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Enregistering the globalized nation in Tanzania

by

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Ujamaa was a political ideology aimed at unity, or better: at political, social, cultural and linguistic homogeneity. The previous chapter has shown that this homogenizing tendency could not control sociolinguistic differentiation; we have seen the emergence of specific registers among social groups, differentiated both by objective aspects – highly educated Tanzanians versus less educated ones – as well as by subjective ones – desires and images of identities brought out through practices of ‘distinction’. Of course, we can expect such forms of register differentiation to expand when the homogenizing drive of a singular political ideology and a monofocal nation vanishes, and in this chapter I will turn to these escalating patterns of sociolinguistic differentiation.

6.1. A changed environment

When I returned to Dar es Salaam in 2012 after an interval of several years, I found the city superficially different. For one thing, Dar es Salaam had grown explosively and is now supposed to harbor about 4-5 million people. Thousands of cars create a permanent traffic catastrophe, because the roads – now much improved – were not designed for the capacity required at present. Reconditioned cars, mostly Japanese and with a remarkable frequency of rather expensive SUVs, mix with school buses and Indian motorcycle-taxis called Bajaj – two things I never encountered before. Fancy new tall buildings dominate the city, and much impressive construction work is going on. An immense quantity of natural gas was discovered off the coast of Tanzania, and investors and speculators (notably from the Emirates and from China) obviously consider Dar es Salaam the East-African boomtown of the future.

There is adequate Internet provision in the city now and roads are lined by posters advertising cheap mobile Internet rates offered by the multitude of mobile phone providers now active there (on which more below). People in downtown Dar es Salaam are liberally using their mobile phones, and, like in most other metropolitan cities in the world, one can easily overhear loudly articulated phone conversations in bars and restaurants. There is a new middle class, including a considerable number of what we could call Tanzanian yuppies, and this middle class dominates the cityscape. The media companies offer a large range of networks and channels on TV, many of them international and several domestic ones operating in English. Private schools and universities are booming as well, as the elites prefer to pay for an education they can control themselves. Money is now counted in ‘laki’ (100,000) and ‘milioni’, because the Tanzanian Shilling has dropped from 15:1 against the US Dollar in 1985 (150:1 on the black market) to a staggering but stable 1500:1 in 2012. A beer in an ordinary bar now costs 2000 Tsh, and up to 7000Tsh in more exclusive places.

Contrary to the sometimes extreme paucity of supplies in shops in earlier days, the city now counts several shopping malls in which we see the effects of economic globalization. Heinz Ketchup manufactured in Hong Kong and Heinz Corned Beef made in Brazil; vegetable oil from Kenya, peeled tomatoes and Buitoni pastas from Italy, American Garden mayonnaise imported from the US, Kellogg's cereals packaged in Manchester, UK; Maggi ketchup from Malaysia, sushi rice from Thailand and Basmati rice from Dubai; garlic from China and pears from Somerset west in South Africa; and to top it all, the iconic South African sausage called 'boerewors', manufactured in Kenya. Tanzania's trade doors are obviously wide open, while locally produced goods, suffering from poorly designed and uninspiring packaging, look uncompetitive next to the global trade commodities on the shelves of the new supermarkets. These supermarkets, needless to say, sell their goods at prices that exclude almost everyone except the truly affluent. The Kenya-made sausage costs 15,000Tsh (about 7,5 Euro) per kilo; imported lemons are sold at 2000Tsh (about 1 Euro) per kilo; and even the humble stock vegetables onion and garlic are offered at prices of around 1,800Tsh per kilo. Local average salaries don't bring you far in such shops.

The change is superficial though. As soon as one leaves the central district of the city and wanders towards traditionally poorer areas – the Kariakoo market area, for instance, or districts somewhat farther from the center such as Mwenge and Sinza – one enters a city quite similar to that of two decades ago. The shops and kiosks are now better supplied, that is true; but the people running them are still poor, and they complain about the rising prices of commodities now distributed not by the State but by private companies. Thus, the Makonde woodcarvers in Mwenge now have to procure their ebony wood from a private foresting and lumber company and ebony prices have soared enormously, endangering their tourist-oriented trade. There are new forms of employment – the affluent middle class demands protection and the private security business is exploding in size and profitability; the same goes for car maintenance and Internet/mobile phone provision, new forms of journalism and, for the hopeful, a new tourist business attracting a wealthy population interested in luxury beach hotels and well-equipped golf courses, rather than the Lonely Planet backpackers of some decades ago. The majority of the people, however, still live outside the formal economy, and the Tanzanian Ministry of Education reports on its website that the illiteracy rate in the country has grown from 9,6% in 1986 to a dramatic 31% in 2007. An economic growth rate of 6% has obviously not done much to alleviate the poverty of the Tanzanian masses.¹

¹ The public education system, once the pride of Ujamaa Tanzania, has all but collapsed, forcing middle-class aspiring people to spend astronomic fees on private schools for their sons and daughters. One of my informants, for whose candidness I am grateful, reported that he spent 800,000Tsh per year on secondary school fees for one daughter and 1,6 million Tsh annually on the secondary boarding school of another. His salary – a relatively decent one by local standards – amounted to 6 million Tsh (3000 Euro) per year. The man took heavy bank loans to finance the education of his daughters. Access to the affluent middle class, consequently, has become even harder than before.

The government has changed face as well. Nyerere's *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* still rules the country – the introduction of a multiparty system has not changed the structures of power – but its executives now dress in smart Western suits and occupy large mansions in exclusive areas alongside diplomats and business tycoons. Political power has very much been 'normalized', so to speak: its formats and appearances do not articulate much difference anymore with that in advanced capitalist countries. Nyerere is still worshipped as the *Baba ya Taifa* ('Father of the Nation') and claims to moral leadership still orient to him, but the socialist idealism and voluntarism of his generation have been replaced by a pragmatic managerialism of the Executive, as we shall see further in this chapter.

I will document and discuss some of the sociolinguistic changes accompanying the transformation of the country. And the argument I shall build is that Tanzania has now become a globalized nation whose political, social and cultural profiles must be understood in relation to the different scales that characterize globalized sociopolitical and cultural configurations. We will have to consider the impact of globalized scenarios and frames for identification – an important and qualitatively new scale level – as well as those of a repositioned nation-state and of repositioned sub-national dynamics. The local and the national have both shifted their relative positions due to global forces: this argument was central to *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (Blommaert 2010) and can be elaborated, be it sketchily, with respect to Tanzania. I also recapitulate the central claim made in *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*: that attention to sociolinguistic detail offers us a privileged and uniquely sensitive diagnostic of wider patterns of change and development (cf. also Blommaert & Rampton 2011). By looking at what many others would consider irrelevant details, we are sometimes able to get to the very heart of such processes.

