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Ngoni People's Attitudes Towards the Use Of Kingoni in Beginner Classes

Gastor Mapunda[*]

Abstract

This paper explores Ngoni people's attitudes towards the use of Kingoni in teaching beginner classes. The Tanzania educational policy designates Kiswahili as the only language of instruction in public primary schools. The data were collected in Songea Rural District using interviews, a questionnaire and classroom observations. The study is guided by the ethnolinguistic vitality framework, which informs decisions on language attitudes and inclination to language use. The findings show that 77% of the participants wanted Kiswahili to be used, while the rest had different choices, including English. The more disadvantaged groups such as peasants showed more ambivalent attitudes towards the use of Kingoni. The study concludes that parents support the use of Kiswahili and not Kingoni, but this attitude has pedagogical and linguistic implications in that children cannot follow instructions and that they are denied their right to be taught in a language they know well.

Keywords: *Ngoni people's attitudes, education policy, Tanzanian languages , Classroom learning, Kingoni*

Introduction

In Tanzania there are about 150 languages (Muzale & Rugemalira, 2008:80) that are spoken by several communities. Additionally, Kiswahili, which is the national *lingua franca* and the official language, is the second language to about 80% of Tanzanians.

Since the German colonial rule (1885-1921) in mainland Tanzania, the issue of the medium of instruction (MoI) has been a problem. Germans made Kiswahili the language of lower levels of education and administration (Polomé & Hill, 1980). This was the beginning of the disturbance of the linguistic ecology in the country. When Tanganyika got independence, policies on the MoI did not consider the fact that Kiswahili was then spoken by only a fraction of Tanzanians. The policy statement, which is currently operational, holds that *"The medium of instruction in primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject"* (URT, 1995:39). By default, this statement outright excludes all the ethnic community languages (ECLs) from being used in the education system. This situation makes the transition of non-Kiswahili speaking children from the home language to the school language difficult.

[*] Lecturer, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: mapundag@gmail.com

Some African countries saw this anomaly and acted in the best interest of their educational systems. Kenya and Ghana are examples of such countries, whose policies respect the languages which children understand well (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002:117; MOESS, 2007:2).

Theoretical Consideration

Theoretically, this study is guided by the ethnolinguistic vitality framework, which attempts to integrate sociological and psychological variables in accounting for language behaviour; which in turn inform decisions on language attitudes, and therefore inclination to language use. Practically, attitudes determine language growth and survival. According to Giles et al. (1977) ethnolinguistic vitality refers to that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity. Linguistic vitality is indicated by factors such as demographic, economic, political and cultural positioning of a group (UNESCO, 2003:3).

While the number of speakers of Kingoni is not threatening, the issue of attitudes is a threat. According to the Languages of Tanzania (LOT) (2009), there are 240,834 speakers of the language. Linguistically, this number sounds reasonably huge, but the issue of vitality goes hand-in-hand with the attitudes of the speakers alongside institutional support, together with other factors. According to the national policy on MoIs, all ECLs, lack institutional support.

Research Questions

The main research question of this study is: how do parents feel about the use of Kingoni in beginner classes? Additionally, parents were asked questions about their children's exposure to Kiswahili at home, as well as in the community. The questionnaire questions were somehow similar to those asked in the interview, except for the contexts of their administration.

Language Attitudes

According to Lai (2005:365-366) attitude can be understood as:

> ...a tendency to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects... Attitude is a latent process that is internal to a person and therefore cannot be directly measured but can be inferred through observable responses elicited by stimuli.

Additionally, Garrett (2010:23) argues that attitudes can be manifested in three ways: *cognition, affect* and *behaviour.* Attitudes are cognitive if they comprise beliefs about things that have some social significance. One example of such beliefs is the value that is attached to English by many Tanzanians: that knowing the language is synonymous with being educated. Besides, attitudes are affective if they involve feelings of approval or disapproval of the attitude referent. Finally, attitudes are behavioural if they lead to dispositions to act in certain ways towards the attitude referents. However, the design of this research is not meant to capture the behavioural manifestation of attitudes.

Language Attitudes and Ideology

Attitudes to language use and preference are informed by ideological orientations. Lubbe (2007:104) identifies two types of ideology that inform language attitude: *language assimilation,* which includes assimilationism; and *linguistic pluralism,* which includes vernacularisation. Of the two, however, language assimilation is the more common, and of interest to this study. Language assimilation refers to a situation in which one language tends to absorb one or more language groups.

Practically, discussions on attitudes to language have ranged from issues of struggles against colonial-based linguistic suppression-cum-favouritism, and economic and social utilities, to international relations and government decisions, which favour certain languages.

Methods of the Study

The study employed two methods of data collection: semi-structured interview, and questionnaire. In the semi-structured interview phase, 12 parents participated; while for the questionnaire 130 people participated. The findings are presented and discussed descriptively and quantitatively in this paper.

