

ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGES IN NAIROBI

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Claims of a shift in attitudes toward indigenous, national and European languages in Africa have raised concerns of drastic language shift and consequent language death. In addition to these languages, certain African urban centers in recent decades have seen the birth of youth hybrid languages, which function as in-group markers, as well as tools for negotiating between the conflicting demands of tradition and modernity. In Nairobi Kenya, the youth language is known as *Sheng*. Attitudes toward *Sheng* as well as toward the indigenous, national and European language in Kenya are studied through survey research, examining difference between age groups, genders and socioeconomic classes. The data confirms claims of attitude shift. While English is the language gaining the strongest allegiance among the youth, Kenyans of all ages recognize the growing importance of *Sheng*. In the light of the history of similar languages, the positive attitudes of the youth toward *Sheng* can be considered a symptom of the gradual death of the indigenous languages.

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PREFACE

In a semester of study in Nairobi, Kenya, I encountered the reality of a progressing language shift, which is working to divide generations among Kenyans, even within families. This research project was inspired by the effect of and the opposition to that language shift within the Ng'ang'a family; it was made possible by Rebecca and Marie Ng'ang'a, and is dedicated to Tabitha Wambui Ng'ang'a (grandmother) and Tabitha Wambui Ng'ang'a (granddaughter).

1. Introduction

Claims of a shift in attitudes toward indigenous, national and European languages in Africa have raised concerns of drastic language shift and language death. African academics have in recent decades expressed alarm over the linguistic situation in Africa, and many point to the presence of the European languages as the primary threat to their own indigenous languages (Sonaiya 2003, Benjamin 1994, Katupha 1994). These ex-colonial languages are met with accusations of linguistic imperialism (Wa Thiong'o 1986) and psychological inefficiency (Oludhe-MacGoye 1995). But are these languages the most eminent threat to the indigenous languages of Africa?

My purpose in this paper is to demonstrate from original survey data that there is in fact a shift in language attitudes away from indigenous languages in Nairobi, and to explore how this attitude shift may be a predecessor to language shift. I review literature on the issues of language contact, shift and death. I examine the sociolinguistic history of Africa (in particular Kenya) highlighting the evolution of language attitudes among speakers of African languages. I then present a picture of the current sociolinguistic situation in Nairobi, and discuss the place of the youth language *Sheng* within the context of the many languages surrounding and (lexically, structurally) contributing to it. Finally, I turn to some original survey data regarding attitudes toward indigenous languages, national languages (Swahili), European languages (English) and *Sheng*, in an endeavor to better understand how the health of the indigenous languages may be affected by these other languages.

1.1. Language Contact

1.1.1. Language Maintenance

I begin by examining language contact. Winford (2003) names three possible responses of a speech community to a language contact situation: language maintenance, language shift, or the creation of a new language. When a speech community preserves its original primary language, with only small degrees of change due to the influence of the other language(s) involved, this is language maintenance. Linguistic borrowing and convergence are common linguistic strategies in such situations. Borrowing can range from casual (lexical items only) to intense (moderate structural borrowing). While borrowing can take place in even relatively homogenous speech communities of monolinguals, structural convergence typically occurs in multilingual communities. Convergence can also range from moderate to heavy, depending upon the type of contact involved, from mere geographical proximity to another speech community, to intense inter-community contact. Winford also discusses code switching as a language maintenance strategy, in which speakers alternate between the two or more languages within one conversation.

Of significance are genetically distinct languages in contact, where the matrix language is of one language family, and the embedded language is of an entirely different language family. The matrix language refers here to the primary language of the speakers engaged in borrowing or code switching, and the embedded is the secondary language from which they are borrowing. Typically borrowing is asymmetrical, in that it runs from the sociolinguistically dominant language to the other (Myers-Scotton 1992). As speakers acknowledge the dominance of the secondary language, they may actually begin to shift to that language as the matrix language of their borrowing and code switching. Code switching, with a shift in the matrix language,

promotes and also explains the process of language shift. Eventually, speakers may use the previous primary language only in code switching (Myers-Scotton 1992).

1.1.2. Language Shift and Death

Once a speech community has engaged in structural convergence and code switching, their language becomes vulnerable to language shift. Here, the primary language of the speakers is called the abandoned language, and the secondary language is the target language. In cases of heavy structural convergence, bilingualism among the speakers of the abandoned language is required over a significant period of time (Thomason & Kaufman 1988). Sasse (1992b) claims that every case of language shift is embedded in a bilingual situation. He describes the bilingual speaker as “the locus of language contact, interference and borrowing,” while the semi-speaker is the “locus of language decay” (Sasse 1992a, 60).