In particular, and I recapitulate points made in the previous chapter here, we see that social processes have patterns of enregisterment as their sociolinguistic correlate (Agha 2007). Particular 'chunks' of language and other communicative and semiotic resources are 'ordered' in such a way that they indexically point towards the specific social practices and actors' identities with which they occur. The relationship is not just reflective: processes of enregisterment construct such social practices and identities. Talking in a political register, for instance, constructs meanings as 'political' and speakers as 'politicians'; the same goes for lawyers, doctors and other neatly identifiable social categories, but also for hip youngsters, yuppies, HipHop fans, and so forth. Enregisterment is the social order we find in communicative practice; the requirement (or desire) to be recognizable-as-someone ensures a relative stability and recurrence for the orders of indexicality that construct the practices and identities within which one wants to inscribe oneself (see Blommaert 2005, chapter 3). Thus, we shift the debate and the analysis from differences between 'languages' (e.g. Swahili and English) towards differences *within* languages – 'ways of speaking', genres, styles, in sum the patterns of order we can observe in processes of enregisterment.

In what follows, I shall offer a series of three vignettes illustrating the multiple processes of enregisterment we observe in contemporary Tanzania. I will first

document the new culture of managerialism of the Tanzanian State (6.2). It is a feature of global ideoscapes in the sense of Appadurai (1996), and its usage indexes the incorporation of the Tanzanian State in a worldwide model of business-oriented public governance. Next, I will engage with new forms of advertisements for Internet and mobile phone provision (6.3). They articulate a range of new images of middle-class identities, and they – remarkably – do so in Swahili. The two first sections, thus, will discuss the emergence of new registers targeted at new complexes of social and political practice. Third, my attention will go to the emergence of heterographic practices among Tanzanians on Facebook (6.4) – their ‘languaging’, so to speak (cf. Jørgensen 2008; Juffermans 2010; Creese & Blackledge 2010; Blommaert & Rampton 2011). This, too, will show global affordances turned into locally enregistered codes (Pennycook 2010; Blommaert 2012).

After these three descriptive sections, I will pull the different pieces of the argument together in a discussion of the complex forms of enregisterment that characterize the globalized society that Tanzania has become (6.5, cf. Agha 2007; Møller & Jørgensen 2011). Throughout the different examples, we shall see the gradual emergence of register, rather than language, as the key notion for understanding contemporary sociolinguistic processes in Tanzania. This argument will be more fully developed in that final section, and we will see how more complex repertoires answer the demands of more complex forms of identity work now performed.

6.2. Visions and Missions

The present rulers of Tanzania, both in public and private sectors, are people who were educated under *Elimu ya Kujitegemea*, the educational policy of Ujamaa discussed in chapter 2, in which primary education was generalized and improved so as to create, certainly until the Oil Crisis of the mid-1970s, an education system unique in scope and quality (Mushi 2009). These leaders, consequently, are all fully literate, multilingual and well educated, and these features set them apart from the previous generation of leaders, many of whom had just modest educational backgrounds often acquired under colonial rule. Abeid Karume, the first President (and dictator) of Zanzibar and Vice President of Tanzania, was at best semiliterate, and he took pride in the fact that most members of his Zanzibar Revolutionary Council likewise had enjoyed very little formal education (Shivji 2008: 109). The present leaders were also in the second wave of handpicked promising youngsters sent off to the University of Dar es Salaam and other higher institutions in Tanzania and abroad for advanced education. They returned in the 1980s with Business Administration or Law degrees and set out to construct post-Ujamaa Tanzania.

The slowness and inadequacy of the Tanzanian public administration used to be the stuff of legends. A good friend of mine started working at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1979 and retired some years ago after a career of over three decades; recently, to his infinite joy, he received the letter appointing him to tenure at the University backdated 1981. Changing foreign notes into Tanzanian Shillings in the 1980s required about half a day in the bank, because the form

used for this rather simple transaction required no less than three stamps and signatures – I kept some such densely belabored slips of official paper as souvenirs of the many, many desperate hours in banks, waiting for the Deputy Chief Teller Clerk to arrive and put his signature and stamp on the exchange form. Mountains of paper would cover the offices of Ministries and very little could be achieved without elaborate explanation and, occasionally, some 100Tsh notes offered in hierarchical sequence to officials. And I keep vivid memories of the times, in 1985, when the Government decided to change all bank notes in the country to a newly printed series in just a few days' time, forcing *all* citizens to stand in phenomenal queues by the banks with their cash possessions in hand – a genuine Eldorado for pick-pockets and corrupt bank managers, and possibly the most chaotic instance of public management I have ever witnessed.

Today, Ministries are housed in new tall glass-and steel buildings in downtown Dar es Salaam as well as (the smarter ones) in some suburbs. The Ministries have websites and offer e-facilities to citizens, and the facades of their buildings are, like those of some large businesses, adorned with boards announcing the Ministry's Vision and Mission solemnly written in Swahili and English (FIGURE 1).

FIGURE 1: The Vision and Mission of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Samora Street. © Jan Blommaert



These Vision and Mission statements indicate a change of seismic proportions in public management. From a hegemonic and monopolistic state in the days of *Ujamaa na Kujitegemea*, Tanzania's public policy texts now overflow with

references to cooperation, first across national boundaries and second between public and private actors, and it inscribes itself into a familiar globally aligned discourse. Consider the following fragment from a policy document on the “Public Financial Management Reform Programme – Strategic Plan” issued by the Tanzanian Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (June 2008, p.31):

“The PSRP (= Public Service Reform Programme) has a wide mandate. It covers restructuring, private sector participation, executive agencies (of government), Performance Management, Programme coordination and M&E (= Monitoring & Evaluation), MIS (= Management Information System) and Leadership Management and Development and Coordination. Each of these touches upon aspects of PFMRP (= Public Financial Management Reform Programme). Investment Management component of PFMRP deals with Parastatals, so there is common interest on executive agencies. Information Technology (Computer Services) deals with management information and so needs to relate to overall MIS within government.”

This Reform Programme has itself a Vision and a Mission (p.38). The Vision is formulated as:

“To excel in and sustain financial management and accountability, fiscal control and provision of quality Treasury Services”

And the Mission statement reads:

“To achieve and maintain sound financial management, fiscal discipline, accountability resource mobilization and allocation, public debt management, Government asset management through developing robust fiscal and monetary policies, efficient and effective provision of Treasury Services and enhancing professionalism.”