Context of the Study Area

The current study was conducted in Kilagano Ward, in Songea Rural District. It was done in two remote villages, which for ethical purposes, will be pseudo-named Lihona and Mbarapi. Data were collected in schools and communities. These villages are in remote areas; remoteness here meaning that the villages were until very recently not easily accessible by car, lorry or bus. Only recently do three mini-buses ply the route once a day.

People in the two villages engage in subsistence agriculture, with small scale animal husbandry and poultry keeping. Their income comes mainly from sale of their crops and local brews. In these villages children join primary school with barely any mastery of Kiswahili, the only language designated by the policy as the MoI throughout the country. Children have mastery of Kingoni, which is their ECL, so they are essentially monolingual.

Instruments and their Administration

The interview sessions were held with parents who had children in Standard I in the schools, or at least those who previously had had children in Standard I. This was practically convenient because at the time of their administration, the researcher was also involved in classroom observation.

The interview questions wanted to find out about language use at home, if the parents thought that their children were capable of using Kiswahili in their learning, what they felt about the use of Kingoni as a medium of teaching, and so forth.

As for the questionnaire, this was administered later in the community, and particularly at the informants' convenience. It collected data on age, sex, ethnic affinity, level of education, place of birth, how long had one lived in the village, and which was their first language. The questionnaire also sought to know the language(s) that: is used at home and in the community; is spoken at home, are spoken in the area, is more popular, is known best in the family, and are used in different contexts. The contexts provided were farm, teasing, bar, market, religion (church/mosque), funeral, wedding, hospital, village assembly, and government offices.

Participants

Phase one, which was done in April-May 2008, used semi-structured interviews, and involved 12 participants. These were parents who had children studying the initial years, particularly in Standard I. Initial years are important for this study because these are transition years from the home to the school. The home has its own language and the school also has its own language. Phase two, which used the questionnaire method, was done in June-July 2011; and involved 130 participants. According to data from the village offices, Lihona had 1094 people, while Mbarapi had 742 in June 2011.

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Semi-Structured Interview Findings

The most striking and consistent trend of this survey was a negative attitude towards Kingoni. The survey focused on how parents felt if their children, who just joined school, spoke Kingoni at school and in the classroom. Generally, their responses showed that they did not want children to speak Kingoni. Out of the 12 parents interviewed, 9 were of the view that Kiswahili is the option and Kingoni is useless; while 3 see value in their ECL. The following extracts show the attitudinal disposition of the parents, despite the fact that almost all admit that their children cannot use Kiswahili for learning.

Some of the arguments given by parents for their denial of Kingoni include: 'feeling ashamed', 'feeling bad', 'associating Kiswahili with being educated', and so forth. Extracts 1 to 5 show the attitudinal opinions. Extract 1 is taken from an interview with Parent Lipe, who says that he feels ashamed to speak Kingoni before people from other ethnic groups.

Extract 1: I feel ashamed to speak Kingoni

34 Itw Wewe kwa nini unatumia Kiswahili zaidi?
Why do you use Kiswahili more?

35 Lipe Ee, mazoea yangu. Kwanza asili ya Wangoni..., si unajua kutembea huku na kule kuzungumza lugha ya Kingoni unaona kama unajisikia aibu.
Yes, I am accustomed. First, the custom of the Ngoni ... you know travelling here and there, speaking Kingoni you feel ashamed.

36	Itw	Kwa hiyo unasikia aibu kuongea Kingoni? *So you feel ashamed to speak Kingoni?*
37	Lipe	Naam *Yes*
38	Itw	Kwa nini? *Why?*
39	Lipe	Mazingira ya Wangoni hata wakiwa Dar es Salaam, Wangoni sio wengi wanazungumza lugha yao. *The tradition of the Ngoni people, even when in Dar es Salaam, not many Ngoni would speak their tongue.*
40	Itw	Kwa hiyo na wewe unawaiga hao wanaoona aibu? *So you follow those who feel ashamed?*
41	Lipe	Ee, yaani damu ile inarithishwa hata bila wewe mwenyewe kujua. *Yes, this means that same blood has been passed on to you without your knowledge.*
42	Itw	Kwa hiyo unaongea na watoto wako Kiswahili kwa sababu unasikia aibu kuongea Kingoni? *So you speak Kiswahili with your children because you feel ashamed to speak Kingoni?*
43	Lipe	Naam *Yes*

What parent Lipe is saying is that the Ngoni people feel ashamed to speak Kingoni in the presence of people from other ethnic group. This is the reason for him struggling to ensure that his children speak Kiswahili, and not Kingoni.

Extract 2 is an interview with Parent Kayuni from Mbarapi. She is of the view that parents in the area are irresponsible because their children cannot communicate well in Kiswahili.