When a substantial portion of the bilingual community simultaneously switches its primary language from the abandoned language to the target language, and consequently switches its secondary language from the target language to the abandoned language, the process of primary language shift has begun (Sasse 1992b). Numerous cases have been recorded in which language shift was a result of “the pervasive addition or substitution of the grammar of another language in the code switching situation” (Myers–Scotton 1992, 33). Language shift, then, can be the result of extensive language contact, borrowing and code switching. This can ultimately end in language death. Thus, while Winford lists borrowing and code switching as mechanisms of language maintenance, they have also been described as mechanisms of language shift and death. “A language may not have lost features so much as it may have substituted them with those of the ‘invading language.’ . . . Thus, it is not language decay which kills a language,

but rather (a) among the semi-speakers, replacement at all levels, with the final blow represented by morphosyntactic replacement; and (b) among the fluent speakers, their own death” (Myers-Scotton 1992, 52).

According to Brezinger and Dimmendaal (1992), two levels are involved in language death: the environment (political, historical, economic, and linguistic) and the speech community (language use, attitudes and strategies). Changes within a speech community must be understood in terms of the coinciding changes in the environment. For example, Batibo (1992) speaks of “suicide death: the result of factors such as economic needs, natural catastrophes, acknowledgment of neighbor’s prestige or a mere strategy of integration” (Batibo 1992, 89).

When the invading language is the symbol of a higher standard of living, a speech community may seek to adopt that language in order to identify with the way of life that it indexes. Myers-Scotton discusses speakers who only use the dying language in code switching, where the matrix language is the invading language. These speakers probably see their identities as “better symbolized by the invading language” (Myers-Scotton 1992, 53). Eventually, if language loyalty to the dying language is lost, then code switching discontinues, and all that remains is the invading language.

1.1.3. Language Creation

Winford’s third possible outcome of language contact is the creation of a new language. Such a language can be classified as a pidgin, as a creole, or as a bilingual mixed language. Pidgins are highly reduced *langue franche* “that involve mutual accommodation and simplification; employed in restricted functions such as trade” (Winford 2003, 24). Creoles have similarities with both language maintenance and language shift “with grammars shaped by varying degrees

of superstrate and substrate influence, and vocabulary drawn mostly from the superstrate source” (2003, 24). Winford describes bilingual mixtures as being similar to language maintenance, incorporating large portions of the invading language into the preserved grammatical structure of the original primary language.

1.2. Bilingual Mixed Languages

What Winford calls bilingual mixed languages have been also labeled contact languages, mixed languages or bilingual mixtures, and are composed of linguistic material that cannot be traced back to a single source language, but “have genetic connections with two language families or branches” (Bakker & Mous 1994). Unlike pidgins and creoles, mixed languages must be created by a bilingual speech community, as large portions of material from each of the two (or more) source languages is implemented. Features from both are “adopted wholesale, without the kind of distortion that would occur in the absence of bilingualism” (Thomason 1996a 3). While mixed languages are not always regarded as “full fledged” languages, most researchers who compare them with instances of code switching or intense borrowing find a linguistic structural distinction (Bakker & Mous 1994).

1.2.1. Identity and Ethnicity

In addition to its communicative function, language also functions to mark its speakers as members of a particular group, or speech community. Fishman (1977) describes the symbolic nature of language, explaining that it serves to express or refer to something other than itself. In that process of symbolizing, language tends to become valued for its own sake. As members of one group compare themselves to members of other groups, they look for unique qualities of their own that will differentiate them from all other groups. Language varieties are a salient

means of establishing or confirming group identity. In a study of Welsh speakers, Bourhis and Giles (1977) found that members of the “in group” identified themselves as distinct from “out group” members by means of accent divergence. While for larger groups, language may become less important for self-identification, for groups speaking minority languages, language is always vital, since their languages face the threat of extinction, if not guarded jealously (Brezinger & Dimmendaal 1992, 4).

