

HOW DID SWAHILI EXPAND AS FAR AS EASTERN CONGO? AN ACCOUNT FROM ITS STRUCTURAL BASIS¹

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The expansion of Swahili into the inner portion of Africa has routinely been explained by researchers in terms of social and economic reasons, taking into account activities of Arab traders, expansion of Islam and/or Christianity, colonisation, development of mining in Shaba region and other such factors. No explanation currently exists to my knowledge that considers the structural reasons for the expansion of Swahili, which this paper seeks to address. Concerning the power relationship between Swahili and local (mostly Bantu) languages, Swahili is thought to be on the upper level and local languages are on the lower level. This is true because Swahili is used as a lingua franca over a wide area of different languages. With respect to lexical transfer, for example, most researchers state that lexical transfer occurs from Swahili to local languages, while ignoring the influence of the local language on Swahili. However, examination of Swahili and local languages spoken together in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo suggests that the transfer is bidirectional, and the transfer from local languages to Swahili is noteworthy. In fact, Swahili adopts elements of local languages to adapt itself to the local situation, making the language familiar to local people. This paper demonstrates this by explaining the parallelism of the tense/aspect system and kinship terminology of Congo Swahili and local languages (Tembo in particular) which differ from Standard Swahili.

1. Introduction: My experience in the Congo

The name Swahili originates from the plural Arabic noun for ‘coast’, *sawāḥil*. Swahili came into existence as a result of an extended process of contact between East African coastal people and Arabs as well as with Persians and Indians to a lesser extent (see Kihore 1976 and Nurse & Spear 1985, etc.).

Although Swahili is originally a coastal language, today, it is spoken not only in the coastal areas of Kenya and Tanzania but also in a wide area that spans up to the right bank of the Congo’s Lomami River, which is more than 1,000 km away from the Indian Ocean. However, it is important to note that Swahili is basically being spoken as a second or third language and

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especially as a lingua franca, whilst its native speakers make up a small number, centering around the coastal areas of the Indian Ocean.²

Socio-economic reasons for Swahili's expansion include: the penetration of Arab traders into the inner portion of the African continent, basing themselves in Zanzibar; the colonisation of European powers accompanied by Christianisation and the accumulation of workers (e.g. copper-mining labour in the Shaba region of the Congo)³. However, it is my opinion that the Swahili expansion cannot be explained by socio-economic reasons alone but language structure factors should also be taken into account, as we shall see below, factors which rarely appear to have been put forward as an explanation for it.

This paper aims to examine why Swahili, a language that originated in the East African coast, expanded as far as the inland area of the Congo from a structural basis, and concludes by proposing that Swahili has an external form and a bony framework, but it is very flexible and shapes itself by relying on and/or adopting structures of local languages.

I lived with the Batembo on the western shore of Lake Kivu in the South Kivu region of the Congo (then Zaïre) for 15 years (from 1976 to 1990). The Batembo speak Chitembo (JD531) on a daily basis, and in spite of their accent many speak fluent Swahili. The reason for this is discussed subsequently.

Education is considered as one reason. Swahili, which serves as a lingua franca in the area, was used as a medium of instruction in the first three years of primary school in the 1970s and 1980s (although this situation may have changed during the power transfer from the former Zaire to the present Congo in the 1990s). As a result, people became familiar with Swahili; however, it does not explain why those with none or little schooling background also speak Swahili.

A possible explanation for this can be the church which played a considerable role in spreading Swahili. The Congo is chiefly a Christian country. Thus, it is possible to find a church (especially Catholic, Protestant and Kimbanguist) even in remote rural areas. Missionaries preached not only in local languages but also in Swahili. The Swahili Bible was also used because vernacular versions were not available in many areas.

However, for many locals, Christianity is a sort of fashion, and Sunday Mass is a distraction for them. People did not necessarily learn Swahili by seriously reading the Bible. The question that then remains is: Why do they speak it so well? It is important to take into

² We have to add at the same time that recently a growing number of urban inhabitants begin to use Swahili as their first language.