Extract 2: Parents are irresponsible

37	Itw	Watoto wa darasa la kwanza wanaweza kuwauliza walimu maswali kwa Kiswahili? *Can Standard I children ask teachers questions in Kiswahili?*
38	Kayuni	Mm, haiwezekani *Mm, impossible*
39	Itw	Kwanini haiwezekani? *Why impossible?*
40	Kayuni	Aah, uzembe wa wazazi kuwafundisha *Ooh, irresponsibility of parents to teach them*
41	Itw	Uzembe? *Irresponsibility?*
42	Kayuni	Ee, naona ni uzembe wa wazazi kuwafundisha. *Yes, I see it as irresponsibility of parents to teach them.*

In Extract 2, Parent Kayuni is of the view that children cannot speak Kiswahili because parents are irresponsible. In other words, her thinking is that all children in the area are to speak Kiswahili and not Kingoni because Kiswahili is important; and not speaking it amounts to irresponsibility.

In Extract 3, Parent Mau, from Mbarapi, says that she does not feel good if her children speak Kingoni.

Extract 3: I don't feel good my children to speak the ECL

57	Itw	Na wewe mwenyewe unajisikiaje juu ya hilo, kwamba wao wanajua zaidi Kingoni. Wewe unajisikiaje? *And how do you yourself feel about it; that your children speak more Kingoni. How do you feel?*
58	Mau	Najisikia siyo vizuri. *I feel not good*
59	Itw	Unajisikia siyo vizuri? *You don't feel good?*
60	Mau	Ee. *No*
61	Itw	Hutaki wajue Kingoni? *You don't want them to know Kingoni?*
62	Mau	Ee sitaki wajue Kingoni *No, I don't want them to know Kingoni*
63	Itw	Hutaki wajue Kingoni? *You don't want them to know Kingoni?*
64	Mau	Kwa sababu mi mwenyewe nimeshajua Kingoni sasa kusema Kiswahili moja kwa moja bila kuingiza Kingoni sitaweza. *Because I myself already know Kingoni, so now I cannot speak Kiswahili fluently without mixing in some Kingoni.*

Parent Mau also argues that she does not like her children to speak Kingoni, arguing that her children cannot use Kiswahili in their studies because they do not know enough of it. Mau argues that she cannot speak Kiswahili without mixing it with Kingoni, which she sees as a weakness. She argues that her Kiswahili is badly influenced by Kingoni, and she is not happy about it. I noticed though, that during the interview she did not use any Ngoni word, which suggests that she could speak Kiswahili fluently.

Extract 4 demonstrate a parent's feeling that speaking Kiswahili is associated with going to school, (speaking in Kiswahili is usually equated to being educated), which also presupposes that speaking Kingoni is the opposite of going to school, that is, it is for people who have not gone to school.

Extract 4: Our children speak Kiswahili because we have gone to school

25	Itw	Kwa nini wewe nyumbani kwako mnatumia Kiswahili wakati wengine wanatumia Kingoni? *Why does your family use Kiswahili while others use Kingoni?*
26	Heri	Mazingira yanayozunguka katika jamii ya ukoo wetu sisi kina Limonga, wengi wao wote wanazungumza Kiswahili. *The situation that surrounds the community of our clan we Limongas, most of them speak Kiswahili* (sic).
27	Itw	Kwa nini? *Why?*
28	Heri	Kwa sababu ya msingi kwanza sisi wazazi wao tumeshaenda shule na tunakifahamu Kiswahili. *Because of the basic reason that we their parents have gone to school and know Kiswahili.*
29	Itw	Wewe unaweza kuniambia kiwango chako cha elimu ni kiasi gani? *Can you tell me what your level of education is?*
30	Heri	Kiwango changu cha elimu kwa bahati mbaya sijaenda mbali. Nimemalizia darasa la saba. Toka pale nimeenda tu kozi mbalimbali za kilimo na mifugo na maendeleo ya jamii. *My level of education unfortunately I haven't gone far. I have completed primary education. From then I have attended just some courses on agriculture and animal husbandry, and community development.*

Parent Heri, from Mbarapi, is of the view that those who cannot speak Kiswahili have not gone to school. In Kiswahili "having gone to school" is very often synonymous with "being educated". In view of that, he argues that his 'clan' has decided to speak Kiswahili because *they have gone to school*, so they are educated; and Kingoni is for those who have not gone to school. Surprisingly in turn 30 he declares that he did not go further with his education. What a contradiction! Practically, this claim is attitudinal, and may be difficult to trust because it is based on mere integrative urge to identify oneself with the Swahili community. This is because there are Ngoni speakers who have gone school who speak Ngoni, and vice versa.