In particular, mixed languages serve as in-group languages, marking community solidarity and ethnic identity, rather than as *langue franche*. Mixed languages also signal in-group solidarity because they cannot be understood by outsiders. Some mixed languages have been described as “secret languages,” some as “hybrid” languages, and others as “youth languages.” What distinguishes these various mixed languages is not their linguistic characteristics, but rather their social functions, such as the manner in which their speakers make use of the language to mark their identity. For example *Callahuaya*, a “secret” language of Bolivia, is used by a group of special healers. Their “secret healing language,” sometimes called “the language of the Incas” is based on Quechua, with lexical contributions from Puquina (now extinct) and Tacana. Its secret nature contributes to the strength of the separate identity of the healers (Muysken 1994a).

In particular, language is important in marking ethnic identity (Legere 1992, 99). “It is precisely because language is so often taken as a biological inheritance that its association with ethnic paternity is both frequent and powerful. It is ‘acquired with the mother’s milk’” (Fishman 1977, 19). While many things can symbolize ethnicity, such as artifacts, food, and worship patterns, it is language that is held as the greatest symbol. Fishman claims that as long as there are human societies, there will be ethnicity, and as long as there is ethnicity, language will be its

symbol (1977, 42). In its role as ethnic symbol, language can be viewed as the carrier of culture, or even as the culture itself.

Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next. Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. (Wa Thiong'a 1986, 15).

Thomason (1996a) discusses mixed languages as an ethnicity marker in the case of the *Ma'a* language, spoken by the Mbugu, a group of people living in the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania. There are two varieties of this language, one which is Bantu-like (reflecting the language of their Pare neighbors) and one which has a Bantu grammar, but a Cushitic lexicon. This second variety was created by the Mbugu for the purpose of setting themselves apart from their neighbors (Mous 1994). The Mbugu were culturally conservative, and resisted complete assimilation into the culture of the Bantu around them. "What is truly unusual about the history of *Ma'a* is the combination of social factors that caused its speakers to carry out total restructuring of their language instead of simply shifting to Mbugu" (Thomason 1996b, 484). An attitude of loyalty to their own ethnicity and culture was instrumental in preventing a complete language shift.

The case of the *Ma'a* language has led Thomason and Kaufman (1988) to conclude that attitudes have very little predictive value. "We can say with confidence that the *Ma'a* language owes its spectacularly mixed structure to its speakers' refusal to acculturate completely to their Bantu-speaking milieu . . . but we could not have predicted in advance that some *Ma'a* clans would show this extreme cultural resistance while others simply shifted to Bantu." The authors

find language attitudes to be “as varied as the contact situations in which they are embedded” (Thomason & Kaufman 1988, 46).

However, a lack of predictive value does not indicate total insignificance. Other researchers have found an examination of language attitudes to be crucial for gaining insights into language choices and behaviors. “Patterns of language choice reflect language attitudes. Therefore, in cases of language shift, one has to investigate underlying changes in attitudes towards the languages involved” (Brezinger & Dimmendaal 1992, 4).

The importance of language attitudes stems from the manner in which language symbolizes and even assists in defining a speaker’s identity. “A man’s native speech is almost like his shadow, inseparable from his personality” (from the Report of the Calcutta University Mission in Westaway 1995). Ngugi wa Thiong’o, the infamous Kenyan writer, has said that “the choice of language and the use to which it is put is central to a people’s definition of themselves in relation to the entire universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century” (wa Thiong’o 1986 in Katupha 1994). The contending forces he alludes to here are those of tradition versus modernization, a tension which is discussed in much of post-colonial African literature and will be addressed in more detail later in this paper.

1.2.2. Secret Languages

As mentioned above, mixed languages can be described in various ways, including “secret,” “hybrid,” or “youth” languages, depending on the social function that they serve. Some minority language groups create mixed languages, which are classified as “secret languages” due to the manner in which these languages are used by speakers to keep their communication from the

surrounding ethnic groups. *Shelta* is a secret language, which was created by Irish Travellers, a group of itinerant craftsman and traders, formerly known as “Tinkers.” It is an in-group language, not intended to be understood by outsiders; its very existence was a secret until 1876, and today it is still largely hidden from outsiders. The separate identity of the Travellers, and a need for control in dealing with out groups were the reasons behind the creation of this language. *Shelta* speakers before 1800 were presumably bilingual in *Shelta* and Irish. Contact with English brought about borrowing. Code switching also seems to have played a role in the development of *Shelta*, but today the language is broadly regarded as distinct from Irish-English code switching. “It is no more comprehensible to people who know Irish or Scottish Gaelic in addition to English” (Grant 1995, 139).

