

**ENGLISH AS THE DOMINANT FACTOR INFLUENCING LOCAL LANGUAGES' PECULIARITIES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF EAST AFRICAN COUNTRIES)**

***INGLÊS COMO O FATOR DOMINANTE QUE INFLUENÇA AS PECULIARIDADES DAS LÍNGUAS LOCAIS (NO EXEMPLO DE PAÍSES DO LESTE AFRICANO)***

***EL INGLÉS COMO FACTOR DOMINANTE QUE INFLUYE EN LAS PECULIARIDADES DE LOS IDIOMAS LOCALES (EN EL EJEMPLO DE LOS PAÍSES DE ÁFRICA ORIENTAL)***

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of the article is to identify actual language usage and attitudes towards local languages and English in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The article deals with the analyses of language situation's peculiarities in East Africa, with the English language domination process in various spheres of life: education, economy, politics, mass media. The author stresses that the linguistic diversity of East Africa is very rich: 67 living languages in Kenya, 44 living languages in Uganda and 125 living languages in Tanzania. The choice of language in education is considered to be crucial to literacy outcomes. The article deals with the analysis of data that was collected in the period of March 2018 - September 2019. The survey is based on the model of questions designed and developed by Schmied (1990,1991), M. Susanne and D. Ochieng (2017) and includes some additional questions created in Google Forms. The questionnaire is in English and consists of three parts: socio-demographic information, language usage and language attitudes. According to the results, language choice depends on the age of a person's interlocutor, more than a half of respondents switch from their mother tongue language into another language in everyday life, English is a reading language and is used less in listening and writing forms, loan words are used to fill in the linguistic lacunae of a language, the participants do not consider English as a replacement of the mother tongue language and admit that their life is closely related to English.

**KEYWORDS:** Language situation. Language usage. Survey. Participants. East Africa. Kenya. Tanzania. Uganda.

**RESUMO:** O objetivo do artigo é identificar o uso real da língua e as atitudes em relação às línguas locais e ao inglês no Quênia, Tanzânia e Uganda. O artigo trata da análise das

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*peculiaridades da situação linguística na África Oriental, do processo de dominação da língua inglesa em várias esferas da vida: educação, economia, política, meios de comunicação. O autor enfatiza que a diversidade linguística da África Oriental é muito rica: 67 línguas vivas no Quênia, 44 línguas vivas em Uganda e 125 línguas vivas na Tanzânia. A escolha do idioma na educação é considerada crucial para os resultados da alfabetização. O artigo trata da análise dos dados coletados no período de março de 2018 a setembro de 2019. A pesquisa é baseada no modelo de perguntas elaborado e desenvolvido por Schmied (1990,1991), M. Susanne e D. Ochieng (2017) e inclui algumas perguntas adicionais criadas no Formulários Google. O questionário é em inglês e consiste em três partes: informações sociodemográficas, uso da língua e atitudes da língua. De acordo com os resultados, a escolha do idioma depende da idade do interlocutor de uma pessoa, mais da metade dos entrevistados mudam de sua língua materna para outra língua no dia a dia, o inglês é uma língua de leitura e é menos usada para ouvir e escrever, palavras emprestadas são utilizadas para preencher lacunas linguísticas de uma língua, os participantes não consideram o inglês como substituto da língua materna e admitem que sua vida está intimamente ligada ao inglês.*

***PALAVRAS-CHAVE:*** *Situação da linguagem. Uso da linguagem. Pesquisa. Participantes. África Oriental. Quênia. Tanzânia. Uganda.*