Extract 5, which is an interview with Parent Mili, is a medial position about the use of either Kingoni or Kiswahili language.

Extract 5: They should be taught in both languages

38	Mili	Nafikiri uwezo huo wanakuwa hawana kwa kweli. Kwa kweli wanakuwa hawana. Kama ni Darasa la Kwanza lile au awali wale, wanakuwa hawana. *Frankly, I think they don't have that ability. If it is Standard I or nursery, they don't have that ability.*

39 Itw Kwa hiyo una maoni yoyote yale kwa serikali juu ya sera hiyo ya maelekezo yake ya lugha?
So do you have any suggestions to the government on its language policy?

40 Mili Mimi nilikuwa nafikiria kama kungekuwa na uwezekano, ili waweze kuelewa haraka masomo yale, wangekuwa wanafundishwa labda kwa lugha zote mbili hizi – lugha yetu ya Kiswahili wachanganye kidogo na lugha ya kienyeji – ili yule aweze kuelewa hapa naambiwa kitu hiki.
In my opinion I was thinking that if possible, in order for them to understand instructions, they should be taught in both languages – our Kiswahili language to be mixed a bit with the ECL – so that that one understands that I am being told this thing here.

Parent Mili from Lihona takes a somewhat moderate position by suggesting the use of both languages. While this sounds considerate, it can also be considered as an expression of his ambivalence to the use of Kingoni. The thing is, he acknowledges that children cannot learn with Kiswahili as the LoI, and yet he says Kingoni should be used a bit, but more so "lugha yetu ya Kiswahili" (*our Kiswahili language),* which is a bit satirical since in fact his language is Kingoni, not Kiswahili!

Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire was administered in June-July, 2011. A total of 130 participants filled in the questionnaire. They comprised 91 males, and 39 females. Their age categories were: 74 participants aged 20-40 years, and 56 participants aged 41+.

We will start by presenting and discussing findings on how parents would feel if Kingoni was used in beginner classes in the locale; and then move on to the parents' own language use at home. As concerns on how the participants felt if children who just start school were taught in Kingoni, the answers are presented graphically in Fig. 1.

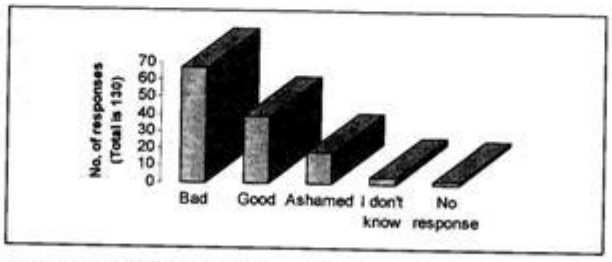


Figure 1: *How parents feel if children who start school were taught in Kingoni*

From Fig. 1 an overwhelming majority felt bad if Kingoni were used. Those who feel bad and those who feel ashamed comprise 65.4% of all the respondents. The reasons given here have more to do with the symbolic value of Kiswahili in the locale rather than its suitability for classroom processes. For example, they argue that Kingoni is a threat to national unity; is not the national language; is narrow in its scope of use; will block the learning of Kiswahili; can be used at home, but not at school; is a useless language; and cannot be used for teaching. More interesting, is that it is a shame for children to speak Kingoni if there are visitors in the village because they will look uncivilized.

Some parents argued that Kingoni cannot work because there are many ethnic groups in the locale. This is not true because all the children from the few ethnic groups mentioned earlier were born in the same villages, and so speak Kingoni as well. This was also confirmed by some parents in their responses.

Few parents gave reasons that relate to classroom processes, but most of which are not based on any evidence. For example, they argue that children will not understand as fast if Kingoni is used for teaching. This is difficult to accept because this is the language that the children speak, and not Kiswahili.

Another question asked the participants to identify language they find valuable, and which they find valueless. The findings are as shown in Fig. 2.

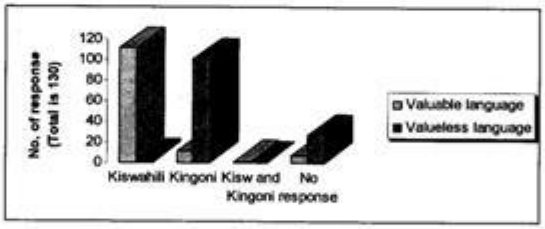


Figure 2: *The language which parents find valuable and which they find valueless*

Figure 2 shows that 111 parents find Kiswahili valuable, but only 2 find it valueless. By contrast, 101 find Kingoni valueless, whereas only 11 find it valuable. Surprisingly, 1 participant finds both Kiswahili and Kingoni valuable, and none finds both of them valueless.

Another important observation, which also confirms the ambivalence, is that 27 participants did not respond to the aspect of which language they find valueless; whereas only 7 did not respond to the aspect of which language was valuable. Figure 2 is a good example of ambivalent attitudes.