Shelta seems to have undergone a shift in grammatical affiliations at some point, from Irish to English. Today only traces of the Irish morphosyntactic structures remain within a predominantly English grammar. The shift (in matrix language) from Irish to English took place during the overall language shift from Irish to English. To account for unknown elements in the language, researchers have proposed that *Shelta*’s matrix language has shifted twice: to English from Irish, and before that, to Irish from an unknown language. Thus, *Shelta* is an example of a resistance to total shift, but in the process of matrix language shifts, the original matrix language has been lost.

Another example of a secret language is found in the Gypsy language, *Angloromani*, spoken throughout Europe. The gypsies are a people of Indic descent who have migrated to Europe, and who originally spoke an Indo-Aryan language. Like *Shelta*, a primary function of *Angloromani* seems to be self-identification as a group member (Boretzky & Igla 1995). This language variety is a result of contact between Romani and English; while there has been actual

language shift to English, Romani vocabulary has been retained, to be used as a secret code. Essentially, it is a Romani lexicon with an English grammar, but as a language variety, it is unquestionably distinct from both English and Romani (Thomason & Kaufman 1988). By replacing the vanishing Romani structures with English ones, *Angloromani* speakers succeeded in preserving certain lexical elements of their original primary language, and avoided complete assimilation. Perhaps *Angloromani* speakers took this strategy because their goal was not to improve inner-group communication, but rather was to *not* be understood by outsiders (Boretzky & Iglá 1995).

These examples of secret languages illustrate the power of ethnic identity in language use. In these cases, in-group loyalty was strong enough to prevent total linguistic assimilation, and this resistance resulted in the creation of mixed languages. This prevention of total assimilation is the reason behind Winford's (2003) matching them with language maintenance. However, today the original contributing languages (for *Shelta* and *Angloromani*) are extinct, and only certain lexical and structural items remain. Overall, the language maintenance was minimal.

1.2.3. Hybrid Languages

Samper (2002) discusses the classification of "hybrid languages." Rather than merely retaining elements of the abandoned language by way of ethnic loyalty, a hybrid language intentionally embraces elements of the identities indexed by the two or more languages involved. Again, what distinguishes this language type from other mixed languages is not its linguistic, but rather socio-cultural characteristics. *Media Lengua*, a language spoken in Ecuador, could be categorized under this definition of hybrid. This language variety grew out of the urbanization of Quechua speakers, who could no longer identify with the Quechua culture, but remained unsettled in the

urban Spanish-speaking culture. They solved their dilemma by creating a new language, which bridged the gap between the identities represented by Quechua (traditional, rural) and Spanish (modern, urban). “Thus, it was not communicative needs that led to it, but rather expressive needs” (Muysken 1994b).

1.2.4. Youth Languages

Fishman describes the impact of mass culture – the entailment of a globalized media and marketplace - on ethnic loyalties. Mass culture has become antagonistic to “particularism and traditionalism” by standardizing products and homogenizing tastes (Fishman 1966b, 408). In today’s world, where mass culture is increasingly accessible, a shift in ethnic allegiance will normally take place in adolescence. “The adolescent period appears to be the juncture at which the impact of mass culture on ethnically-based language maintenance is most clearly felt” (Fishman 1966b, 409).

Fishman speaks of the development of an adolescent culture that relies on mass culture as a non-institutional transition between the values, patterns, behaviors and skills of the family, and those of “the middle class society.” Lacking in appreciation for the culture of their ethnicity, adolescents may achieve only semi-speaker status in their group’s language. This is the case among the young generation of many minority language groups today, such as the *Bondei* language in East Africa (Legere 1992, 109). As has been demonstrated earlier, semi-speakers are the locus of language decay.

Today there is an interesting linguistic development in urban centers in Africa. Young people, who identify with the values represented by mass culture rather than, or in addition to the culture of their parents, have been forging mixed languages similar in many ways to the secret

languages of *Shelta* and *Angloromani*, as well as the hybrid language *Media Lengua*. These youth languages serve as in-group markers, distinguishing their speakers, not from other ethnic groups, but from other generations. In Abidjan, *Nouchi* – based on a local French dialect – has developed. In Kinshasa, young people are speaking *Indoubil*, a variety based on Lingala. Johannesburg boasts two youth languages – *Tsotsitaal* and *Iscamtho*, based on Afrikaans and Zulu (Samper 2002). The youth language spoken in Cameroon is known as *Camfranglais* (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997). And finally, in Nairobi, Kenya, decades of language contact, widespread multilingualism, conflicting cultural pressures, and generational disputes have given birth to *Sheng*, a youth language based on Kiswahili, with many features from several indigenous Kenyan languages, as well as English.

