngoni term, *vimungulu,* existed (Ebner 1939, 54; Spiss 1904, 356; Michungwani village focus group interview, personal communication, 6 September 2013). This term is now frequently replaced by *mbatata*, which is the Swahili term for potatoes not generally used in Tanzanian mainland Swahili.[5] When used in Ngoni, the term has a broad meaning covering both 'Irish potatoes' and sweet potatoes, thus a hypernym.

Within the semantic field 'agriculture and vegetation' even the concepts 'sugar cane' and 'chilli pepper', which are common agricultural products in the subsistence farming of the area, may serve as examples of how Ngoni terms are replaced by Swahili words even in everyday chores of agriculture. The Ngoni term for sugar cane *mlungulungu* was only used by a few older informants and is practically totally replaced by the Swahili term *muwa* or *miwa*. Similarly, all but a few informants used the Swahili term *pilipili* instead of the Ngoni term *sobola/sobora.*

Although substitutive borrowing affecting both basic vocabulary and traditional lifestyle was found to be taking place, quantitatively more additive borrowing was found in semantic fields such as 'food and drink' and 'clothing and grooming' – fields which contain concepts linked to modern life. The 'clothing and grooming' terms were frequently borrowings from English via Swahili. For example the Swahili term *shati* (borrowing from English) for 'shirt' was frequently used instead of the Ngoni term *ligwanda*,[6] and *siketi* for 'skirt' from Swahili *sketi*, instead of the Ngoni term *chibudula,* which means 'shorts'.

2.2 Additive borrowing

The additive loans into Ngoni of concepts from Swahili or from English via Swahili were most frequently attested within the semantic field 'modern world'. These additive borrowings were primarily verified within the subfields 'modern transport' (e.g. bicycle, motorcycle, car), 'reading, writing, schooling' (e.g. pupil, book, pen, newspaper, letter) and 'modern society' (e.g. bottle, spectacles, battery, cigarettes, telephone, radio). Some aspects of the borrowing process and semantic changes affecting these additive borrowings will be discussed in the following

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section. Concepts used for transportation may serve as typical examples of additive borrowing due to modern life, but also of a process of substitutive borrowing of earlier borrowed terms, a process by which an already borrowed term is discarded and replaced by another borrowed term.

The Swahili term *motokaa* [motoká:], which earlier was used for 'car' was for instance borrowed from English 'motorcar'. This term has now practically disappeared in contemporary Swahili and is replaced with *gari*, which has taken over the meaning. The term for car in Ngoni, *mutuka*, pronounced [mútúka, mutúka], is also likely to have been borrowed directly from English or via Swahili into Ngoni and is at present in the process of being replaced by *ligali*, i.e. adapted to Ngoni NC5/6, (*li-/ma-*) with the same semantic content. This is in analogy with paralexi f cation, according to the de f nition of Mous (2001, 113–114), and seems to be transitional.

Within the subgroup 'modern transport' an interesting replacement of a Ngoni term was observed. The term which older informants regard as the proper Ngoni term for motorcycle, is *sekeni* [sɛkéni]. The origin of this term is not clear and the term is not found in Ebner (1939) or in Ebner (1953). It was claimed to have been coined at the time of the arrival of German missionaries and is at least attested to be used before the 1950s (Michungwani focus group discussion, personal communication, 6 September 2013, and Father Lambert, retired abbot of Peramiho Monastery, 27 August 2013). The term is now replaced by the Swahili term *pikipiki* or the onomapoetic *tukutuku,* with retained meaning.

Most of the borrowings within the sub f eld 'modern society' are regular additive borrowings from Swahili, without phonological adaptation, as e.g. 'telephone' which is borrowed from Swahili *simu,* and of Persian or Arabic origin (Schadeberg 2009), or accompanied by phonological adaptations to suit the phonotactic rules of Ngoni. The concept 'radio' has e.g. entered the Ngoni lexicon as *ledyiu*, from English via Swahili, the Swahili term *miwani* 'spectacles' which probably is a borrowing from Arabic (Schadeberg 2009), is borrowed into Ngoni as *mawani,* and Swahili *barua* 'letter', which also is a borrowing from Arabic, becomes *balua* in Ngoni. These loanwords are integrated without any semantic changes.