³ For a discussion see Fabian (1986), Nurse & Spear (1985), etc.

consideration the high linguistic talent of many Africans in general. Africans are often multilingual. They learn languages either by speaking them or listening to them or both.

However, the situation must be different if the target language that they are trying to learn has nothing in common with their own language. In this case, Swahili, which was formed through interactions between Africans and Arabs, retains Bantu structures in its essence. The influences from Arabic, Persian, Indian languages and also English and French in relatively recent times are mainly in the lexical domain and not the grammatical one. Swahili in this sense is an African language, and more specifically, a Bantu language. The Tembo language which the Batembo speak is also a Bantu language.

This relatedness works advantageously for those (the Batembo, etc.) who speak Bantu languages. As the fundamental structures are the same, all that is required is lexical acquisition and some grammatical adjustments. The next section provides examples of these structures, as taken from the tense system of present, past and future, as well as kinship terminology.

2. Tense system

If people were familiar with only Standard Swahili, then they would be unaware that in the past tense of the language, the near past and the remote past are distinguished in many varieties of Swahili. In fact, this distinction is found in Congo Swahili as well as in a number of inland varieties of Swahili in Tanzania. The distinction is not only for the past tense, but also for the present and future tenses. It is indicated by the prefinal element *-ak-*.⁴

2.1 Near past and remote past

The past tense form in Standard Swahili, as well as the near past form and the remote past form in Congo Swahili and Tembo, can be shown with the example of the first person singular form. Standard Swahili is defined here as Swahili based on the Zanzibar dialect, and Congo Swahili as that spoken by the Tembo people of the western shore of Lake Kivu.⁵

⁴ The element *-ak-* is used in other varieties of Congo Swahili. See for example Kapanga (1993) for its use in Shaba Swahili.

⁵ Languages have varieties, and Congo Swahili is not an exception. The Congo Swahili spoken by the Tembo is taken here as representative of the South Kivu region varieties (where closely related languages such as Tembo, Shi, Havu, and Hunde are spoken). See also Bose (this volume).

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(1) Past in Standard Swahili

Nili(kw)enda.

ni-li-(kw)end-a⁶

1PER.SG.SBJ-PST-go-FIN⁷

‘I went’.

(2) Past in Congo Swahili

a. [near past]

Nilienda.

ni-li-end-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-PST-go-FIN

‘I went (recently)’.

b. [remote past]

Niliendaka.

ni-li-end-ak-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-PST-go-PREFIN-FIN

‘I went a long time ago’.

(3) Past in Tembo

a. [near past]

Naéndaa.

n-a-énd-a-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-NEAR.PST-go-PREFIN-FIN

‘I went (recently)’.

b. [remote past]

Náéndaa.

n-á-énd-a-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-REMOTE.PST-go-PREFIN-FIN

‘I went a long time ago’.

Standard Swahili does not distinguish between the near past and the remote past as exemplified in (1). The marker of past is *-li-* and comes after the subject prefix *ni-* (1SG). Congo Swahili, in contrast, has two past tenses, namely the near past and the remote past as indicated in (2a) and (2b), respectively.

The difference of these two pasts is created by the element *-ak-* which comes before the final vowel in the remote past. The near past form does not have this element. This element is termed *prefinal* in Bantu studies, and is known to indicate duration/repetition/habitude. It often has an emphatic meaning when combined with various tenses/aspects/moods such as imperative and negative, or it simply indicates the past tense. The shape becomes *-ak-*, *-ag-*, *-ang-* or *-a-* depending on the language (for its usages and forms, see Sebasoni 1967). In Congo, Swahili spoken by the Tembo uses *-ak-*, and Swahili spoken by the Shi, the Tembo’s

⁶ The radical meaning ‘to go’ is *-end-*. This verb normally takes the infinitive marker *kw-* (< *ku-*) in the past tense in Standard Swahili.