Young Kenyans may be in a position similar to the young people of Ecuador who created *Media Lengua*. They do not identify with the culture of their parents, but are not fully identified with the English-speaking culture either. Rather than choosing one at the expense of the other, they have created their own hybrid culture, with *Sheng* as its symbol. Like *Shelta* and *Angloromani*, *Sheng* may be a symptom of the gradual deaths of the indigenous languages, if not even in some way responsible for those deaths. Young people abandon their mother tongues in order to identify with the *Sheng* culture, while retaining some of the linguistic features of the mother tongues to create a secret code. If they in turn abandon *Sheng* in their adulthood, it may be more expedient to shift to English, a language associated with high socio-economic status and prestige, rather than back to the half-forgotten mother tongue. Thus, *Sheng* may be acting as a catalyst away from indigenous languages, and toward English.

2. Sociolinguistic History

The key to our approach . . . is our conviction that the history of a language is a function of the history of its speakers, and not an independent phenomenon that can be thoroughly studied without reference to the social context in which it is embedded (Thomason & Kaufman 1988, 100).

2.1. East African Languages

Language death has been a reality all over the world, and all throughout history. For example, Gothic, Etruscan, Iberian, Sumerian, Hittite and Egyptian are all languages that are now extinct (Sasse 1992b). On the continent of Africa, there are countless cases of language shift and death. Some cases in East Africa alone include *Akie*, *Sonjo*, *Kwasi* and *Asax* - all languages that shifted to *Maasai*; *Kimbu*, *Konongo*, *Tongwe* - which shifted to *Nyamwezi*; *Mwera* and *Machinga* - which shifted to *Makonde*; and *Ongamo* and *Arusha* - which shifted to *Chagga* (Batibo 1992). However, despite centuries of contact and shift among the African languages, multilingualism prevails. In fact, multilingualism in Africa is so prevalent that Fardon (1994) has said “To put the matter at its boldest, multilingualism is the African lingua franca” (Fardon 1994, 4).

There are over forty distinct indigenous languages and dialects represented in Kenya, and these fall into three main language families. About 65% of Kenyans speak a Bantu language, 20% of Kenyans being *Kikuyu* speakers. Other major Bantu languages include *Embu*, *Kamba*, *Mijikenda*, *Luhya* and *Meru*. 30% are Nilotic, 14% of Kenyans being *Luo* speakers. *Kalenjin*, *Maasai*, *Samburu* and *Turkana* are also in the Nilotic family. The Cushitic family, mostly composed of *Somali* speakers, represents about 3% of the population. The remaining 2% are speakers of either European or Indian languages (Samper 2002).

The process of language shift in East Africa was relatively slow before the entrance of colonialism, and many point to colonial administration as the root of the linguistic frustrations Kenya faces today. “The contention started a hundred years ago when in 1884 the capitalist powers of Europe sat in Berlin and carved an entire continent with a multiplicity of peoples, cultures and languages into different colonies” (wa Thiong’o 1986, 4). The establishment of state boundaries did not take into account the languages of the African people. Thus, the Somali people are divided by the Kenya/ Somalia boarder, the Luhya people are divided by Kenya’s boarder with Uganda, the Maasai are divided by the boarder with Tanzania, and the Luo people are found in all three of these East African ex-colonies (Westaway 1995). Not only were language groups divided, but historically unrelated groups were artificially thrown together.

The colonial administration favored certain of the indigenous languages above others. The language of the *Luo* (also called “*Dholuo*”) was one of these favored ones. Rottland and Okombo (1992) discovered in their research that the three features of colonization in southwestern Kenya – administration, Western education, and Christianity - were consistently tied to knowledge of *Dholuo*. In an informal interview in the late 1970’s, one Kenyan man testified, “My father decided to become a Christian, to donate land for a school to be built upon, and to speak Dholuo in the family” (Rottland & Okombo 1992, 277). Such favoritism appears to have led some members of the “unfavored” groups into resentment and suspicion. For these reasons, since the founding of the Kenyan nation, the indigenous languages have been viewed with misgiving, as symbols or mechanisms of detrimental political solidarity along ethnic lines (Parkin 1974c).