Clearly the Tanzanian officials have taken advanced lessons in the jargon of New Public Management. Their discourse has been streamlined and polished into what can best be seen as a global discourse model of managerialism, a typical ‘ideoscape’ in Appadurai’s (1996) well known vision of cultural globalization. This model of managerialism, certainly in its Anglo-Saxon variety, has blurred the boundaries between public and private management, as Du Gay (2008: 235) observes, since public administration is now supposed to operate in identical fashion to the private sector. Public sector institutions are to be run on an entrepreneurial basis, and ‘culture change’ – a transition from a supposed archaic management culture to a new entrepreneurial one – is seen as a key feature of the model (O’Reilly & Reed 2010: 962). Discourses, images and metaphors such as the ones we encounter in the fragments above are central features of such culture change. In the ideology of managerialism, they emblemize the transition from an atrophied statist public service to one in which the ‘client’ (the citizen) is focal, in which rational planning, process management, efficiency monitoring and permanent quality control are the instruments of public governance, and in which public services are seen as commodities offered in a competitive market.

Let us briefly return to the document quoted above, and consider the densely packed jargon in this fragment (p.36; naturally this fragment is followed by a flow chart):

“There is therefore a logical sequence to the implementation of improvements in PFM, which entails getting the basics right first. If initial effort is directed at implementing a sound set of control systems, this will then enable policy to be put into practice and, subsequently, the delivery of services in an effective and efficient manner.”

Or – there is really no dearth of examples in this document – this fragment (p.39):

“PFMRP III therefore will all be about operationalising best practices i.e. making the tools, techniques, methodologies and systems, developed under PFMRP II, work in Tanzania. The majority of the tools are now in place for a robust PFM structure, however in many cases there is little or no integration between these various supporting systems and procedures, causing inefficient and incomplete operational processes that are hindering further PFM reform. In addition, it is necessary for PFM capacity in Government to catch up with the latest techniques and methodologies to be able to take advantage of the facilities they offer. This Platform will therefore be reinforcing the second PFM reform objective, namely allocative efficiency.”

Here is the culture change in public management in Tanzania: it is a shift into discourse and practice formats that are entirely in line with globally circulating normative templates, and it is via such templates that Tanzania now presents itself to the outside world as an efficient, late-modern globalized state, driven by ‘core values’ which, inevitably, include things such as the following, taken from the website of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs:

- Innovativeness
- Professionalism
- Customer focused
- Commitment to work
- Efficiency
- Participatory management
- Teamwork
- Timely service delivery
- Integrity

Note, of course, that a change in discourse and public semiotics is not immediately equivalent to change in the actual practices and culture of work; quite often, old features of organizational culture persist under a veneer of new managerialism (Kirkpatrick & Ackroyd 2003). People in Tanzania still complain about the erratic service delivery they receive from their public institutions, and diplomats and expatriate businesspeople will still volunteer an avalanche of hair-raising anecdotes whenever requested to share their experiences with public administrations in the country. The point is, however, that we see a discursive change in the discourse of public administration, which represents a complete break with the past and now orients fully to the rest of the world. Whereas the previous regime wanted to be understandable primarily to all Tanzanians, the new regime wants to be understood by the global business and political community.

Such global orientations naturally proceed overwhelmingly in English. The document quoted here is in English, and several of the websites of Ministries contain massive amounts of English and have their design entirely in English. Swahili, though, continues to be used whenever the Ministries produce documents for local and national circulation – speeches by the Minister or senior aides, parliamentary interventions and committee reports, press releases drafted for national consumption, local interviews and so on.

Much of this discourse in Swahili is reminiscent of earlier Tanzanian political styles – the core vocabulary of the state and society has remained stable – yet, we see new patterns emerge. An example is the use of terms distinguishing the ‘public sector’ (‘sekta ya umma’) and the ‘private sector’ (‘sekta ya binafsi’), previously an unknown distinction. Similarly, ‘kubinafsisha’ is a new and widely used official term for ‘privatization’. ‘Uwekezaji’ is another new term, meaning ‘investment’; ‘ujasiriamali’ entered Swahili vocabulary as the term for ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘kubuni miradi’ means ‘project design’ (or ‘project development’), the key term ‘mteja’ (‘customer’) is used in every imaginable context; and of course the Mother of all Business Terms, the term for ‘management’, is ‘usimamizi’, not, as it used to be, ‘utawala’ (‘governance’ or ‘administration’).

Thus, even in Swahili we see the emergence of a new managerial register used to convert the global frame into the national language. This register consists of a mixture of familiar political terminology and a new core vocabulary for denoting key concepts from the global managerial frame blended into a new managerial discourse. The new vocabulary is in pure and ‘High’ Swahili, and it is the product of precisely the same procedures as the ones described in chapter 3: word coining, vocabulary development. And just like with Campus Swahili, this new vocabulary and the new managerial discursive templates it supports are a register, a specific and specialized set of functionally, indexically ordered communicative resources that identify specific complexes of activities and actors in relation to others. The new Tanzanian political culture, the post-Ujamaa shift into a globalized neoliberal universe, is being enregistered in a new way of talking – one that sounds distinctly less political than the previously dominant

one, but one that evokes recognizable attributions of modern global business-minded state leadership.

6.3. Intanet Bomba

As mentioned earlier, one of the most conspicuously different features of Dar es Salaam urban life these days is the generalized use of mobile phones. Like in other places in Africa, mobile phones solve a perennial problem: offering a means of long-distance communication cheaply and effectively, without requiring the massive investments required for landline networks. In the developing world, mobile phones represent a genuine revolution and are seen by influential policymakers as crucial tools for future economic, social and political development. In the words of a World Bank-related researcher,

“Mobile telephones are revolutionizing the formative processes of economic development. These relatively cheap handheld personal communicators are empowering the most basic development agents, turning former functionaries reliant on erratic and remote external inputs into key decision makers with direct access to the facts they need.”
(Lambert 2009: 48)

New providers, consequently, are almost all located in the developing world (Lambert 2009: 49), and the range of services they offer do not lack sophistication: m-banking can be found in several developing countries while it is still rare in Europe; job advertisements and access to social and administrative services are also offered via mobile phones in several countries, as well as cheap chat services.² Another World Bank-connected researcher, Elisabeth Littlefield (2009: 50) thus reports:

“The biggest success in customer adoption to date has been the M-PESA network in Kenya, which has reached more than 6.5 million customers in just over two years. It has become the preferred method for moving money for 50 percent of Kenyans. An average of 150 million Kenya shillings (\$1.96 million) is transferred through the network every day, mostly in small amounts averaging just over K Sh1,500 (\$20) per transaction. CGAP [Consultative Group to Assist the Poor] analysis and a survey by the nongovernmental organization *Financial Sector Deepening Kenya* show that users like the fact that the network is faster, easier to access, and safer than the alternatives. But cost probably trumps other factors as it beats the cheapest formal alternative by 45 percent. To send \$25, the post office charges 5 percent and Western Union charges 57.5 percent; but the fee with M-PESA would be 2.8 percent. In other words, using M-PESA puts \$4 million a week into the hands of poor Kenyans.”