⁷ The abbreviations follow the Leipzig system. Other abbreviations are the following. FIN: Final vowel, PER: Person, PREFIN: Prefinal.

southern neighbours, uses *-ag-*. In this paper, the form *-ak-* is used as the prefinal in Congo Swahili following the Tembo usage.

This element *-ak-*, judging from its usage not only in the past tense but also in the present and futures tenses in Congo Swahili, as will be described below, may originally have indicated emphasis in Swahili. Using the example of the past tense, if someone is asked whether he/she went to Paris and if he/she answers ‘I went to Paris a long time ago’, emphasising that ‘I surely went to Paris’ brings forth the phrase ‘a long time ago’. This emphasis ‘a long time ago’ gives a meaning of remote past for the past tense. In contrast, the normal past form is taken as the near past. However, to indicate the remote past, the meaning does not necessarily need this *-ak-*; the normal, that is, near past form without *-ak-* can imply the remote past as well, depending on the context. This appears to indicate that *-ak-* still has the original emphatic meaning.

In either case, the distinction between the near past and the remote past in Congo Swahili is perfectly parallel to that in Tembo (compare examples 2-3). Although Tembo is not exactly the same as Congo Swahili in methods of expression, as its past tense uses a combination of the tense marker *-a-* (near past) or *-á-* (remote past) and the prefinal *-a-*, their contents are expressed similarly. This parallelism is seen not only between Congo Swahili and Tembo, but also in other Swahili-speaking areas.⁸

2.2 Near future and remote future

The distinction between the near future and the remote future is also made by the presence or absence of the prefinal *-ak-* in Congo Swahili. As this distinction is not seen in Standard Swahili, it could be that it directly reflects the distinction in local languages.

(4) Standard Swahili

[future]

Nita(kw)enda.

ni-ta-(kw)end-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-FUT-go-FIN

‘I will go’.

⁸ See Sebasoni (1967) and Nurse (2008) for a detailed discussion relating to the prefinal.

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(5) Congo Swahili

a. [near future]

Nitaenda.

ni-ta-end-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-FUT-go-FIN

‘I will go (shortly)’.

b. [remote future]

Nitaendaka.

ni-ta-end-ak-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-FUT-go-PREFIN-FIN

‘I will go later on’.

(6) Tembo

a. [near future]

Nyingaénda.

nyi-nga-énd-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-NEAR.FUT-go-FIN

‘I will go shortly’.

b. [remote future]

Nyikaénda.

nyi-ka-énd-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-REMOTE.FUT-go-FIN

‘I will go later on’.

The distinction between the near future and the remote future in Tembo is made by the tense marker *-nga-* (near future) and *-ka-* (remote future). In Congo Swahili, however, it is expressed consistently by the presence or absence of the prefinal *-ak-*. At this instance as well, the remote future may have arisen from the reaction to a question *Utaenda?* ‘Will you go?’ to which someone could have responded *Nitaendaka* ‘I will surely go’. Here, the emphasis is temporally projected toward the future and gives rise to the remote future. However, like the past tense, the near future form in Congo Swahili can be used for the future in general without differentiating the near future and the remote future, depending on the context.

2.3 Present progressive and present habitual

The difference between the present progressive and the present habitual is also expressed by the presence or absence of the prefinal *-ak-* in Congo Swahili. Standard Swahili has two present tense markers, namely *-na-* and *-a-* (and also two subject prefixes of the first person singular *ni-* and *n-* accordingly). Some textbooks state that *-na-* indicates the present progressive (present 1) and *-a-* the general present (present 2). Depending on the area and the speaker, the two forms are used similarly, but some use only one form, whereas some distinguish them either as the present progressive or the general present. In this case, there is variation even in Standard Swahili.⁹

⁹ For example, Perrott (1957) and Nakajima (2000) term the *-na-* tense “present” and the *-a-* tense “simple present”. Wilson (1985) uses “present continuous” for the *-na-* tense and “present indefinite” for the *-a-* tense. Komori (2009) says that *-na-* and *-a-* are used in the same way, only that the former is more common than the latter.

