

DAS DEUTSCH-SWAHILI WÖRTERBUCH: A JACK OF ALL TRADES

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1. Introduction

Deutsch-Swahili Wörterbuch is a bilingual German-Swahili Dictionary compiled by Karsten Legère and first published in 1990. Deutsch-Swahili Wörterbuch (DSW) is aimed at the German student of Swahili, and to a lesser degree the Swahili speakers, who are advanced learners of German. The former use the dictionary for encoding Swahili and to translate German texts into Swahili. The latter use it to decode German.

2. Layout of entries

The DSW has more than 15,000 entries (headwords). These are not marked by labels indicating their grammatical categories such as n(oun), v(erb) etc. German nouns are marked with their grammatical genders: masculine (m), feminine (f) and neuter (n). Plural inflections of nouns are not marked. The grammatical genders are very useful to the German learner. Equally useful to him or her would be the plural forms or inflections, which are missing in DSW. The Swahili equivalents of German nouns are marked with their plural morphemes or forms, an indicator that the German speaker, who is a Swahili learner, was the prime audience, and not the Swahili speaker. For example:

- 1) **Kabel** *n* waya (nyaya), kebo (-)
Kabine *f* (chumba (vyumba), *Schiff* kebini (-)
Kabinett *n* *Pl* Baraza la Mawaziri, *Zimmer* chumba (vyumba)
Kachel *f* kigae (vi-)
Kahn *m* mashua (-)
Kalkulation *f* makadirio *Pl*, makisio *Pl*
Kamel *n* ngamia (-)
Kamm *m* kitana (vi-); *großer* ~ chanuo (ma-)

The Swahili speaker would have been helped to encode German if the plural inflections or forms were indicated in the lemma as well, e.g. **Kabine** *f* (-n) ; **Kamm** *m*, (Kämme) ; **Kamel** *n* (-e) etc. This would simply indicate that the plural of **Kabine** is **Kabinen**, of **Kamm** is **Kämme**, and for **Kamel** is **Kamele**.

The verbs are marked whether they are transitive or intransitive by the labels *tr* and *intr* respectively. The grammatical category marker *v* or *vb* is regarded as redundant since *tr* and *intr* are only applicable to verbs. This is acceptable so long as the anticipated users are expected to be conversant with these terms.

- 2) **abbauen** *tr Gerüst u.ä.* -tengua; *Bergb* -chimba *od* -chimbua
abbeißen *tr* -mega *od* -menya
abfahren *intr* -ondoka; *tr wegschaffen* -peleka, safirisha
abflauen *intr* *Wind* -pungua

Other categories such as adjectives, adverbs, prepositions or conjunctions are unmarked except where an item functions in more than one grammatical category. For example:

- 3) **absichtlich** 1 *Adj* -a makusudi, 2 *Adv* [kwa] makusudi
allmählich 1 *Adj* taratibu, 2 *Adv* hatua kwa hatua
als 1 *Adv* kama, 2 *Konj* -po- -ki-
auf 1 *Adv* | ~und ab huku na huko, 2 *Präp* a) *Ort* juu ya kwenye b) *Zeit* | ~einen Monat mpaka *od* hadi mwezi ujao

A dictionary user wishing to check a grammatical category of an item would not be able to get this information on the spot and with one look. The reader is taken for granted here that he knows the morphological or syntactic characteristics of these forms or their definitions which are indicative of the grammatical category of an item. For example:

- 4) **absurd** -a upuuzi, a kuchekesha
abwechselnd kwa zamu, -a kubadilishikabadilishika
auch pia, vilevile
ausgezeichnet bora
aufmerksam -angalifu, -enye makini

3. Variation of spelling

Swahili equivalents of the German headwords have been at times written with variant spellings. For example:

- 5) **Kern** *m Phys* n[y]uk[i]lia (-), ~**energie** nishati ya kinuklia, ~**forschung** uchunguzi wa kinuklia
Klage *f Jur* mash[i]taka
Krampf *m* dege[dege] (-)
Apfel *m* tofa[h]a (ma-)
Arterie *f* a[r]teri (-)