In the next sentence, however, this optimism is instantly qualified:

² For the latter, see the excellent study of Fie Velghe (2012) on the use of a mobile chat application in townships around Cape Town.

However, fewer than 1 in 10 mobile phone banking customers are actually poor, new to banking, and doing anything more than payments and transfers. Most of the new offerings, especially when led by existing banks, have served to provide more convenient bill payments for existing customers and to decongest branches.”

The sophisticated m-services are thus largely an affair of the urban middle classes, including the lower middle class, as we shall see shortly.

The March 2012 statistics released by the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority reported almost 27 million subscriptions to mobile phone operators.³ Against a population estimated to around 46 million, this number is impressive, but let us not forget that people sometimes have to take subscriptions from several providers to compensate for inadequate network coverage. Several such operators are active, with the global player Vodacom (locally nicknamed ‘Voda’) being the largest one, the state-run TTCL holding a middle position and the privately owned Benson being the smallest. Competition among the providers is fierce and has led to a steady decrease of the rates for using mobile phones.

Apart from basic services – calls and SMS – the providers all offer mobile Internet services. These Internet services, however, are used by only a small minority of mobile phone subscribers. According to the business newspaper *The Citizen* in January 2012, about 11% of the Tanzanian population have access to Internet, 45% of whom – around 2 million – use mobile internet.⁴ Internet subscriptions – compared to basic mobile phone services – are still very expensive: an average domestic (landline) subscription from TTCL in Dar es Salaam cost 100,000Tsh (around 50 Euro) per month in September 2012.⁵

We begin to understand that such figures point towards an elite, even if the term is used with some degree of elasticity here. We also understand that this elite is concentrated in the large urban areas, if for no other reason because of the fact that Internet requires electricity. And when it comes to electricity, the Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority of Tanzania warns us that “[w]ith about 660,000 customers, electricity was available to only about 11% of the population by [the] first quarter of 2007, with more than 80% supplied in the urban areas”.⁶ About 9 out of 10 Tanzanians have no access to a regular electricity supply, and that figure corresponds to more than 90% of the territory of the country. Access to the Internet is a rather exclusive feature of urban life in Tanzania.

It also strongly plays into that urban life-world – even more: it has become an icon of the culture of urban life. And again, we will see that a key element of this

³ Data accessed through <http://www.tcra.go.tz/>, 12 September 2012.

⁴ See the report on <http://thecitizen.co.tz/business/-/18518-number-of-tanzania-internet-users-is-5m>

⁵ I am grateful to Els Vandemoortele for granting me this glimpse of her household budget.

⁶ Data accessed through <http://www.ewura.com/electricity.html> on 12 September 2012.

culture is a new register of 'cool' Swahili. Like in the case of public service managerialism discussed in the previous section, a new lexicon of terms referring to mobile phone and Internet use has emerged in no time, including terms such as "intanet" itself, "kuperuzi" ('to surf the internet', from English 'peruse'), "vocha" ('voucher', i.e. a prepaid card), "bomba" ('connection'), "hudumu" ('subscription'), "mtandao" ('network'), "m-pesa" (mobile 'banking'), 'kufuatilia" ('to follow' on Facebook or Twitter) as well as globally circulating loan codes such as SMS, PIN and MB all firmly entrenched now in the cool register of mobile connectivity, and emerging slang terms such as 'mrembo wa Facebook' ('Facebook darling', a woman attracting significant amounts of male attention on Facebook). Providers market their products under labels such as "ezy pesa" ('easy money' – a phone banking application) and 'Epiq Nation' (an image slogan from the Zanzibar-based Zantel, see below).

Publicity for mobile phone and mobile Internet providers – extraordinarily dense, testifying to the price wars among providers – show happy young people. References are made to happiness and joy throughout, in slogans such as "Ongea kutwa nzima na cheka" ('talk the whole day and laugh'). We see a young man screaming with joy when opening his "Tigo Internet Mega Boksi" – a box containing applications for mobile Internet (Gmail, Facebook, Chrome, Firefox etc.) from the Tigo provider. And young girls enthusiastically gazing at a smartphone are announced to be "wajanja wa kuperuzi" – 'expert internet surfers' (see Figure 2). Those are happy, successful young people, and they are very much in the world.

FIGURE 2: Wajanja wa kuperuzi. © Jan Blommaert



Not unlike what we encounter elsewhere in the world, mobile phone advertisements suggest success derived from global mobility. Zantel's Epiq Nation campaign, thus, shows Mwisho Wampamba, a Tanzanian actor featuring in a popular South African TV series offered on commercial networks in Tanzania – an incorporation of the mobile successful young Tanzanian (see Figure 3). Large Vodacom and Epiq Nation campaign events feature Chidi Benz and Juma Nature AKA Kibla – Tanzanian Hip-Hop icons who attract audiences all over East Africa – and Epiq Nation sponsors a 'Bongo Stars Search' program, comparable to 'American Idol' or 'The X Factor' and aimed at recruiting new and hip popular culture celebrities.

FIGURE 3: Epiq Nation Moto. © Jan Blommaert



The exploitation of Tanzania's vibrant 'Bongo Flava' Hip-Hop scene in mobile phone marketing campaigns was already noted by Christina Higgins (2012) in a remarkable paper. Higgins observed that providers deployed the urban Swahili youth slang in their campaigns, a variety of which Bongo Flava artists are the epigones; popular Hip-hop song titles likewise found their way into marketing slogans, and a popular beer brand has "100% TZ FLAVA" printed on its bottles.