The general (habitual) present of Tembo is a combination of the two forms. The first element is an auxiliary which means the general (habitual) present, and the second element is the present progressive. Precisely, Tembo also has the general (habitual) present expressed in one verb form, that is, *ngénda* (< *n-génd-a*) ‘I usually (habitually) go’, using the radical *-génd-* ‘to go’. However, it is an old, fossilised form, which is not used in daily conversation today and is more commonly heard in proverbs. In this form the tense/aspect marker is zero, and the subject prefix is *n-* (in the case of the first person singular). The *n-* and the radical come into direct contact, creating a complex morphophonological alternation (zero and *g*, that is *-énd-* and *-génd-* in this case).

(7) Standard Swahili

[present]

Nina(kw)enda.

or

Na(kw)enda.

ni-na-(kw)end-a

n-a-(kw)end-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-PRS1-go-FIN

1PER.SG.SBJ-PRS2-go-FIN

‘I go, I am going’.

‘I go’.

(8) Congo Swahili

a. [present progressive]

b. [general (habitual) present]¹⁰*Ninaenda.*¹¹*Ninaendaka.*

ni-na-end-a

ni-na-end-ak-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-PRS-go-FIN

1PER.SG.SBJ-PRS1-go-PREFIN-FIN

‘I go, I am going’.

‘I surely (habitually) go’.

(9) Tembo

a. [present progressive]

b. [general (habitual) present]

*Náénda.**Néndé náénda.*

n-á-énd-a

n-éndé

n-á-énd-a

1PER.SG.SBJ-PRS-go-FIN

1PER.SG.SBJ-PRS.HAB 1PER.SG.SBJ-PRS-go-FIN

‘I am going’.

‘I surely (habitually) go’.

At this instance as well, the Congo Swahili makes the same distinction as Tembo even though the distinction is expressed in a different way.

¹⁰ The *hu-* form of habitual actions (such as *huenda* ‘I habitually go’, etc.) is not used in Congo Swahili.

¹¹ A colloquial form *mínaenda* (pronounced as [mínaénda] with accent on *mi-* ‘I’ in addition to the penultimate one) is commonly used in daily conversation.

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Therefore one may ask why the same distinction as Tembo is made in Congo Swahili, even though this distinction is lacking in Standard Swahili. The reason is that Tembo and Congo Swahili are spoken by the same group: the Tembo people. In Tembo thought and Tembo people's conceptualisation, there is a system of Tembo by the nature of things. They base themselves on, or are tinged with, this system when they speak foreign languages. This reduces the burden on speakers, and at the same time allows them to gain a better understanding of people from the area. This works especially in the case of languages such as Tembo and Swahili which belong to the same genealogy. If Swahili adopts such structures it becomes more intrinsically Bantu, and thus no linguistic problems arise. Interference of local languages may be less in areas where the influence of Standard Swahili is more constant. However, in an area such as the eastern part of the Congo where the influence of Standard Swahili is minor in everyday life, Swahili expands its sphere by referring its structure from local languages.

3. Kinship terms

Swahili has a kinship terminology, but the same words can have different meanings in Standard Swahili and Congo Swahili. The differences that have emerged between the two are largely due to Congo Swahili's adoption of translated expressions from local languages like Tembo which they commonly speak. Although it is not possible to systematically relate all the kinship terminology here,¹² this paper will highlight sibling terminology in particular which is not only considerably different in Standard Swahili as compared to Congo Swahili but also demonstrates that the expressions in Congo Swahili parallel those of Tembo. Examples from (10) to (13) are Tembo words for siblings, with the two forms listed indicating the singular (left) and the plural (right). These are followed by examples (14) to (17) in Congo Swahili.