***RESUMEN:*** *El propósito del artículo es identificar el uso real del idioma y las actitudes hacia los idiomas locales y el inglés en Kenia, Tanzania y Uganda. El artículo trata del análisis de las peculiaridades de la situación del idioma en África Oriental, con el proceso de dominación del idioma inglés en diversas esferas de la vida: educación, economía, política, medios de comunicación. El autor destaca que la diversidad lingüística de África Oriental es muy rica: 67 lenguas vivas en Kenia, 44 lenguas vivas en Uganda y 125 lenguas vivas en Tanzania. La elección del idioma en la educación se considera crucial para los resultados de la alfabetización. El artículo trata del análisis de los datos recopilados en el período de marzo de 2018 a septiembre de 2019. La encuesta se basa en el modelo de preguntas diseñado y desarrollado por Schmied (1990,1991), M. Susanne y D. Ochieng (2017) e incluye algunas preguntas adicionales creadas en Formularios de Google. El cuestionario está en inglés y consta de tres partes: información sociodemográfica, uso del idioma y actitudes lingüísticas. Según los resultados, la elección del idioma depende de la edad del interlocutor de una persona, más de la mitad de los encuestados cambian de su lengua materna a otro idioma en la vida cotidiana, el inglés es un idioma de lectura y se usa menos en las formas de escuchar y escribir, Las palabras prestadas se utilizan para llenar las lagunas lingüísticas de un idioma, los participantes no consideran el inglés como un reemplazo de la lengua materna y admiten que su vida está estrechamente relacionada con el inglés.*

***PALABRAS CLAVE:*** *Situación del idioma. Uso del idioma. Encuesta. Participantes. África Oriental. Kenia. Tanzania. Uganda.*

## **Introduction**

Since the 1930s, the term «language situation» has been widely used in the research works of linguists who have investigated and described the languages of Africa and Asia (FERGUSON, 1971).

The American linguist Charles A. Ferguson believes that the idea of the language situation is hidden in the configuration of language usage at a given time and place and includes data such as how many languages coexist on one territory and which languages are used in the analyzed region, as well as how many people speak these languages and what population's attitude towards languages is (FERGUSON, 1971).

In the research work, the language situation is considered as an interaction process between languages within countries, regions and republics that can be applied to multilingual speech communities in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The scholar of African languages and linguistics Herman M. Batibo in his book «Language Decline and Death in Africa: causes, consequences and challenges» suggests the following structure of the language situation in African countries: ex-colonial languages, dominant indigenous languages and minority languages (BATIBO, 2005).

According to a comprehensive reference work *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* that provides information and statistics for all of the world's known living languages, there are 67 living languages in Kenya, 44 living languages in Uganda and 125 living languages in Tanzania (Ethnologue Languages of the World). The following data proves the presence and use of two or more languages within a modern nation state (PAULSTON, 1994).

## **Methods.**

It should be noted that in the course of our research we decided to survey the East African population (from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) to determine the current language situation, as well as to clarify the attitude of the people towards English and local languages. The survey was created using the online service Google Forms, from March 24th, 2018, to September 11th, 2019. We based our survey on the research done by Susanne Mohr, a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the University of Bonn, and Dunlop Otieno Ochieng, Ph.D. in English Linguistics from Chemnitz University of Technology (SUSANNE MOHR, DUNLOP OTIENO OCHIENG 2017). The questions were written in English and consisted of three parts: socio-demographic information, language usage and language attitudes.

## **Results and Discussion**

The language map of Africa has undergone significant changes over the past centuries, it has many independent States. Therefore, it is still quite difficult to study the languages of

Africa, however, we can say, that the territory of the African continent has both mono-and multiethnic States (BAGHANA, GLEBOVA, 2018).

American linguist Joseph H. Greenberg presented a unified classification of African languages, which has the following four groups: Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan. The languages of all represented groups are found in East Africa.

The most significant language of the African continent is Swahili, which is the language of wider communication and is widely spoken in Eastern Africa today (BAGHANA, GLEBOVA, 2018).

Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are like most countries in East Africa extremely linguistically and culturally diverse which makes it possible to define it as an official language.

Claude Piron points out five methods on choosing an official language of the country:

- the use of a few «most popular» or «official» languages, with interpretation of oral exchanges and translation of documents (the *oligolingual* system);
- the language used by all ethnic groups, usually English (the *ethnolingual* system);
- the use of all the languages of participants, with interpretation and translation in all of them (the *omnilingual* system);
- the use of an «interlanguage», for example, an interethnic language that has never been the language of an analyzed group of people (the *interlingual* system);
- the use of the languages of all participants without interpretation and translation (PIRON, 2006).