The point Higgins made there, and which can be confirmed here, is that the connection between popular culture and marketing moves Swahili in a privileged position vis-à-vis the young urban middle-class consumers targeted in campaigns. But it is not just *any* Swahili: it is the cool slang-ish Swahili characterizing local youth cultures in Tanzanian cities, driven by the media and (as we shall explore more fully in the next section) the Internet. The medium for such campaigns is thus not a language *per se*, but a specific register. The amount of code-mixing in publicity for mobile phone providers should already make clear that 'language' is not the best unit to describe what goes on. As we can see in Figure 3, the English term "Epiq Nation" is followed by the Swahili term "moto" ('heat'): Epiq Nation is *hot*, and the blend of English and Swahili brings that message about.

We are thus witnessing fully developed lifestyle branding targeting a young urban audience of consumers, and this fully developed form of branding follows global templates. Look at how the companies behind Epiq Nation announce their campaign:⁷

"Etisalat Zantel" has partnered with "**Mobilera**" to offer "Epiq Nation" the new youth lifestyle product which is much more than just great rates for mobile phones and internet services.

"Epiq Nation" will provide the Tanzanian's youth with unprecedented services where they can have access to exclusive deals, discounts, experiences and competitions. This offer aims at improving the lives of the youth in Tanzania and meets their hunger for new technologies and products.

The lingo is that of advanced consumerist marketing, and the approach is that of sophisticated branding strategies aimed at complementing the product ("great rates for mobile phones and internet services") with an avalanche of "exclusive deals, discounts, experiences and competitions", so as to shape entire identities and life projects centred around particular commodities (Blommaert & Varis 2012a, 2012b). We have seen that post-Ujamaa politics has been inserted into global ideoscapes of public managerialism; here, too, we see how mobile phones and Internet products are advertised in ways fully integrated in global scenarios for branding and marketing, centred around the commodification of entire identities and life projects via the purchase of a product.⁸ Choosing Zantel's Epiq Nation products is not just a choice for a particular product in a competitive market – it is a choice for a specific lifestyle, a self-imagined identity constructed through consumption. People who do so are not just 'wateja' ('customers'), they

⁷ From <http://campaign.dubib.com/news/10450-epiq-nation#.UFBhcKRdNHg>, accessed 12 September 2012.

⁸ The fully globalized nature of marketing templates in Tanzania can also be judged from the extraordinarily frequent use of the greatest lie of global consumerist marketing: the suggestion that certain things are 'free of charge'. The Swahili word 'bure' ('gratis', 'free of charge') occurs in every second advertisement, suggesting that a certain amount of prepaid airtime, SMSses or download Megabites is 'free' when you purchase certain package formulas (see Figure 2 above). Things are usually not 'free' when you have to pay for them, of course.

are laughing and smiling, happy, young, affluent 'wajanja wa uperuzi' ('experts surfers') and, perhaps, 'warembo wa Facebook' ('Facebook darlings').

We have seen that providers target a young urban audience, and that they do so by means of complex campaigns turning products into lifestyle choices. Given the price of Internet subscriptions, the audience going for the full package is relatively restricted. And this is where we see that providers 'open up', so to speak, and attempt to bring their products to customers in less well-off areas of the cities, to the struggling urban lower middle classes who earn a modest salary but are nonetheless fully integrated in the networks of contemporary urban life. A taxi driver, for instance, needs a mobile phone to conduct his business, because taxis operate on an individual lease basis and without a central radio dispatching system. The same goes for small traders and shopkeepers: contacts with customers and providers are all maintained through mobile phone communication. Even more: given the relatively high cost of cross-network calls, these lower middle class people can be seen equipped with more than one handset, each of them connected to one provider network and all of them used to make network-internal calls. More affluent customers, less worried about the prohibitive costs of cross-network communication, typically have a single smartphone.

With this in mind, consider Figure 4.

FIGURE 4: advertisements in Mikocheni village. © Jan Blommaert



Mobile phones, subscription packages and prepaid cards are not just sold in hip downtown shops and malls; they are sold almost everywhere in the city. Small groceries, restaurants, post offices, bars, kiosks: one can read everywhere that 'vocha' are available, and 'vocha jumla' ('every kind of prepaid card'), followed by a list of brand names – 'Voda', Airtel, Tigo, what have you. Mobile phone provision stretches into the poorest corners of the city. Naturally, the cost of full subscription packages with mobile internet access far exceeds the budgets of most people in such areas; what is effectively sold there are the cheapest prepaid cards, enough to make local calls and send some SMSes. But they can be found everywhere alongside other standard household products such as soap, maize flour, cooking oil, onions, fruit or water. Thus, while we can say that the spread, the availability, of mobile phones in Dar es Salaam is 'democratic', their distribution or accessibility – the specific ways in which they are being appropriated and used – is not democratic at all and follows clear class lines.

The democratic spread, nonetheless, necessitates an open format of marketing communication. A more detailed look at figure 4 reveals something quite interesting, and in order to grasp its relevance, some explanation needs to be given about advertisement culture in Tanzania. To begin with, advertisement was a relatively rare thing in Ujamaa Tanzania. The reason was quite simply that consumer commodities were rare in the days of *Kujitegemea*. One would see professional beer advertisements, some Pepsi publicity boards (also in figure 4) and some for other international products – more about that in a moment – but often, product were advertised by locally manufactured paintings on facades and fences, done by professional sign-writers. Commercial slogans did not circulate intensively, with perhaps the exception of a slogan for a local 'pombe' (indigenous beer) called Chikubu. The slogan was *Tumia Chibuku, ni pombe bora* – 'use Chibuku, it's excellent beer' – and it was played before and after a popular humorous radio play that aired every night on Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam for years on end. Most people still know the slogan today, and note that the slogan was in Swahili.

Prestige products – a synonym of products manufactured abroad – were almost invariably accompanied by English publicity items. Thus, in figure 4 we see a small and older sign promoting Nivea cream with an English text; we also see the older Pepsi sign, also in English. Driving through Dar es Salaam, we still see English widely used whenever prestige products are being promoted: hotels and spas, wines, brandies or whiskies, imported beers, some banking facilities, insurance and so forth. Mobile phone adverts, in contrast, are overwhelmingly *in Swahili*, and the English Nivea sign in figure 4 is juxtaposed with several Swahili mobile phone signs, as the more detailed Figure 5 will show.

FIGURE 5: Mikocheni village, detail. © Jan Blommaert



Even when they target the affluent Tanzanian yuppies, as we have seen, the new Swahili register is used rather than, or at least in conjunction with English (as e.g. in 'Ezy Pesa'). Monolingual English mobile phone advertisement boards can be found, not by coincidence, in the vicinity of expensive shopping centers attracting a largely expatriate community of customers. Thus, the English Epiq Nation poster featuring Mwisho Wampamba (Figure 3) could be found near Shopper's Plaza, Masaki, a supermarket tailored to the demands of the international business and diplomatic community in Masaki, and incorporating a 'Subway' sandwich shop on its premises.