2.2. National Languages: Swahili

Swahili is like a Nile perch. It is a delicacy, but it is swallowing all the smaller fish on its way (Batibo 1992, 93).

In Tanzania, the African language Swahili, rather than the European language English, made its way to the high position of official language. Processes of language shift have taken place in this East African country for centuries, and this linguistic assimilation often stemmed from a shift in ethnic identity (Legere 1992). The Swahili language has always enjoyed prestige in East Africa, due to the high economic status of its native speakers, coastal people who had migrated to the interior for trade, some time around 1780 (Gorman 1974a). Other ethnic groups on the coast wished to identify with Swahili culture and this shift in cultural allegiance encouraged the language shift (Batibo 1992). In addition, Swahili was one of those languages “favored” by the colonial administration (Legere 1992). Upon independence, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (Tanzania’s first president) predicted that the other ethnic languages would eventually be replaced by Swahili, “a natural and unregrettable development, since any good move has its side effects” (Nyerere in Batibo 1992, 93).

Missionaries from Europe made use of Swahili in their evangelistic literature and teaching. However, at some point these missionaries came to view the Swahili language and the Islamic culture as “two sides of the same coin.” For this reason, the linguistic status of Swahili was attacked, and the language was labeled a “hybrid” or “bastard language” (Mukuria 1995, 36), stemming from claims that it was the product of intermarriage between male Arabs and female Bantu speakers. These labels led to a widespread belief that Swahili was a pidgin, and that this status was inferior to the status of languages such as English. Research has revealed that the historical conditions in which a pidgin might arise did exist for many years, yet this evidence as well as the linguistic structures of the language today does not conclusively demonstrate pidgin status for Swahili (Nurse 1996). Today, its status as a Bantu language has been largely accepted based on empirical lexical and statistical data (Mukuria 1995).

However, in the interior of Kenya, where Swahili is now spoken as a lingua franca, there is some insecurity among its speakers, who recognize the “Standard Swahili,” as the variety spoken in the coastal areas, or Zanzibar. While this standard variety is no longer regarded by linguists as a pidgin, the variety spoken in the interior of Kenya is (Nurse 1996). Some Kenyans blame the lack of a consistent language policy for the pidginization of their Swahili. In 1964, Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya’s first president) surprised Kenyan legislators by addressing the House in Swahili and declaring it to be Kenya’s national language. However, subsequent attempts to make use of Swahili in Parliament failed, and the official language policy regarding Swahili remained ambiguous for decades. Today, use of Swahili in official communication is on the rise. “It co-exists with English in various official forms, e.g. applications for birth certificates, endorsements in passports, etc.” (Mukuria 1995, 42).

As opposed to Tanzania, where over 95% of the people are Bantu speakers, Kenya is linguistically heterogeneous. In addition to the numbers of non- Bantu speakers, Swahili in Kenya faces problems of modernization. Bloomaert (1994) believes that English will always be regarded as superior, as it is the source language from which new terms are introduced. Thus, English is viewed as the “fiercest enemy” of Swahili (Bloomaert 1994, 219), not only in Kenya, but in Tanzania as well (Westaway 1995).

2.3. European Languages: English

In Kenya, English has acquired such functional prominence that the question now is whether to consider it as “another people’s language,” or to regard it as just another Kenyan language.” (Kembo-Sure 1995, 69).

Europeans came to Africa with nationalistic ideals, prioritizing national integration, efficiency, and a united populace, and imposed these ideals upon the unprepared, traditional societies that

they encountered (Bloomaert 1994). While making use of some of the African languages (such as *Dholuo* and Swahili), the European powers typically instituted their own languages as the unifying, official languages. After independence, many African nations chose to retain the official use of the ex-colonial languages to avoid “tribalism,” and the elevation of any one of their own languages (van Binsbergen 1994). Other reasons for choosing the European languages as official languages include the interests of elite groups, the high costs and lack of accessibility of textbooks and curricula in indigenous languages, the prestigious status of the colonial languages, and their use as both international and trans-ethnic languages (Paulston 2003). The desire of young post-colonial nations was to institute a language as a symbol of the new nation’s “oneness,” and the fullness of their independence and nationhood (Elugbe 1994).