Therefore, in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, the government ruled English to be an official language of the country (a neutral language). The given choice reduces the possibility of conflicts among the population of East Africa caused by ethnic and cultural wars and also does not convey an attitude of superiority of one local language over another.

There are 67 living languages in Kenya: 13 institutional, 33 developing, 15 vigorous, 1 is in the position to be endangered and 5 dying (ETHNOLOGUE LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD).

English and Kiswahili are the two official languages of the country. Kiswahili is linked to be used in trade and town life, English is associated with skilled jobs and refers to education and government and minority languages remain within families and traditional values.

The primary school curriculum has got literacy and language instruction in English and Kiswahili as well as instruction in a regional mother tongue.

The multilingual society provided necessary conditions for the development of a mixed code such as Sheng, an urban variety of Kenyan Swahili, which is very popular among young people. It comprises grammar and syntax from Kiswahili but includes other local languages as well. The historical development of the language is associated with the poverty of the population of Nairobi.

There are 125 living languages in Tanzania: 2 institutional, 20 developing, 58 vigorous, 39 in being endangered position and 6 dying (Ethnologue Languages of the World).

Considering this extreme multilingualism, institutional languages had to be chosen on a national level after independence. Kiswahili is a national language and lingua franca of the East African region and is used as a medium of instruction in primary education (MOHR, 2017).

English is associated with success and upward mobility. Although English is spoken by approximately 5% of the population (members of a higher social class) (TIBATEGEZA, 2010), it remains as the *de facto* national working language and medium of instruction in secondary and higher education. And again, the language choice of medium of instruction was made by the interests of the elite (KAMWANGAMALU, 2013).

Therefore, English can be regarded as an international language rather than a second language. The language that will never replace the African languages in Tanzania (SCHMIED, 1990; SCHMIED, 1991).

There are 44 living languages in Uganda: 6 institutional, 26 developing, 6 vigorous, 4 in trouble and 2 dying (Ethnologue Languages of the World).

The Bantu languages are spoken in the South and in the West, the Nilotic languages are spoken in the North, Central Sudanic languages are used in the North-West and the three Kuliak languages are spread in small islands along the north-eastern border with Kenya (NAMYALO, 2016). The language situation in Uganda is represented by the official language of the country – English, two dominant indigenous language – Kiswahili and Luganda and minority languages – Alur, Lugbara, Ruchiga/ Runyamkole, Lusoga, Rutooro/Runyoro, Lukenyi, Rukonjo, Lango, Lumasaaba and Teso (BATIBO, 2005).

As we can see the choice of language in education is considered to be crucial to literacy outcomes in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

It can be assumed that if children experience difficulties in learning in English, then this language should be replaced with their mother tongue language. However, it is not as

simple as it seems. We need to bear in mind that the use of two languages in the learning process can only make the situation worse. The students' mother tongue languages are completely different. Robina Keyyune believes that teachers can provide instruction in English using the concepts and knowledge that students have already mastered in their mother tongue language (KYEYUNE, 2003).

In the course of research work, there has been a special questionnaire that consists of three parts: socio-demographic information, language usage and language attitudes. According to the purpose of the survey, 63 people participated in it.

In the first part of the questionnaire which is devoted to the *socio-demographic information*, 62 people responded to the questions: 40 men and 22 women. The mean age was 30.2 the standard deviation was  $SD = 9.03$ .

It should be emphasized that 46 participants received higher education, 12 people graduated from college and 7 others graduated from high school. The participants' high educational level showed that the majority of the respondents are well-qualified workers among them one can find mental health nurse, Doctor of Medicine, software engineer, ICT assistant, Healthcare Management Consultant, teachers, IT Technician, University Professor of Linguistics and many others. There are some students and unemployed people. Some of the responders currently live in other countries such as the USA, Russia, England, Finland and Canada.

In the second part of the survey named *language usage*, the respondents were asked to indicate their mother tongue language. According to the results, 24,2% of participants reported using Kiswahili and another language, 21% indicated that they use only Kiswahili or they use only English and another language and 11,3% reported using Luganda. Thus, we can see that Kiswahili is the most frequently used mother tongue language in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This is confirmed by Schmied's views (1991) regarding Kiswahili as a national *lingua franca* in East Africa.