However, some interesting semantic changes were observed regarding borrowing of some concepts linked to modern life. We have earlier shown that borrowing may result in a specialisation, as in the 'Irish potatoes' example given above. In the following section some examples of semantic widening and loanshifts are discussed.

2.3 Borrowing and semantic changes

The concept 'pen' within the subgroup 'reading, writing, schooling' of the f eld 'modern world', exempli f es a gradual ongoing semantic change. The Swahili term for the concept 'pen' *kalamu*, which is a generic term for both ink pens and pencils in both languages, was used uniquely by older Ngoni speakers to denote a pen. This is

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a semantic widening. The interviews established that *kalamu* [kalámu, karámu] was regarded as the most used Ngoni term for 'pen', at least more Ngoni than the other terms which were attested in the elicitations. Other terms were used interchangeably by middle-aged and young informants, e.g. borrowings from English via Swahili as *peni* and *biki* (which originated from the trade name Bic pens) were frequently used. The term 'ballpoint pen/ballpen', with variants *bolpeni, bopeni, bolupeni*, − which is not commonly used in Swahili − is probably a borrowing influenced by the long-time presence of missionaries in the area and thus probably a loan which did not enter the language via Swahili.

The term for 'battery' *liganga*, [liɠáŋɠa] which literally means 'stone', was frequently occurring in the recordings, along with the borrowed term *betri* with variations *betrii* [bɛ́tri:], betli [bɛ́tli], *libetri*, *betirii*, [bɛ́tíri:], which all are inter-speaker variations of borrowing from English via Swahili.[7] The term *liganga* has undergone a semantic widening. This is thus a loanshift, as the term has taken on a partially new meaning. The loanshift is taken wholesale, possibly directly from English or via Swahili, which coined the term *mawe ya tochi*, 'stones for torch' for the concept 'battery'.

Likewise, the Ngoni word *lihona,* which originally means 'tobacco' (Ebner 1939, 54) has additionally the meaning of the new concept 'cigarette'. In interviews, elderly informants claimed that *lihona* is the correct term for cigarette. Informants from both the oldest and the youngest age groups used both the Swahili and the Ngoni terms, thus confirming the generalisation of the term *lihona*. *Lihona* is a hypernym for all tobacco products (cigarette, cigar, tobacco smoked in pipe, snuff and locally made cigarettes). The semantic broadening is metonymically motivated and not necessarily contact induced and the term was not prominent in the recorded data from elicitations.[8] The Swahili term *sigara* [siɠara], which Swahili has borrowed from Arabic (Schadeberg 2009), is the most frequently used, with some individual phonological adaptations as e.g. *sigala* [siɠála].

The term *chupa* for 'bottle' is used extensively in Ngoni. The term has been borrowed from Swahili into Ngoni. Earlier *chupa* was in Swahili restricted to glass bottles, but the word has gradually gone through a process of semantic widening to additionally include plastic bottles. In Ngoni the term *chupa* is used for both glass bottles and some kinds of plastic bottles, like PET bottles. In interviews informants agreed that *likopo,* which is a borrowing from Swahili *kopo* 'tin can' and is borrowed into Swahili from Portuguese (Schadeberg 2009), is used for cans or bottles made of tin or metal. The term is adapted to Ngoni NC5/6 (li.kopo/ma.kopo). However, *likopo* is used in a more general way in the data, for all kinds of bottles, including plastic bottles. Older informants who moved from the Ngoni-speaking area and thus were able to identify terms existing before 1950 and knew how these words were used earlier, stated that *likopo* was earlier used only for metal cans. This use was also confirmed by older informants still living in the area. The borrowed term

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likopo has thus undergone a semantic widening after being borrowed into Ngoni, now corresponding to the Swahili meaning of the term. The term *libotolo*, which is used and is a direct borrowing from English, has undergone a semantic shift. The borrowing, which is rather recent,[9] is formed from the English term 'bottle', but the meaning has shifted to denote the concept 'plastic gallon container' in Ngoni. The term given by Spiss (1904) for bottle (fasche) is *lihorohoro.* This term has disappeared completely.