In his book, *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi wa Thiong’o describes one line of thinking among the Kenyan intellectuals of today. This group believes that the best (if not only) way for Kenya to develop and modernize is to lose its traditional African heritage and to adopt the traditions and ideologies (including the languages) of “the West” (wa Thiong’o 1986). However, many Kenyans object to this proposal. The European languages, such as English, are not merely disinterested languages of wider communication and education; they are symbols of colonial oppression in the minds of many Africans. While they are ethnically neutral, they suffer from an association with past abuses and cultural imperialism (Elugbe 1994, wa Thiong’o 1986). Sonaiya (2003), a Nigerian linguist uses terms such as “historical baggage” and “psychological burden” to describe the weight of English’s negative associations. Just decades ago, the ability to speak the European languages indicated the degradation of one’s own language, and the relinquishing of power into the hands of the exploiters (Katupha 1994, Benjamin 1994).

African authors and scholars are now regarding the ideal of monolingualism with skepticism. Bamgbose (1994) discusses two myths: 1) that multilingualism always divides; and 2) that monolingualism always unites. He discredits the first by pointing to the economic strength and unity of Switzerland (an officially trilingual nation), and discredits the second by pointing to certain struggling Arab-speaking countries. He concludes that the factors involved in economic development are deeper than simply the linguistic factors.

Perhaps multilingualism is not a problem, after all; perhaps it is a strength. Some authors have begun to look back to the indigenous languages, and to resent the current high position of English. "It is on behalf of these minority languages (and to a lesser extent, Kiswahili), that the teaching and use of English as a lingua franca is attacked by extremists as 'the language of foreign domination,' 'the language of oppression' and similar disparaging epithets" (Williams 1995, 141).

But most Kenyan authors do not intend to disparage the use of English. While they express a desire to uphold the good of the indigenous languages, they also see a place for English. "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it" (Chinua Achebe, in wa Thiong'o 1986, 6). Today, many books are being written and published in African languages (Chabal 1996). Some authors find hope in the literary history of English itself. "One wonders what would have happened to English literature, for instance, if writers like Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton had neglected English, and written in Latin and Greek simply because those classical languages were the cosmopolitan languages of their times" (Kariara 1995, 19).

One plan for incorporating both the indigenous languages and English into the lives of Africans is to view them in terms of spheres: an official sphere, for English, and a sphere of “identity” for the indigenous languages. Sonaiya (2003) describes the identity language as being the language of cultural self-expression and genuine interpersonal communication. It is the language that embodies the speaker’s ethnic identity. Sonaiya’s idea can be seen in the literary realm: “For centuries people all over Europe did their serious writing in Latin and their popular writing in the mother-tongue without reducing their fluency or power in either language” (Oludhe-Macgoye 1995, 45). It is also found in the educational realm. “Nzunga, a linguistics professor at the University of Nairobi, argues that there is room for all languages in Kenya because each has a specific function” (Samper 2002, 132).

Some scholars hope that eventually the African languages can become strong enough to take the place of the European languages in the official spheres (Katupha 1994). However, the majority propose a ‘psychological’ return to African languages and values, and not a complete ousting of modernity and Western culture. They believe that tradition is meant to help organize life, rather than to be a shield from the changing realities of life (van Doorne 1995). These scholars are seeking what Samper (2002) calls “hybridity.”

We reject the primacy of English literature and cultures. The aim, in short, should be to orientate ourselves towards placing Kenya, East Africa and then Africa in the center. All other things are to be considered in their relevance to our situation and their contribution towards understanding ourselves. . . . In suggesting this we are not rejecting other streams, especially the western stream. We are only clearly mapping out the directions and perspectives the study of culture and literature will inevitably take in an African university. (Anyumba, Liong & wa Thiong’o, in wa Thiong’o 1986, 94).

2.4. Educational realities

Since 1901, language-planning committees have debated on the issue of language education, while consistently designating English as the primary medium of instruction (Westaway 1995). Initially, the provision of educational facilities came by way of missionary work. These missionaries were diligent in translating and publishing selected indigenous languages, and were commended for their work by the Government Commission of 1919. However, the vast majority of indigenous languages never received instructional materials (Gorman 1974a). Thus, the indigenous languages could not be assigned as the medium of education “a role for which they were ill-adapted in the critical early years of schooling” (Westaway 1995, 3).

In 1967, the Ministry of Education ordered the production of teaching materials in the country’s major languages, encouraging the teaching of primary school children’s own languages (Hemphill 1974). However, today only about half of Kenya’s languages are represented in educational resources; and while the government officially encourages the use of indigenous languages in primary education, it unofficially discourages the use of those languages elsewhere, for fear of political agenda (Samper 2002).