Parents were also asked on what action they would take if they found a Standard I pupil speaking Kingoni in the classroom. Many participants said that such an incident is not acceptable, and should be stopped. However, a few of thought it is fine for the children to speak Kingoni in the classroom.

Those who were against it gave the following responses: such a child should be warned and/or punished; should be told not to use Kingoni; should be told that Kingoni is a useless language; stop them; discuss with their teachers what action should be taken; advise them to speak Kiswahili and English; teach them Kiswahili and advise them to use the right language, which is Kiswahili. Those who thought that the use of Kingoni is fine had this to say: would take no action because the children did not know what they are doing; congratulate them and give them presents; encourage them to use Kingoni; no action because the children are used to Kingoni.

Another question asked parents to provide their suggestions on the use of Kingoni for teaching beginner classes in the villages. Most parents supported the use of Kiswahili, while a few supported the use of Kingoni. The reasons given in support of Kiswahili were such that: children will become more educated; is becoming more and more international; is the right language; it is understandable and is the national language; and that Kiswahili will make children self-aware. As such they suggest that parents need seminars on the use of Kiswahili, and should work hard to teach their children Kiswahili.

Actually parents who were more extreme suggested that Kiswahili and English are enough. They said that introducing more languages will confuse children. One extreme case was the suggestion that even Kiswahili is not known internationally, so English is the only option. As such, Kingoni should not be used in the classroom at all.

Very few parents supported the use of Kingoni; and with the following arguments: experts should write books in Kingoni to facilitate teaching and learning; small children can learn easily if taught in their first language; and Kingoni is the language of the home. Others were of the view that every ethnic group has their own language which they must use. Some parents said that the idea of using Kingoni in initial years is welcome, and congratulated those who came up with the idea. In addition, they said there should be a teacher from within their area who should teach in Kingoni. They suggested further that Kingoni should come first; and Kiswahili should be introduced later. Some of them complained that many pupils fail their examinations because Kiswahili is difficult for them.

A small number of parents were neutral and argued that children need both languages to be used concurrently.

One question asked parents to identify the language that they would like to be used in teaching children who start school. The general trend of the responses is presented graphically in Fig. 3.

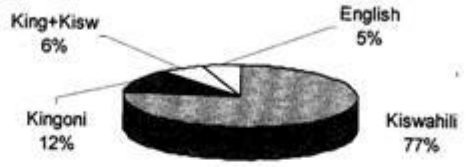


Figure 3: *The language which parents prefer for teaching beginner classes*

The presence of English in the answers is surprising because English is not one of the available options of languages for teaching in public primary schools. Additionally, English is not even well known to many of the primary school teachers who are to use it for teaching.

Leaving this general picture aside, the responses to this question were analysed on the basis of the demographic information of the participants. This information about ethnic affinity, level of education, sex, age and occupation is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of participants

Sex		Age		Education		Occupation		Ethnic affinity	
Male	*Female*	*20-40*	*41+*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Peasants*	*Non-Peasants*	*Ngoni*	*Non-Ngoni*
91	39	74	56	106	24	118	12	91	39

Sex

Sex-wise, there were 91 men and 39 women. As for men, 75% wanted Kiswahili, 15% wanted Kingoni, 6% wanted English, and only 4% wanted both Kiswahili and Kingoni. As for women, 80% wanted Kiswahili, 10% wanted Kiswahili and Kingoni, 5% wanted English, and the other 5% wanted Kingoni. So, in sum, an overwhelming majority of both sexes opted for Kiswahili. The second choice for the males is Kingoni, while for females it is a combination of both Kingoni and Kiswahili. This may suggest that women are less supportive of Kingoni in beginner classes. This finding corroborates the findings of other studies on language and gender, which found men to be more bilingual than women (Hidalgo, 2006:118; Piller & Pavlenko, 2004:493).

Age

Age-wise, the participants were put into two categories: 20-40 and 41+. Those in the 20-40 group were 74; while those in the 41+ group were 56. About 73% of those in the 20–40 group wanted Kiswahili to be used; 16% wanted Kingoni,

whereas 9.5% wanted English, and the remaining 1.5% wanted both Kiswahili and Kingoni to be used. In the category of 41+ years, 80% wanted Kiswahili to be used, 13% wanted both Kingoni and Kiswahili, while the remaining 7% chose Kingoni.

Generally, it can be deduced that there is no big difference in thinking between the two age categories. The explanation can be that some of the younger people are more optimistic about their socioeconomic standing than the older generation, who might equate their misfortunes to the use of Kingoni. Whereas 16% of those in the 20-40 age group wanted Kingoni, only 7% in the age category of 41+ wanted Kingoni. This comparison presupposes that socio-economic opportunities and hopes have a bearing to people attitudes towards an ECL. As such the younger ones are socio-economically more optimistic than the older ones.