(10) a. *múkulu wanyí, bákulu banyí*

1) my elder brother (Ego: masc.), 2) my elder sister (Ego: fem.)

b. *múkulu wau, bákulu bau*

1) your (sg.) elder brother (Ego: masc.), 2) your (sg.) elder sister (Ego: fem.)

c. *múkulu wai, bákulu bai*

1) his elder brother (Ego: masc.), 2) her elder sister (Ego: fem.)

¹² For details of Tembo kinship terms, see Kaji (1997).

- (11) a. *múlumuna wanyí, bálumuna banyí*
 1) my younger brother (Ego: masc.), 2) my younger sister (Ego: fem.)
 b. *múlumuna wau, bálumuna bau*
 1) your (sg.) younger brother (Ego: masc.), 2) your (sg.) younger sister (Ego: fem.)
 c. *múlumuna wai, bálumuna bai*
 1) his younger brother (Ego: masc.), 2) her younger sister (Ego: fem.)
- (12) a. *mwáli wetsu*,¹³ *báli betsu*
 my sister (Ego: masc.)
 b. *mwáli wenyu, báli benyu*
 your (sg.) sister (Ego: masc.)
 c. *mwáli wabu, báli babu*
 his sister (Ego: masc.)
- (13) a. *múshisha wetsu, báshisha betsu*
 my brother (Ego: fem.)
 b. *múshisha wenyu, báshisha benyu*
 your (sg.) brother (Ego: fem.)
 c. *múshisha wabu, báshisha babu*
 her brother (Ego: fem.)

In Tembo, possessive adjectives are normally used to indicate terms for close kin such as siblings and parents. Although terms referring to parents have no possessive adjectives, for example, *tatá* ‘my father’, *éhó* ‘your (sg.) father’, *éshe* ‘his/her father’, since these words convey the required meaning in themselves, terms referring to siblings need possessive adjectives (which come after the qualified noun and may cause tonal change in the noun).

One of the important characteristics of the Tembo kinship terms is that seniority is stringently enforced for siblings of the same sex as Ego, but no such distinction is made for siblings of the opposite sex. That is, if Ego is masculine, he has to distinguish between elder brothers and younger brothers (like in Japanese), but with respect to his sisters no such distinction is made and one word can be used for both elder sisters and younger sisters (like in English). Similarly, if Ego is feminine, siblings of the same sex, namely elder sisters and younger sisters, must be carefully distinguished, but for brothers only one word is used for both without distinction of seniority. See Figure 1 (in the Appendix) for the distinction of siblings in Japanese, English, Tembo and Congo Swahili.

¹³ Two pronunciations are possible for the singular, either *mwáli* or *mwáli* when followed by *wetsu* ‘our’, *wetsu* ‘your’ (pl.), or *wabu* ‘their’.

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In this respect, the same word is used for elder brothers and sisters (10), and the same word is used for younger brothers and sisters (11). However, no confusion arises regarding words that indicate elder brothers or elder sisters because *múkulu wanyí* (10a), for example, is used only by males to mean ‘elder brothers’, whereas this category is not present for female speakers, as both elder brothers and younger brothers are just brothers (13). If females use this term, it only means ‘elder sisters’. In fact, *múkulu wanyí* signifies ‘my senior’, and it does not specify the sex. The same goes for *múlumuna wanyí* (11a) which signifies ‘my junior’. It can designate both males and females.