Another example from a different semantic feld, but which illustrates similar semantic changes in the Ngoni lexicon, is found regarding the concept 'charcoal'. The Swahili term *mkaa* is presently in the process of replacing the Ngoni terms for 'charcoal', which are *makalakala* 'charcoal to be burnt, burning charcoal, charcoal on fre' and *makisila* 'already burnt charcoal or soot'. When borrowed, *mkaa* encapsulates all the various conceptions of the referent. The Swahili term is used for all kinds of charcoal, while the Ngoni term *makalakala* keeps the narrow meaning 'charcoal to be burnt, burning charcoal, charcoal on fre' and the terms *masima* and *makisila* both denote 'already burnt charcoal or residue'.[10] Thus, at present *mkaa* has become a superordinate in Ngoni while *makalakal*a and *masima/makisila* are hyponyms.

This is a general trend regarding borrowing from Swahili into Ngoni and which also was found regarding quite new concepts. For example, the elicited data for the concept 'shoe,' showed that the Swahili borrowing *chilatu* from *kiatu* (NC7/8 ki/vi- entering NC 7/8 chi-/vi- in Ngoni, with phonological adaption and phonotactic adaptation to Ngoni CV structure by insertion of epenthetic /l/) was most frequently used. The term is a relatively established borrowing, listed in Ebner (1953, 9), and has become the generic term. It is a rather old borrowing, listed by Spiss (1904) as *kiratu* (labelled Kisutu form). Earlier the Ngoni used a different kind of wooden open shoe (Cosmas Mapunda, personal communication, 6 September 2013). However, the specifc open plastic shoe or sandal that was depicted in the photo is called *yeboyebo* in Swahili. This term was used (sometimes reduced to *yebo*) in addition to *sandasi*, from 'sandal', which is a borrowing from English. Originally these sandals were called *sendozi*, which originated from the English plural 'sandals' (Michungwani focus group, personal communication, 6 September 2013).

Another example of hypernym in the data was the word for Irish potatoes, *matosani* in Ngoni. The hypernym *kiazi*, which is a Swahili term, was frequently used. Only one informant used the adapted term *chilazi* 'potato', i.e. with the same phonotactic adaptation as for *kiatu/chilatu* mentioned above.

Generally, the informants preferred Swahili hypernyms to the Ngoni ones. The use of a superordinate term was in some occasions supplemented by a more specifc Ngoni term. For example the superordinate term for gourd in Ngoni is *lidenge*, but different types of gourds have their specifc names, like *ndumba* 'a kind of small gourd' or *ndeve* which is also a small kind of gourd used as a cup. Although the

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superordinate term *lidenge* is preferred, some middle-aged or elderly speakers combine this with the hyponyms *ndumba* and *ndeve*.

Additionally, there is at present a general tendency of using Ngoni hypernyms instead of the specifc Ngoni terms to describe even old items. For example the word *chiviga* [civíga] refers to a pot moulded of clay soil. However, the Ngoni make several kinds of pots, each with a different name. A pot for frying meat, vegetables and for cooking broth is for instance called *chikalangu,* a pot for brewing liquors is called *likalangu* and one for storing drinking water and liquors is called *chihulu* or *chifulu*. However, the general trend at present is to use the hypernym *chiviga* for all kinds of pots, which may be linked not only to influence from Swahili but additionally to loss of traditional material culture.

Furthermore, the photo elicitation of old items demonstrated that some words seem to have been totally forgotten by all age categories of informants. Instead, terms for the material used for making the item, the shape or the function of the item, were occasionally used. A typical example of this is the word for a y-shaped piece of wood for holding cooking pots while cooking. The Ngoni term for this item is *mzamu*. However, almost half of the informants used the words *lipanda* 'branching', *mkamulilu* 'a holding thing' or *libihi* 'wood' to name the item.[11]

From the examples given above, it is clear that the contact situation has led to semantic changes, as well as changes affecting other aspects of the Ngoni language. In view of that a number of conclusions may be drawn.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Generally speaking, the data have revealed hierarchical relationships showing interesting patterns. As the data were based on rather free elicitations from photos, the informants' choice of terms gave an indication of the present state of Ngoni in the existing language contact situation.