Level of education

Out of the 130 participants, only 24 participants had secondary education; the reaining 106 had primary education. About 75% of those with secondary education wanted Kiswahili to be used for teaching beginner classes, 13% wanted Kingoni, 8% wanted English and the remaining 4% wanted both Kingoni and Kiswahili. As for those with primary education, 76% wanted Kiswahili, 12% wanted Kingoni, 7% wanted both Kingoni and Kiswahili, while 5% wanted English. Comparing the findings on age categories with the level of education one can see that 13% of people with more formal education wanted Kingoni to be used in beginner classes, while 12% with less formal education wanted Kingoni.

Occupation

In terms of occupation, the participants' information is grouped into two categories: being or not being a peasant. Out of 130 participants, 118 were peasants, while only 12 were non-peasants. For the 118 peasants, 77% wanted Kiswahili, 10% wanted Kingoni, 7% wanted both Kingoni and Kiswahili, and the remaining 6% wanted English. As for the 12 non-peasants, 67% chose Kiswahili, while the remaining 33% preferred Kingoni. Out of the non-peasants 8 were government employees, 3 were businessmen, and 1 was an electrician.

It should be noted here that the non-peasants are also the relatively better educated, and it is likely that the non-peasants are able to see that teaching children in a language that they cannot use properly cannot be of use. Another possible explanation is that, these people are able to see that the socioeconomic misfortunes of the people in the area are not a result of their use of Kingoni, but possibly of other non-linguistic factors.

While demographically there is no much difference, in terms of percentages, in different categories, the differences identified portray a systematic trend. For example, fewer participants with primary education were supportive of the use

of Kingoni; fewer women were supportive of the use of Kingoni; fewer older people were supportive of the use of Kingoni; and fewer peasants were supportive of the use of Kingoni. What these entire categories share in common is their higher level of social and economic insecurity.

Ethnic affinity

In terms of ethnic affinity of the participants, there were 110 Ngoni and 20 non-Ngoni participants. The non-Ngoni were from Ndendeule, Pangwa, Hyao, Matengo, Nyasa, Manda, Bena, Sangu, Makua, Nindi, Kisi and Sukuma ethnic groups. In terms of percentage, non-Ngoni were only 15% of all the participants. About 80% of the non-Ngoni wanted Kiswahili to be used, while the remaining 20% wanted both Kingoni and Kiswahili. For the Ngoni 75.5% wanted Kiswahili to be used, 14.5% wanted Kingoni, 6% wanted English, and the remaining 4% wanted both Kingoni and Kiswahili to be used. So, essentially, there is no remarkable difference in terms of attitudes on the basis of ethnic affiliation. But as for the non-Ngoni, one would expect them to support the use of a language that they too can understand well.

Reasons for Choices

In addition to identifying the language of their choice, the participants gave a number of reasons for their answers. Since the reasons were many, for convenience they will be grouped into three categories: language centred, community usefulness centred, and process centred. Each category is further subdivided into two sub-groups: those for and those against the use Kingoni.

Language centred: These reasons do not address the issue of why parents should want their children to be taught in a particular language. The reasons given are to do with the attributes of the languages themselves. The reasons in support of Kiswahili hold that Kiswahili: has correct vocabulary; is the language that is liked; is easy to understand; is the right language; must be developed further and further; and is the national language. By contrast, Kingoni was said not to be known internationally. There was only one reason in support of the use of Kingoni: that children should begin with Kingoni, and Kiswahili should be introduced gradually because it is the national language.

Community usefulness centred: This category does not directly address the demand of the question. The reasons given address issues other than pedagogical. They include: Kingoni will disadvantage non-Ngoni children; Kiswahili brings national unity; children need English for higher education; Kiswahili and English will expose children nationally and internationally; Kiswahili is the language of globalization. There was one reason in support of Kingoni in this category: that Kingoni is their real language of the home.

Process centred: These address the question by giving the reasons as to why they like a particular language to be used for teaching. These responses also

vary in terms of supporting or opposing the use of Kingoni. The reasons in support of the use Kiswahili in this category include: the policy allows Kiswahili not Kingoni; use of Kingoni is the beginning of losing children in the schools. Those in support of the use of Kingoni gave three reasons: children will understand faster if taught in Kingoni; knowledge of Kingoni will help them learn Kiswahili better; and Kiswahili is difficult for the children. One participant took a medial position by urging the use of both languages because they all are used in the locale.

Language Use in Different Situations

Ten situations were provided for participants to say which language should be used in each situation. The situations were those that were relevant to their settings: farm, teasing, bar, market, religion (church/mosque), wedding, funeral, hospital, market, village assembly and government office. In terms of language use, these situations can roughly be grouped into three categories: (i) those that were occupied by people from outside the Ngoni community; (ii) those that mostly involved the Ngoni community; and (iii) those that involved both Ngoni and non-Ngoni.