The research revealed that language choice depends on the age of a person's interlocutor. For example, local languages are mainly used to communicate with the older generation (grandparents); Kiswahili, English and another language are used with parents; English and another language are used with children and siblings. Besides, it is noted that the people in East Africa prefer to communicate with the locals by the use of their home language. The population of Tanzania and Kenya tend to use Kiswahili while people in Uganda speak Luganda. Moreover, one must take into consideration, if the speaker experiences the lack of lexical items in one of the languages or can't express himself in the

right way he will switch to another language whether it is official, national or local language of the country (English-Kiswahili, Kiswahili-English, Luganda-English or English-Luganda, Runyankole, Rukiga, Gikuyu, Kikamba, Luo).

Multilingualism in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda is confirmed by the fact that 54.8% of respondents always switch from their mother tongue language into another language in everyday life while 43.5% do it only a few times per day. Furthermore, 63.9% find it easier to speak English in everyday life. The reason why English dominates in everyday life is that most of the respondents started studying the language aged between three and six years, moreover, 3 people got acquainted with the language since birth and only some participants at the age of 18.

Focusing our attention on English usage in everyday life, we discover that the language is used in writing by the majority of 90.3%, in reading by the majority of 93.5% and in listening, including the radio and TV, by the majority of 88.7%. These results show that English is a reading language for respondents and is used less in listening form.

In reply to the following question *When do you usually resort to the help of English words (the words that do not exist in your language, so you use English ones)* it is revealed that English is certainly used in the areas of technology by 85.2% (lexical items like *the Internet, phone, computer*); in medicine by 49.2% (e.g. *doctor, aspirin*) and commonly used words by 31.1% (e.g. *hello, hi, thank you, good morning, how are you, great, cool, thanks, I love you, bye, welcome, hey, ok, nice weekend, football, actually, basically and anyway*). This is explained by the fact that most lexical items are borrowed due to globalization where English languages emerges as a global force. In this case, loan words are used to fill in the linguistic lacunae of a language in a foreign setting. Moreover, they are morphologically adapted to the language system (Baghana,2018). Therefore, it becomes impossible to live without the use of specific words, phrases and expressions.

In the third part of the survey named *language attitudes*, we discovered that 63,9% of the participants do not consider English as a replacement of the mother tongue language in their region. The results show, 95,2% of respondents do not want English to disappear from their country and 59,7% admit that they cannot imagine life without English.

According to the research work, 82,3% of the participants are proud of their mother tongue language and none of them answered *I wish I could not speak the mother tongue language at all*. 54,1% of participants are proud of being able to speak English, while 27,9% consider English being necessary and 9,8% state that English is required at work. Therefore, it is quite obvious that local languages are regarded as identity markers (Coetzee-Van, 2014)

while English serves as a mean for skilled jobs (Nakayiza, 2016). English represents one of the most enduring legacies of British colonialism (Mazrui, 1996). As already mentioned by J. Schmied, S. Mohr and D. Ochieng, our survey showed that English will never replace African languages and will remain an additional language in certain spheres in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, for example, the official one while in everyday life local languages will dominate (SCHMIED, 1991; MOHR, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

All in all, the given survey helped us to analyze the language situation in three East African countries, it raised further analyzed questions and perspectives for future studies. Linguistic diversity of these countries turned out to be a complicated question which demands profound research work.

All the participants of the questionnaire of the research work were highly educated so it was not difficult for them to read the survey's questions and respond in English. Therefore, it would be useful to translate the questionnaire in Kiswahili or any other local language to perceive a clear idea of the language situation in the following countries. By doing that the older generation could be interviewed since the mean age in the current survey was 30,2. Thus, considering these points, it is possible to obtain more detailed and accurate data in analyzing language situation and language attitudes in a multilingual society.

On this basis, one can hope that the government of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda will do its best to ensure that each language takes its proper place in the country. The authorities must be able to take control of the language situation in the countries, so that local languages and English can co-exist as a complement rather than replacement.

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