This means that n[y]uk[i]lia = nuklia and nyukilia; mash[i]taka = mashtaka and mashitaka; dege[dege] = degedege and dege; tofa[h]a = tofaa and tofaha; and a[r]teri = ateri and arteri. The problem of variant spellings in the Swahili lexicon is apparent even in the Standard Swahili Dictionary (SSD) (TUKI 1981). However, this has to be corrected, because even in SSD the accepted orthography is known despite the redundancies in it. Rendering only the accepted form would help the Swahili learner to know the variant which is regarded as standard. For example **mashtaka** and **nuklia** are the accepted forms. The sub-entries of 'Kern': ~energie, ~forschung etc show only the accepted form **nuklia**. The same applies to the derivatives of 'Klage': **klagen** *intr Jur* peleka mashtaka; **Kläger** *m Jur* mshtakiwa (wa-)

Some phrasal equivalents of the headwords have optional elements put in square brackets. For example:

- 6) **Alarm** *m* [hali ya] tahadhari
Kilometerzähler *m* mita [ya gari]
Kino *n* [nyumba ya] sinema
Korken *m* kizibo [cha gome]

This implies that the user has the option of using the entire paraphrase for every headword or can omit the elements in the brackets. What is important here is whether the semantic content of the Swahili equivalent is equivocal to that of the headword with or without the elements in brackets or not. Of the absence of the bracketed elements does not affect the sense of the headword then the added elements are redundant. If the elements are necessary, then they do not have to be in brackets. What could be asked is, do the Swahili speakers say: "Ninakwenda **sinema**" or "Ninakwenda **nyumba ya sinema**", and "Ondoa **kizibo**" or "Ondoa **kizibo cha gome**"? It seems that the elements in the brackets are not necessary here. In the case of 'Kilometerzähler' the neologism *spidimeta* (speedmeter) could be understood more than *mita* or even *mita ya gari*.

4. Swahili equivalents

The Swahili equivalents of the entrywords in DSW are as expected in the one word forms. However some equivalents are in phrase or word group forms as in 'Kilometerzähler', 'Kino', 'Korken' etc. Moreover, other equivalents are in sentence forms and sometimes they are rather long.

- 7) **Amphibienfahrzeuge** *n* gari ya kijeshi iendayo ardhini na kuelea majini
Kamille *f* aina ya mti shamba wenye maua iitwayo camomile
Känguruh *n* mnyama wa Australia iitwayo kangaroo
Klarinette *f* ala ya kupuliza ya aina ya saksafoni ndogo iitwayo klarineti
Klee *m* mmea wenye majani iitwayo clover
Koproduction *f* *Film* picha ya sinema iliyopigwa od inayopigwa na wabia
Abschlußprüfung *f* mtihani wa kuhitimu shule ya msingi *od* mwaka wa masomo
alarmieren *tr* weka katika hali ya tahadhari

Most of these descriptions could be shortened and in some cases eliminated. Where Swahili had no equivalents, adoption or even coinage (based on Swahili phonology and word formation rules) could have been preferred to a long description. Since English is a more familiar foreign language to most Swahili speakers, the loanwords could come from this language as practiced in the dictionary. The source language should be indicated at the end of the entry. The equivalents for the above sample headwords could be as follows: **gari amfibia**, **kamomile**, **kangaroo**, **klarineti**, **klova**, **filamu ya ubia**, **mtihani wa mwisho**, **tahadharisha**.