In the first category the situations are *government office, village assembly* and *hospital.* From experience, and also from the data, those who held these offices were from outside the Ngoni community. It is natural that in such situations Kingoni cannot predominate, but is used in some cases. The second category includes situations that are traditionally filled by the Ngoni community. In these situations the natural language should be Kingoni. In the questionnaire these situations were; *for teasing, at the bar* and *in the farm.* The third and last group is an amalgamation of Ngoni and non-Ngoni situations. These include *religion, wedding, funeral* and *market.*

Starting with religion, it is uncommon to find people without a religion in these villages. Until very recently, the villages were exclusively Christian, of the Catholic denomination. Recently, a mosque has been built in one village. In religion, readings are in Kiswahili (Christians), and Arabic (Moslems). However, the sermons are likely to involve a bit of code-switching and code-mixing. For weddings and funerals, with the exception of the religious rituals which are performed in Kiswahili or Arabic, other interactions are naturally expected to be conducted in Kingoni. As for markets, these are mobile in the villages, and are held monthly. They involve people from different linguistic settings. In such a situation Kingoni could be used along with Kiswahili. These findings are summarized in Table 2.

Most of the findings in Table 2 are surprising for people who know the villages well because in some of the situations, what would actually be found is different from what the data suggest.

Table 2: Views on which language is used in different situation (N=130)

	Kingoni	Kiswahili	Kingoni and Kiswahili	English and Kiswahili	No response	Total
a) Farm	63%	26%	11%	-	-	100%
b) Teasing	63%	28%	9%	-	-	100%
c) Bar	58%	12%	29%	1%	-	100%
d) Market	4%	65%	31%	-	-	100%
e) Religion	2%	88%	8%	2%	-	100%
f) Wedding	45%	22%	33%	-	-	100%
g) Funeral	45%	25%	30%	-	-	100%
h) Hospital	1%	84%	15%	-	-	100%
i) Village assembly	1%	89%	10%	-	-	100%
j) Government office	-	92%	*5%*	*2%*	1%	100%

For example, one would expect that at a wedding or funeral, Kingoni would feature significantly. In the farm situation, one expected Kingoni to dominate. Similarly in the bar and for teasing situations, one could expect the figures to go up to 85%. But this is not the case, as from the responses.

Discussion of the Findings

According to the findings many parents have shown ambivalent attitudes towards the use of Kingoni as a MoI in the initial years of their children's formal education. This is despite the potential that ECLs have for educating children who just start school in the villages. Most of the arguments that parents raised address issues other than pedagogical ones. Such arguments are linguistically and pedagogically unacceptable. For example, they argue that Kiswahili is a symbol of modernity, brings national unity, is fashionable, and is a beautiful language. In addition, some parents are afraid of assumed negative comments by people from outside their own community who might view their children as uncivilized. These are some of the sociological and psychological arguments that account for their attitudes; some of which are baseless.

The core of the questions was how parents would feel if Kingoni was used for teaching beginner classes. What is apparent is dislike of their own language, as a reaction to their disadvantaged socioeconomic positions; and the assumed 'superior' socioeconomic position of speakers of Kiswahili (and of English). At least four things emerge from the findings: mismatch between political ambitions and local sociolinguistic realities; language, power and attitudes; vitality trends of Kingoni; and the paradox of realities, wishes and attitudes.

Mismatch between political ambitions and local sociolinguistic realities

Tanzania, like many post-colonial states, chose Kiswahili as its national language. This choice was due to a combination of historical reasons, and political ambitions. The use of national languages for many such countries has been mostly facilitated by nationalism and national unity reasons, among others (Fasold, 1987; Gill, 2004).

It is this kind of objective that has unfortunately been overriding for Tanzania. While this and other objectives are crucial, there seems to be no mechanism in place in Tanzania to see to it that other equally important objectives, like educational development, are not overlooked. So there is a mismatch between political ambitions and local sociolinguistic realities, thus causing imbalances. This is why many of the participating parents kept on repeating "Kingoni will compromise national unity," forgetting that children in the classrooms were not learning literacy skills appropriately. The situation obtaining in Tanzania is what Fairclough (1992: 33-34) describes as "... a confusion between sociolinguistic realities and political aspirations."

Language, power and attitudes

In sociolinguistics, language is often taken to be a marker of the speaker's socioeconomic class. This relationship is what Becker (2003:65) calls 'symbol of group membership'. In Tanzania, people in rural areas consider urban dwellers as socially and economically better-off; and thus a privileged class that is more powerful.