The Mikocheni kiosk in Figures 4 and 5, thus, displays two generations of prestige products: an older one (Nivea cream) in English, dating to the times where 'international' was still a synonym for 'outside of Tanzania' and therefore 'in English'; and a new one (mobile phone services) in which global commodities have been turned into *local* status-hierarchical emblems – they have been 'reterritorialized' to adopt Higgins' (2012) terminology. Such forms of localization, as we now know, are defining features of cultural globalization. They enact the 'vernacular globalization' that Appadurai (1996) already announced, and that accounts for the tremendous frequency with which we see local 'accents' added to global cultural templates (see Pennycook 2007, 2010; Higgins 2009; Blommaert 2010 chapter 3; Blommaert & Varis 2012a Culture as accent). The use of mobile phones is a global status emblem cleverly and skillfully 'translated', so to speak, into a local stratification of symbols and values. The cool Swahili register that accompanies and enacts it is the key to this localization practice, and it is no doubt also the key to the success of mobile phones in Dar es Salaam.

6.4. Tanzanians @ Facebook

We can notice such ‘accents’ in other globally circulating status registers as well, and one such register is the playful heterographic languaging we find in various new media niches: internet chats, SMS codes, Facebook and Twitter messages. I have previously described such forms as ‘supervernaculars’ (Blommaert 2012). Before engaging with some Tanzanian examples, let me briefly clarify some conceptual issues, because the first sentences of this section contain some relatively recent jargon.

‘Supervernacular’ is a term we coined in order to describe rapidly emerging and developing codes widely used among ‘supergroups’ – huge network and/or online communities in which new and locally constructed (‘grassroots’) vernaculars circulate thanks to new communication technologies such as the internet and mobile phones. These supervernaculars are

“patterned sociolinguistic resources (...) adopted by communities of users that share none of the traditional attributes of speech communities — territorial fixedness, physical proximity, socio-cultural sharedness and common backgrounds. People now use similar sociolinguistic resources without sharing any of these traditional features of community. And such loose, elastic, dynamic and deterritorialized communities are among the key features of superdiversity.” (Blommaert 2012: 3)

Supervernaculars are a typical instance of register: the symbolic resources of languages and scripts are explored, exploited and ordered in such a way that they create a distinct but sharable code, considered to be ‘normal’ (hence normative) among members of the supergroup in which it circulates. It is a script which transmits both denotational meanings – one can ‘say things’ in the code – as well as a dense package of indexical meanings: joint identity frames are being activated, speaking positions and stance can be flagged (e.g. by means of emoticons), degrees of expertise and seniority of group membership can be displayed. Using the script is therefore much more than just another form of ‘writing’; it is inevitably an act of identity in relation to specific social settings. The script becomes a register, and that register is ‘cool’, creative and subversive.

As to the creative and subversive aspects: supervernaculars such as chat codes and mobile phone texting codes are often ‘heterographic’: they stretch the affordances of conventional scripts in such a way that a new, deviant system of normative writing emerges, different from the ‘orthographic’ one and therefore ‘heterographic’ (Blommaert 2008). Thus orthographic “see you at four o’clock” can become, in mobile texting code for instance, “CU@4”. And note the normativity of this heterographic system: writing “SU@4” is meaningless because it contains an error (‘S’ instead of ‘C’) which is as catastrophic as major errors in ‘orthographic’ writing. The codes of conduct of subcultures, we can notice, are as normative as those of any ‘mainstream’ community.

This creative deployment of semiotic resources, in defiance of established norms and expectations (but simultaneously constructing alternative ones) has been called ‘languaging’ in recent literature (cf. Creese & Blackledge 2010; Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen et al. 2011). People do not ‘have’ or ‘use’ language, they *do* language, they *perform* and *enact* language, sampling and assembling any

available resource that has the potential of conveying the intended meanings and indexical effects. Such meanings and effects draw intertextually on existing traditions – of heterographic practices for instance – and creatively re-perform and re-order such traditions.

There are such traditions of heterography in Tanzania; in fact, I discussed several instances of it in earlier work (e.g. Blommaert 2010: 190-193), observing several different phenomena. One was the playful and witty exploitation of English expressions so as to create ambiguities and pun: the owner of a (rather battered) minibus, for instance, writing “Con Ford” on his windscreen and flagging, thus, (a) the brand of his vehicle, (b) the comfort it offers to passengers; (c) who should be mindful, however, because this is a *con* Ford – a possible ‘tapeli’ trick. While producing these multiple and layered meanings, the author of ‘Con Ford’ displays his linguistic skills, his ability to twist common English expressions in such a way that they generate irony, humor and so on. We encounter here a typical instance of what Higgins (2009) understands by “English as a local language” in Tanzania: English language resources are ‘brought down’, so to speak, to a local universe of indexical meanings and attributes and they make sense *hic et nunc*, on the windscreen of a Dar es Salaam minibus.

A second phenomenon was global. The Bongo Flava Hip Hop movement of the 1990s imported the heterographic codes widely circulating in the global Hip Hop scene, in artists’ names, song titles, graffiti and slogans. A famous early Hip Hop band, thus, was called “II Proud” (‘too proud’, cf. ‘2Pac’ – ‘Tupac’), another one “Da Dee-polw-matz” (‘the diplomats’). Note the ‘eye dialect’ in the former (“da” for ‘the’; see also the ‘Flava’ in Bongo Flava itself) and the plural ending ‘-z’ in the latter. These global features of Hip Hop and (later) broader pop-cultural writing (‘colorz’, ‘niggaz’, ‘gangstaz’, ‘Gorillaz’, ‘rapz’) penetrated all the way down to small and local Dar es Salaam youth gangs, calling themselves *Wahuni* (the Swahili equivalent of ‘gangstaz’) and proudly displaying their slang vocabulary to me (Blommaert 2010: 191-192). While dictating their words and expressions to me, they took care that I would write these words down *correctly*, even if that correctness was heterographic. Thus the plural of the slang term ‘toto’ (‘girl’) had to be written as ‘totoz’, with the ‘-z’ plural ending. The ‘-z’ was cool.