Some headwords are defined in the form of 'definition in usage'

- 8) **abhelfen** *intr* | dem kann abgeholfen werden inawezekana kulitafutia dawa | dem ist abzuhelfen litafutiwe dawa
abkommen *intr* | vom Weg ~ acha njia
abraten *intr* | er rät uns von der Reise ab anatushauri tusifanye safari
abstimmen *intr* | über einen Vorschlag ~ piga kura juu ya pendekezo

kentlich/etwas ~ machen dhihirisha, tambulisha kitu
kleiden *tr* | das kleidet sie gut inamkaa vizuri
klip | ~ und klar bila kuficha
kommen | ~ und Gehen pirikapirika, pilikapilika (-)

This approach is very useful to language learners because it helps them in encoding. However, it does not give the meaning of individual lexical items. Moreover, we do not know if the given sample sentences cover all the instances the word is used in. Where this is the case, we would assume that the user looking up a word in the dictionary could find the typical sentence similar to that in which he found the word and hence get the meaning of the whole sentence. Function words or word groups which have fixed sense could be explained in this method, as in 'klip' above. Content words need their equivalents in the TL. For example: **abraten** *intr* -shauri (advise). Er rät uns von der Reise ab = anatushauri tuisafiri (He advised us not to travel)

Some equivalents are not precise enough for one to get the meaning of the headwords because they convey a slightly different meaning from that of the entrywords especially derivatives. Others lack semantic limiters that would restrict the sense of a lexeme.

- 9) **arbeiten** *intr* -enda
Husten *m* kukohoa, makohozi
Abgeordnete(r) *f(m)* mjumbe (wa-)
Konserve *f* kopo (ma-)
Koppelung *f* kuunganisha
Kosmetik *f* upambaji, urembaji

The translation of Swahili deverbal infinitive nouns into German is problematic. Should it take the *-ung* form, e.g. **Begleitung** *f* kusindikiza; **Trennung** *f* kutenga, kutenganisha; **Koppelung** *f* kuunganisha etc. or with the infinitive verbal noun, e.g. **Kraulen** *n* kuogelea kwa kurusha mikono; **Kommen** *n* kuja; **Können** *n* uwezo or kuweza? Should every item be taken on its own merit and be translated according to the sense denoted? Is **Koppelung** 'kuunganisha' (joining) 'kiungio' (joining object) or 'kiungo' (joint)? **Kosmetik** could better be explained by 'vipodozi'. 'Urembaji' and 'Upambaji' are too broad. They include beautifying a room with flowers or pictures, or even a person with beautiful clothes. **Husten** *n* is 'kikohozi' (caught) and **husten** *intr* 'kohoa' (to caught). 'Mjumbe' in **Abgeordneter** needs to be qualified, e.g. 'mjumbe wa baraza la wakilishi' (member of house of representatives). 'Mjumbe' (member) alone is not enough. 'Kopo' translated only as 'tin' is confusing. It needs to be qualified too.

5. Lexicographical metalanguage

A general dictionary avoids the use of linguistic codes as metalanguage even if they are explained in the front matter because they may be a handicap to an ordinary language user, who is not familiar with the language, e.g. *rel* for the Swahili relatives: -ye-, -yo-, -cho-, -lo-, -zo-, -ko-, -mo-, -po-, -o-, or *neg* for the negative forms ha- or si-. The use of the codes *rel* and *neg* in the definitions does not give the reader the meaning of the word if he/she is not informed of Swahili grammar.

- 10) **krankhaft** -si-, *rel* -a kawaida [unusual]
kurzsichtig *Med* -si- *rel* -ona vizuri [short-sighted]
Sand *m* mchanga (mi-) | *übertr* die Sache ist im ~ verlaufen -*neg* -fikia mbali
 -*neg* -fanika
Ahnung *f* | keine ~ haben von -*neg* -wa na habari ya *od* za [have no idea]

The user would have been helped if an actual word is used instead of *rel*, *neg*, -si- -wa etc. In the case of relatives, -o- should be taken as basic since all except -ye- have this element. Thus **krankhaft** -sio -a kawaida, **kurzsichtig** -sioona vizuri. The negatives could also be written in full, e.g. **Ahnung** | keine ~ haben von hakuwa/-siokuwa na habari.

Definitions should always be in complete sentences. Incomplete statements make it difficult for the reader to get the meaning of the headword because the user has to fill the missing words before he could retrieve the meaning of the item in the definition.