Urban areas in Tanzania are linguistically metropolitan, so Kiswahili is used as a lingua franca. Incidentally, people in the remote rural areas have associated Kiswahili with financial opportunities, which unfortunately is not true. In view of this association, Kiswahili is taken by the villagers to be a route to success, or a language of upward mobility. Partly, they have a reason for that assumption because most, if not all, of the official domains in Tanzania are transacted through Kiswahili. It is this kind of situation that mostly triggers their ambivalent attitudes to their language. Some go as far as calling Kingoni a useless language. As a consequence, many parents are of the view that the use of Kingoni at school should be inhibited by reprimanding and canning children who speak it; holding teachers responsible, and even suggesting that the government should intervene in the villages to make everyone speak Kiswahili. This is similar to what Bekker (2003:67) observes in South Africa: "*Because of this close bond between a language and its speakers, the acquisition of a new language often implies the acquisition of a new social identity.*" This is something that should not be left unchecked, and needs more attention.

Vitality Trends of Kingoni

For language vitality to be assured, there should be at least three things: a number of speakers; language attitudes of speakers of the language (UNESCO (2003); and institutional support. This support includes assigning a language official domains of use through government policies.

In terms of the number of speakers, Kingoni cannot be considered to be endangered. However, there is little hope in terms of speakers' attitudes, together with lack of institutional support. The current policy framework leads people to disregard their language, which is ominous. As such, the future of the

language is not wholly safe. This is because ambivalent attitudes are a threat to intergenerational language transmission, which is important for language vitality (UNESCO 2003:8).

The paradox of realities, wishes and attitudes

It has been revealed in the findings that children in remote rural areas cannot benefit from learning though the medium of Kiswahili in initial years. Many parents have testified to this reality. Sadly, however, most parents think that the mere use of Kiswahili (and for some, English) will readily transform the socioeconomic disadvantages of their families, which is unfounded. This is a paradoxical mismatch. In the end, language difficulties may lead to truancy and dropping-out of school, let alone the fact that pupils' learning will be minimal.

Apparently, such parents are interested in 'assumed' benefits of Kiswahili, ignoring the immediate snags that hinder children from effective learning. They forget that it is actually knowledge of the subjects that is sought first at school. In fact, this knowledge is independent of the language in which it is transacted. Still, many are not willing to give in to the situation at hand. A very negligible fraction of parents accept the fact that Kingoni is the language that children in the area understand, and not Kiswahili. This situation is similar to what Graham (2010:314-316) found in Kenya, where both teachers and parents would not accept the use of Kipfokomo in the classroom.

The reasons behind these parents' attitudes is more complex than one can surmise. But as a general observation, such ambivalent attitudes are triggered by the wishes of parents for their children, and not by realities. The wish for socioeconomic advancement has led to ignoring the fundamental issues of local classroom situations, which are instrumental for knowledge creation and dissemination.

Conclusions

This paper has investigated parents' attitudes towards the possibility of using Kingoni in beginner primary school classes in Songea Rural District, where Kiswahili is least known to children, and yet is the MoI according to the national policy. It is a follow-up study of a previous study, which established that children's learning in the villages is slower compared to other children in another setting where Kiswahili is also the language of the community.

One of the more significant findings of the study is that most parents show ambivalent attitudes to Kingoni. Related to the issue of ambivalent attitudes is the realism that the categories of participants who were socioeconomically more disadvantaged in the society (e.g., women, the less educated and peasants) were more ambivalent than the relatively more advantaged. As such, low socioeconomic standing to some extent relates to negative attitudes to the ECL.

Another finding is that what most of the informants say about language use does not conform to the situations on the ground. Yet, attitudes are intricate since they are personal, and sometimes social opinions.

These findings have important implications for pedagogical interventions, but also for vitality interventions. Pedagogically, children cannot follow instructions well by participating in classroom processes due to lack of Kiswahili proficiency. As such it is a linguistic injustice for the children whose home language is ignored. As for the vitality of the language, while the number of speakers is linguistically big, the survival of this ethnic identity has all along been protected by the remoteness of the locale. However, close to the villages there is a uranium mine opening up, so Kiswahili will take on as a lingua franca. But an important question remains: will the mere knowledge of Kiswahili without other skills ensure economic upward mobility?

As a general concluding remark, it is important that governments take affirmative actions through policy pronouncements that ECLs be assigned some official domains, such as early literacy education where need be. This is but just one step towards mobilising positive attitudes to ECLs, because simply assigning these languages to formal domains of use may not necessarily guarantee their acceptability. Rather, it is positive attitudes that can ensure success.

Another important affirmative action would be to review primary school curricular to include vocational training, as a more meaningful strategy for enabling economic upward mobility. Parents should be made aware of the fact that mere knowledge of Kiswahili is a not a magic solution to their economic disadvantages.

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