Congo Swahili follows similar rules as the Tembo ones explained above. It is important to note that in the Tembo examples (12) and (13), the possessive adjectives *wetsu* ‘our’, *wenyu* ‘your (pl.)’ and *wabu* ‘their’ are used rather than *wanyí* ‘my’, *wau* ‘your (sg.)’ and *wai* ‘his/her’. This is because the word *mwáli* (sg.) and *báli* (pl.) means ‘daughter’ if qualified by possessive adjectives whose possessors are singular such as *my*, *your* (sg.) and *his/her* (in this sense, *mwáli wetsu* [sg.] and *báli betsu* [pl.] can literally mean ‘our daughter’). *Múshisha* can be treated in the same way, but this word is not used in other context except for kinship terminology. It is to be noted that the grammatical agreement between the head noun and the qualifying adjective tends to be neglected in Congo Swahili (*mukubwa yangu* rather than *mukubwa wangu* as seen in [14a]).

- (14) a. *mukubwa yangu, bakubwa yangu*
1) my elder brother (Ego: masc.), 2) my elder sister (Ego: fem.)
b. *mukubwa yako, bakubwa yako*
1) your (sg.) elder brother (Ego: masc.), 2) your (sg.) elder sister (Ego: fem.)
c. *mukubwa yake, bakubwa yake*
1) his elder brother (Ego: masc.), 2) her elder sister (Ego: fem.)
- (15) a. *mudogo yangu, badogo yangu*
1) my younger brother (Ego: masc.), 2) my younger sister (Ego: fem.)
b. *mudogo yako, badogo yako*
1) your (sg.) younger brother (Ego: masc.), 2) your younger sister (Ego: fem.)
c. *mudogo yake, badogo yake*
1) his younger brother (Ego: masc.), 2) her younger sister (Ego: fem.)
- (16) a. *dada yangu, badada yangu*
my sister (Ego: masc.)
b. *dada yako, badada yako*
your (sg.) sister (Ego: masc.)
c. *dada yake, badada yake*
his sister (Ego: masc.)

- (17) a. *kaka yangu, bakaka yangu*
 my brother (Ego: fem.)
 b. *kaka yako, bakaka yako*
 your (sg.) brother (Ego: fem.)
 c. *kaka yake, bakaka yake*
 her brother (Ego: fem.)

The word *kaka* means brothers in general and elder brothers in particular; it is used both by males and females in Standard Swahili. *Dada* is similar in that it means sisters in general and elder sisters in particular, and is used both by males and females in Standard Swahili. In Congo Swahili, in contrast, *kaka* is used exclusively by females to mean brothers, and *dada* is used exclusively by males to mean sisters. In sum, these words are used by calquing the Tembo series words of *múshisha wetsu* ‘my brother (Ego: fem.)’ and *mwáli wetsu* ‘my sister (Ego: masc.)’ respectively, and applied to Swahili. Further, the use of *mukubwa* ‘senior’ and *mudogo* ‘junior’ in Congo Swahili is a translation of the Tembo words of *múkulu* ‘senior’ and *múlumúná* ‘junior’.

A final point to add is that the expressions *mkubwa wangu* (sg.), *wakubwa wangu* (~*zangu*) (pl.) and *mdogo wangu* (sg.), *wadogo wangu* (~*zangu*) (pl.) are also used in Standard Swahili. However, the former means ‘elder brother or sister’ used by speakers of both genders, and the latter means ‘younger brother or sister’ used by speakers of both genders, whereas the sex of Ego does not matter as it does in Congo Swahili.

4. Concluding remarks

Much has been written about the influence of Swahili on each local language.¹⁴ Indeed, in Tembo, for example, ‘soap’ can only be expressed as *sabúni* (< Sw. *sabuni*), and ‘dish’ is *saháni* (< Sw. *sahani*). For a conjunction as simple as ‘but’, the Swahili word *lakini* is more frequently used in daily conversation than its genuine word *kasi*. Nevertheless, the influence of local languages on Swahili cannot be overlooked as this majorly explains the expansion of Swahili inland.

In this paper, expressions in Congo Swahili were shown to parallel those in Tembo in both examples of the past, future and present tenses, and the kinship terms for siblings which differed from those in Standard Swahili. These parallels are not limited to those specific domains. Congo Swahili also has similar elements in languages surrounding Tembo (for features of Congo Swahili of the Kivu region, see Kaji 1985).