So cool even that in Dar es Salaam now a good number of quite respectable businesses can be found using this heterographic feature in their names: ‘Mamboz Corner BBQ’ and ‘Choma’z Grill’, for instance, or the cleaning firm ‘Spiknspanz’. The ‘z’ was also there, as we saw earlier, in the mobile phone brand slogan ‘Ezy pesa’ – in which ‘ezy’ is an entirely heterographic reconstruction of ‘easy’. The “Epiq” in “Epiq Nation” is of course another instance; and I also already noted the “100% TZ FLAVA” slogan on Kilimanjaro Beer bottles. The cool heterographic codes of Bongo Flava and its global sources of inspiration have become fully integrated into corporate marketing discourses.

With this under our belts, let us now turn to the languaging of Tanzanians on Facebook. Of course, the earlier observations on the spread and distribution of internet in Tanzania apply here as well: Facebook users are a small minority of predominantly young people from the more affluent middle classes, clustered in the urban centers of the country where they have access to the rather expensive

Internet provision. Let me now present some observations.

To start with, Facebook is obviously a tool by means of which young Tanzanians enter a fully globalized world of objects, commodities, meanings and values. Young Tanzanian males express very strong opinions in favor of or against international soccer teams, often from the British Premier League – Manchester United, Everton and Liverpool top the rankings there. Young women post top designer clothes and shoes on their Facebook walls, and several Tanzanians appear to be entirely *au fait* with the curious world of Internet ‘memes’. I noted a status update in which we encounter the so-called ‘Lolcatz’ – pictures of cats accompanied by (often heterographic) English statements, that have rapidly become one of the most popular Internet memes (“*Can I has cheezburger?*”). And Figure 6 shows how ‘funny animal’ pictures are used in Tanzanian as elsewhere to good effect:

FIGURE 6: Funny animals on Tanzanian Facebook

kwetu mbezi ipo hii saloon

HAPO KWA MASHOST MMEFUNIKWA NA NYANI KWA MITINDO



Delen



Billguy Dominic i hop na ww ndo unaponyowaga evrydy



[Vertaling bekijken](#)

Figure 6 already shows some of the intriguing linguistic features of Facebook in Tanzania, to which I can now turn. In general terms, of course, Facebook usage is a distinctly multilingual enterprise in Tanzania, and we can see various different varieties side by side on a kind of continuum with 'standard English' on one end and 'standard Swahili' on the other end. In between, we notice a wide variety of heterographic forms of languaging.

Let us first have a closer look at 'standard English'. It is not Her Majesty's variety which we encounter here, since 'standard' stands for what counts locally as

standard. A particular degree of fluency appears acceptable as 'standard', even if it contains odd syntactic or other forms. Thus we encounter examples such as:

"very girl has three guys in her life.the one she love.the one she hate and the one she can't live without..."

"They say in every successful man, there is a woman behind it.
Question: What is behind unseccessful men??"

"never to die unnoticed, nothng drops from air..... hardwork!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

'Standard' here is an aspirational description: people consciously try to write 'standard', as opposed to other forms.

These other English forms are by and large globally circulating heterographic signs, as we can see from the following examples:

"choose 2 be single is selfish its just smarter to be alone than with wrong person"

"..mornin guyz, ..on ma way 2 college!"

"am proud 2 b man u fan!"

"Gud mornin 2 al friend of myn"

"...ooh ma God help me!"

"Thank You"

"in da office"

We see a supervernacular here: the young Tanzanian Facebook users have absorbed the heterographic rules of a range of varieties of English that one now encounters all over the world and in a variety of channels. They have very clear ideas of the affordances offered by these heterographic scripts – they know, for instance, that "2" can stand for "to" and "too", they know that eye dialect is best done when it sounds 'black' ("ma God", "da office") and they know how to shorten orthographic forms by slotting in homophonic heterographic symbols, as in "Gud morning" ('good morning') and "myn" ('mine').

This supervernacularized English can of course be mixed with Swahili, yielding a variety in which almost every aspect of language usage is dislodged and blended:

“how?? watever botherin yu weka kando thats lyf ups nd down ni kawaida..” (‘Whatever is bothering you, set it aside, that is life, ups and downs, it’s normal’)

And Swahili itself can be turned into a heterographic code by using exactly the same affordances as the once we noticed in English. Thus, “2” can stand for the Swahili syllable “tu” in, for instance “wa2” (‘watu’, ‘people’), or to replace the first person plural marker “tu” as in “2ngoje” (‘tungoje’, ‘let’s wait’). The symbol “w” stands for “we” as in “ww” (‘wewe’, ‘you’), and “c” can replace “si” in e.g. “cc” (‘sisi’, ‘we’) and “cendi” (‘siendi’, ‘I’m not going’). Adding to this, we notice local idiosyncrasies – a ‘dialect’ of the supervernacular in the sense that the general rules of Supervernacularization are complemented with some local ones. Final syllables or vowels can be dropped from words, as in the following example:

“ulienda wapi ten ww any way 2ngoje but i wixh itakuw pouwa xan”

Orthographically transcribed, we would get something such as:

“ulienda wapi tena wewe; anyway, tungoje, but I wish itakuwa poa sana”

Apart from the switches into supervernacularized English, which we already pointed out, we also see a shift into urban slang, when the term ‘poa’ is used (written here as ‘pouwa’). Poa is the Dar es Salaam urban slang term for ‘cool’. Thus what our Facebook user writes here can be translated as:

“where did you go again, you? Anyway, let’s take it easy but I would like it to be very cool”

Such expressions are not necessarily reserved for exuberant language display; the heterographic forms are routinely used in mundane utterances and interactions; thus a young woman responds to the counsel of a friend as follows:

“..malez yak bora yananifany niwez kuish n wa2 w ain tofaut tofauti maishan”

In an orthographic rendering this would read:

“maelezo yake bora yananifanya niweze kuishi na watu wa aina tofauti tofauti maishani” (‘your excellent advice enables me to live with all sorts of different people in my life’).

And elsewhere we read: “Gud nyt pipo n nawatakia njoz njema!” – convertible as “good night people na nawatakia ndoto njema” (‘Good night people and I wish you wonderful dreams’). The heterographic code, thus, is an instrument for a wide variety of interactions.

Intense languaging, exploring the affordances and the limits of heterographic writing and blending standard and slang varieties of any origin – in short, assembling any and all useful resources in the construction of a register that

identifies the skillful Facebook user – the *wajanja wa kuperuzi* we encountered earlier. Facebook in Tanzania, as elsewhere, is a laboratory of new identity work, drawing on a range of semiotic means that can be ordered and re-ordered within the limits of communicability (cf. Wang & Varis 2011). While transferring messages and their contents – not necessarily devastatingly relevant contents, as in ‘gud nyt pipo’ – the Facebook users also display their semiotic skills and their fluency in the cool register that marks and distinguishes identities in this new medium. They are a community, and they have a language of their own. Not a stable one and neither a unified and uniform one, but a language nevertheless.