- 11) **anfliegen** *tr* *Flug* -karibia ... kwa ndege
ankleben *tr* -bandika ... kwa gundi
anküpfen *tr* -funga ... fundo
konservativ -enye kushikilia ... -a zamani
köpfen *tr* *Sport* -piga ... kwa kichwa
krönen *tr* -tia *od* -vika taji

It is difficult to mark the plural forms of open compound forms in Swahili because in most cases the two elements have plural markers and sometimes the markers of the two elements are different in form. In DSW only the plural marker of the first element is indicated:

- 12) **Kapazität** *f* fundi stadi (ma-) [i.e. mafundi stadi]
Kapelle *f* *Arch* kanisa dogo (ma-) [i.e. makanisa dogo]
Kandidat *m* *Wahl* mgombea uchaguzi (wa-) [i.e. wgombea uchaguzi]
Schädling *m* mnyama mharibifu
Sanitäter *m* mdaktari msaidizi (ma-) [i.e. madaktari msaidizi]
Ader *f* mshipa wa damu

The plural markers (ma-) and (wa-) put after the lexical item indicate that they are prefixed to the first elements, i.e. fundi stadi (ma-) = mafundi stadi; mgombea uchaguzi (wa-) = wgombea uchaguzi. The plural markers in these contexts do not create problems of encoding because the second elements do not take the plural marker, whether it is an adjective as 'stadi' or in a noun like 'uchaguzi'. On the other hand 'kanisa dogo' (ma-) = 'makanisa dogo' or 'daktari msaidizi' (ma-) = 'madaktari msaidizi' do not follow the same logic. The plural marker for 'mnyama mharibifu' (Schädling) and mshipa wa damu (Ader) seem to have been forgotten. The correct rendering of plural markers of open compound nouns that will take into account both elements of the lexical item where it is applicable, would be as follows:

- 13) **Kapazität** *f* fundi stadi (ma-) [i.e. mafundi stadi]
Kapelle *f* *Arch* kanisa dogo (ma-/ma-) [i.e. makanisa madogo]
Schädling *m* mnyama mharibifu (wa-/wa-) [i.e. wanyama wahaaribifu]
Sanitäter *m* mdaktari msaidizi (ma-/wa-) [i.e. madaktari wasaidizi]

The plural of the multi-lexical unit in Swahili is also rendered by the element preceding particle -a of a lexeme. This is not marked in DSW (cf Ader, Knöchel). This information is very important because in Swahili the element that precedes the linking -a is governed by the noun class of the preceding noun. The element changes if the noun class of the preceding noun changes. The same applies to nouns which become plural.

14) Singular	Plural
mshipa wa damu	mishipa ya damu
tabaka la madini	matabaka ya madini
kifundo cha mguu	vifundo vya miguu

It's obvious from the above examples that multi-lexical units with the particle -a require two features when they change into plural:

- I) The element preceding particle -a changes its form to correspond with the changing form of the plural noun: Cf mshipa **wa** damu and mishipa **ya** damu.
- II) The second noun that follows particle -a changes its form. (This is only applicable to nouns other than the noun of N class which do not have plural forms).

6. Conclusions

A bilingual dictionary is essentially expected to cater for users of both languages. In this case, both Germans wishing to encode Swahili, and Swahili speakers wanting to decode German would use this dictionary. The author of a bilingual dictionary should be aware of their needs and render them.

DSW is lacking some grammatical and semantic information which is very useful to both categories of users of the dictionary. Cf the missing plural forms of German nouns, misleading orthography of some Swahili nouns which are rendered in variant forms or confusing and sometimes incomplete plural forms as reflected in the multi-lexical units.

Despite the observed shortcomings, DSW is a good German-Swahili dictionary. It is the most elaborate and most up-to-date dictionary written in standard Swahili and incorporates modern Swahili words, both ordinary and specialized ones appearing in popular science literature. The dictionary includes also some illustrative examples which are useful for encoding language. DSW is therefore a dictionary that both a Swahili and German learner would be advised to buy and use.

James S. Mdee