¹⁴ See Batibo (1992), Mekacha (1993), Yoneda (1996, 2010), Kaji (2003) and the articles therein.

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Kinship terms are lexical, but constitute an entire system in themselves. As a case of individual words, the word *ndizi* can be cited. This word means ‘bananas’ in Standard Swahili, but it does not mean ‘bananas’ in Congo Swahili. It specifically designates ‘plantains.’ It is equal to the local word *múhábá* in Tembo or *múshábá* in Shi, both meaning ‘plantains.’ The other varieties of bananas have their own name, *mukandili* ‘beer-making banana,’ etc.

Banana beer is widely consumed in eastern Congo. It is called *kasíkisi* in Congo Swahili, Tembo and Hunde, Shi, etc., a word unknown in Standard Swahili. It is certain that this word came into Swahili from a vernacular language, since the accent does not fall on the antepenultimate syllable in Swahili. However, the language of origin cannot be specified because all the languages of the area have this word. This is a typical example. Each area has its own lexical items, and it can be argued that Swahili expanded its sphere adopting common features it encountered.

If such an uptake is too overwhelming the language may not be recognised as Swahili. However, this is not an area of concern. The head is *kichwa* (sg.), *vichwa* (pl.) in Congo Swahili and Standard Swahili.¹⁵ Also, the greeting ‘How are you?’ is *Habari gani?* in both varieties. People living 1,000 km away can communicate without a language barrier as long as they speak Swahili.

Differences become more pronounced with more recent borrowings. Swahili in French-speaking areas is apt to borrow from French, whilst Swahili in English-speaking areas tends to borrow from English. For example, a bus is *basi* (Eng. *bus* [bʌs]) in Tanzania, but in the Congo it is *bisi* (< Fr. *bus* [bys]). The office is *biró* (< Fr. *bureau* [byro]) in the Congo, and it is *ofisi* (or *afisi*) (< Eng. *office* [ʔfis]) in Tanzania. Swahili loans from Arabic, Persian and Indian languages along the East African coast in pre-modern times are already established and stable in Swahili. However, for more recent borrowings, their pronunciation and existence itself are more unstable. As Swahili has two sources to borrow from – English and French – it is necessary to take measures from both English- and French-speaking countries in order to not diminish the utility of Swahili,¹⁶ which has expanded over a wide area, grounding itself on the common features of local languages.

¹⁵ For the plural *bichwa* is often heard in Congo Swahili.

¹⁶ Concerning the relationship with English Petzell (2005) discusses borrowing and adaptation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) words in Swahili.

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Appendix:

Figure 1: Distinctions of siblings in Japanese, English, Tembo and Congo Swahili

	male	female
elder	<i>ani</i>	<i>ane</i>
younger	<i>otōto</i>	<i>imōto</i>

a. Japanese

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	male	female
elder		
younger	<i>brother</i>	<i>sister</i>

b. English

	male	female
elder	<i>múkulu</i> <i>wanyí</i> (T) <i>mukubwa</i> <i>yangu</i> (CS)	<i>mwáli</i> <i>wetsu</i> (T) <i>dada</i> <i>yangu</i> (CS)
younger	<i>múlumuna</i> <i>wanyí</i> (T) <i>mudogo</i> <i>yangu</i> (CS)	

c. Tembo (T: upper) and Congo Swahili (CS: lower)

	male	female
elder	<i>múshisha</i> <i>wetsu</i> (T)	<i>múkulu</i> <i>wanyí</i> (T) <i>mukubwa</i> <i>yangu</i> (CS)
younger	<i>kaka</i> <i>yangu</i> (CS)	<i>múlumuna</i> <i>wanyí</i> (T) <i>mudogo</i> <i>yangu</i> (CS)

d. Tembo (T: upper) and Congo Swahili (CS: lower)