The extensive additive borrowing attested in the data and exemplifed in this paper confrms that lexico-semantic changes are directly related to changes in lifestyle. With regards to the Ngoni language some specifc observations were made. It was found that there was only semantic widening in the data, which may not be so surprising in this contact situation. However, combined with replacement of specifc Ngoni terms with Swahili hypernyms and also replacement of old Ngoni terms with Ngoni hypernyms, as shown in the data, the results indicate that the Ngoni lexicon is undergoing rather rapid changes. The use of hypernyms additionally suggests that speakers' competence of the language is waning. All age groups failed to mention even items which have always been endemic in their own community. Thus, the rather weak tendency for younger informants (and sometimes even the older ones) to use more Swahili terms found in the earlier quantitative study of Ngoni borrowing by Rosendal and Mapunda (2014) was not confrmed when studying semantic

changes. The general trend is that there are only marginal variances between speakers of different age groups. The results thus suggest that the changes affect the entire Ngoni-speaking community. The study has furthermore supported our initial theoretical assumption that borrowed and native terms cannot exist side by side with the same meaning, i.e. without either a semantic broadening or narrowing. Both these semantic processes have taken place in Ngoni, even though generalisation was found to be the most common change.

Ngoni is threatened by widespread bilingualism and even increasing monolingualism in Swahili. The pattern of the recorded data, with preferences for superordinates regarding both Ngoni terms and borrowings, points to language attrition or even a loss of language competence among the speakers of the language. Even though this study did not target syntactic changes, the findings indicate a loss of competence which may additionally be linked to a more general cultural loss through attrition of Ngoni culture and traditions, factors which are important for language maintenance. Incorporation of additive loanwords may be seen as a survival strategy of the Ngoni language to cope with changing environmental conditions. Some of the findings may additionally be attributed to changes in lifestyle or loss of traditional material culture and not only to extensive contact with Swahili. However, the results of the language contact with Swahili are alarming, especially as even cases of substitutive borrowing affecting basic vocabulary were found and that most Tanzanian languages probably are affected in similar ways in the current sociolinguistic situation in Tanzania. We are therefore of the view that documenting these languages along with their cultural wealth is necessary for their survival for future reference and for the Ngoni themselves.

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NOTES

1. Peramiho is a semi-urban centre and Kilagano a small village in the Ngoni-speaking area. See Figure 1. The informants were chosen based on the same sociodemographic parameters as the other elicitation.
2. This group was believed to have retained earlier forms of the language due to isolation in another speech community. All four informants lived in the same village, where the interviews and the focus group discussion were conducted.
3. For more about frequency of borrowing which affects basic vocabulary in Ngoni, see Rosendal and Mapunda (2014).

4. Discussions with older Ngoni speakers indicated that the forms *limuti*, *muti* and *chimuti* have their origin in Swahili. However, the informants were not certain when the forms entered the language. The term *chimuti* is listed in Ebner (1939, 4) as 'tree' (baum) and in Spiss (1904, 319) as *kimuti*, which he calls a Kingoni term, along with *kibiki* which he labels the Kisutu term for 'tree'.
5. The term *mbatata* is borrowed into Swahili from Portuguese (Schadeberg 2009). It was not possible to establish how the term entered Ngoni. However, it is more plausible that the word entered Ngoni through Swahili which socially was more prestigious than neighbouring languages such as Ndendeule, Matengo and Manda.
6. *Gwanda* is also a Swahili term, defined in TUKI dictionary (2001) as a calico garment, worthless garment, smock.
7. [r] and [l] are allophones in Ngoni.
8. Only three out of 23 informants used the term.
9. The term was unknown to the resettled informants and did not exist in the Ngoni vocabulary when they moved to Tanga around 1950. *Libotolo* is thus a relatively recent borrowing.
10. Among the Ngoni the use of charcoal for cooking is rather recent. Therefore, when used today, the term *makisila* which meant soot on the ceiling or on the cooking pot, now also denotes charcoal among some speakers of the language. This use is a semantic widening.
11. As our data did not show many examples of this tendency, further investigation was done. This probing showed that this represents a rather common trend for naming items in Ngoni. For example the concept 'slasher' which is a kind of grass cutter, is called *tengu* in Ngoni but is commonly called *lifyekelo*, which implies the function to slash, 'that which slashes'.

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