6.5. Who is the Tanzanian now?

In an exceptionally insightful ethnographic study, Sabrina Billings (2006; also 2009, 2011a,b) explored the language hierarchies that emerge in post-Ujamaa Tanzania in that archetypal global format of feminine competitiveness: the beauty pageant. Beauty pageants have entered Tanzania along with the free-market economy and commercial media, and they have been (and are) spectacularly successful events. This success goes hand in hand with controversy, and there has been perpetual debate over both the feminine aesthetics expected from contenders during these events, and the more specific aspects of presentation, dress and demeanor of candidates (see also Higgins 2009: 65-91). The format, as said, is a global template with a local accent: the contenders have to go through the routines we find in similar contests elsewhere in the world, and the winner will progress to the Miss World contest. Becoming Miss Tanzania, thus, is seen as a step-up towards competing for the crown at the global scale level.

Higgins shows how language creeps into this globalized pageant format and plays a decisive role in it. Apart from displaying their physical beauty, candidates also have to display intelligence and wit in an interview. They are asked whether they wish this interview to be conducted in Swahili or English, and the choice appears not to be one between equals: winners rather systematically opted for English as the medium for conveying their thoughts and views. Even more: English appears in such choices as an immediate pointer towards education, and girls produce English discourse modulated by school-based templates for speaking and arguing. Who speaks English *must* be educated, and a beauty queen should be well educated – that is the logic.

This logic is compelling and oppressive, because it opens a scale of judgment about the ‘quality’ of English in which candidates operate. English with a heavy Tanzanian accent is booted off stage, and Higgins recounts a dramatic scene in which the lead contender for the crown catastrophically mutilates her otherwise well-rehearsed English speech and loses the contest to a girl whose superior English fluency was an effect of years of education in the United States. The logic operates at two levels therefore: first, English is preferred over Swahili; and second, fluent and ‘international’ English is preferred over non-fluent and locally accented English. We move from ‘language’ to ‘register’ here: the *specific kind* of language is what tips the balance, and the contest between registers shows the

expansion and diversification of the sociolinguistic market in post-Ujamaa Tanzania.

We have seen this in the three vignettes presented in this chapter: Tanzanian society has moved from a monoglot and monocentric Swahili-dominated sociolinguistic system towards a heteroglossic and polycentric one, in which a wide range of norms dominate specific social niches for communicative practices and identity construction, all relatively sovereign in the sense that they are not controlled (or even controllable) from above. From a strong emphasis on language – *one* language – we have moved towards a complex system of crisscrossing and overlapping registers, and the language ideologies have been adjusted likewise. Following the development of this polyglot complex as the challenge for sociolinguistics in Tanzania and elsewhere.

This has consequences, and one clear consequence is that we have to relocate the nation-state as one scale among many in a polycentric environment. State ideology under Ujamaa was a hegemony aimed at a monoglot society. In post-Ujamaa Tanzania, state ideology is no more hegemonic and certainly not monoglot in target: it is itself now incorporated in global frames for being a modern neoliberal state, it has adopted the key indexicals of that identity frame for the state – the businesslike and managerial register we discussed in section 6.2. This new position of the state creates a vast space for the development of what we used to call ‘subcultures’ – consumerism, age peer group identities, new middle class identities, popular culture identities.

The problem with the term ‘subculture’, however, is that it presupposes one dominant or hegemonic ‘higher’ culture. This we had under Ujamaa: there was a clear vision of a single hegemonic culture in Tanzania, even if that dominance was an objective rather than a reality. In present-day Tanzania, the ‘higher’ culture, to the extent that we can identify it, probably consists of a set of global cultural and ideological templates that can be locally accented in a perpetual process of cultural production and reproduction. The ‘dominant’ culture, if you wish, is heteroglot and dynamic. From a monocentric model, Tanzania has moved to a polycentric model, and the continuous development of specific registers testifies to that.

So who is the Tanzanian? From an erstwhile singular definition, the *mwananchi* examined in chapter 2, we have moved to a pluriform and polycentric definition allowing for tremendous diversity and continuous patterns of (re-)categorization (Higgins 2007). These patterns of categorization draw on new forms of sociolinguistic order, as semiotic and communicative resources are being perpetually reshuffled in new practices of enregisterment.

Language purists, language planners and language educators tend to abhor such perpetual patterns of innovation and change: a Tanzanian professor of Swahili once barked to his son, in my presence, that the language used by the teenage boy *siyo Kiswahili* (‘is no Swahili’), repeating a responsive template which is probably universal and centuries old – the older generation being irritated about the fact that their children can’t speak properly anymore (the ‘complaints

culture' described by Milroy & Milroy 1985). But in spite of their best efforts, such language guardians and experts cannot stop or alter the direction of these elementary sociolinguistic processes.

The contemporary Tanzanian will still be recognizable by the common use of Swahili. This achievement of Ujamaa stands and will remain unshakeable as a sociolinguistic given. But the 'Swahili' that identifies Tanzanians appears in a thousand different shapes, some widely understandable and others understandable only among members of specific peer groups. This was probably always there; the previous chapter offered some early examples of this phenomenon. It was, however, for a long time hidden behind a wall of monoglot discourse on Swahili, which denied (and at least disqualified) sociolinguistic diversification in the terms we encountered in chapters 2 and 3.

As I argued in the first part of this book, it was this sociolinguistic differentiation that drove language planners and policy makers to despair and gave them the feeling that the Swahilization efforts had failed. I argued then, and repeat here, that they were in actual fact hugely successful, and that the problem encountered by the planners and policy makers was an effect of their monoglot language ideology and of the sociolinguistic expectations they extracted from it. Sociolinguistic realism shows a phenomenal success: a complex of linguistic and communicative resources we usually denote with the label of 'Swahili' has been made available and accessible to almost everyone in Tanzania. The fact that all these people adopt these resources and start doing unplanned and unscripted things with them, is a simple, a normal and a highly predictable sociolinguistic fact.

And it points towards massive success: if we wish to apply the otherwise rather useless term 'ethnolinguistic vitality' to contemporary Swahili, it is not uniformity that indexes such vitality; the vitality is manifest from precisely the dynamics of change and differentiation within Swahili. The plethora of newly emerging registers is proof beyond reasonable doubt that this complex of language resources has become part of the deep fabric of an entire society. Since this society is not uniform, it is only evident that its languages will be plural too – even if one singular umbrella term 'Swahili' is used for them.

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