In Tanzania, the German government established schools where future members of administrative service received their education in Swahili. However, in Kenya, there was a shortage of instructors who could teach Swahili, let alone employ it as the medium of instruction (Hemphill 1974). Some additional problems regarding Swahili as an educational medium include lack of a suitable syllabus and very little uniformity in Swahili courses across schools. This lack of uniformity resulted in yet another problem: a very wide range of Swahili proficiency levels of pupils entering the same classes. “Some . . . have no background at all. Others are conversant with ‘pidgin’ Swahili . . . and others speak Swahili as their mother tongue” (Gorman 1974c).

English faced similar problems: lack of trained teachers, lack of an organizing syllabus, and a range of attainment levels coming in to the schools. However, by the 1920's the acquisition of English was clearly a main incentive of Kenyan parents in sending their sons to school (Gorman 1974a). "The fact is that English is the most sought after language in this century and it will remain so almost certainly into the next" (Kembo-Sure 1995). This appeal has secured English's place as the medium of education in Kenya.

Among the complaints against English as the medium of instruction are the accusations of the young people who claim that the educational system is depriving them of their mother tongues, a complaint that Oludhe-MacGoye (1995) views as ridiculous. "Nowhere in the world do you originally go to school to learn your mother-tongue. Your parents and your grannies teach it to you" (Oludhe-MacGoye 1995, 47). Others complain that the students are not learning English well enough. Many authors worry that the standards of the English language in Kenya are falling (Westaway 1995, Samper 2002). Some blame Kenyan authors themselves for the falling standards. "Having read a number of books by minor Kenyan writers, I have concluded that they are partly responsible for the kind of English language used in Kenyan schools, which people have complained about year by year. The youths create their own English with their own semantics, punctuation and to some extent syntax" (Ogembo 1995, 96).

3. Present Situation of Kenyans

3.1. Nairobi

Historically speaking, Nairobi and other urban centers in East Africa were created for the purpose of connecting these regions with the global economy (Kurtz 1999). Ironically, today these cities remain essentially marginalized from the international scene. Post-colonial African cities face an economic crisis in which not only the economies of their countries as a whole, but also the majority of their individual citizens have been steadily losing ground (Chabal 1996). And yet, despite the lack of financial prospects found in these cities, urbanization is on the rise (O'Brien 1996). In Kenya, the population growth rate in urban centers is double that of the nation as a whole, and urbanization has become one of the nation's most important social phenomena (Kurtz 1999).

This importance is reflected in the Kenyan novel, where fascination with urbanization has become the defining characteristic. "The city is where Kenyan novelists regularly project both the obsessions and the fears of their society" (Kurtz 1999, 6). Kenyan novelists present a wide range of pictures of their cities, in particular Nairobi. Nairobi is portrayed as the "playground for the new generation of African entrepreneurs . . . where that same generation becomes embroiled in conflicts and power struggles . . . a melting pot for a new post-ethnic Kenyan paradise . . . the ultimate coming-of-age initiation rite . . . the site of betrayal and disillusionment . . . a place that will make you take your own life . . . dark and oppressive . . . where the lights burn bright and where a fast-thinking person can make a fortune . . . where flawed individuals struggle to make the best of it" (Kurtz 1999, 157).

Four main ethnic groups are represented in Nairobi: Kikuyu - 45%, Luhya - 15%, Luo - 15%, and Kamba - 14%. Werbner (1996) claims that ethnic identities are only a small fraction of

the many identities involved in the post-colonial politics of city life. Yet, Chabal (1996) finds Africans to be particularly “ethnic in their sense of identity,” describing ethnicity as the force behind the politics of African countries.

Parkin (1974b) defined the interchange between ethnic groups in terms of “dominance.” This dominance rests upon a combination of socio-economic, political and numerical factors (Parkin 1974a). He describes ethnic polarization as the result of an awareness that one’s personal ethnic identity, and the opportunities and powers (or lack thereof) that attach to that ethnicity, are unalterable. As has been seen earlier, language is a mechanism for designating ethnicity. Thus, the use of language in a multilingual community will likely be bound by many conflicting emotions, and will serve as an outlet for expressions of the tensions in social life (Whiteley 1974a).

3.2. Indexicality

One may condemn the local languages as encouraging tribalism or praise them as expressing the true spirit of African-ness; one may condemn Swahili as divorced from local culture or praise it as transcending tribalism; one may condemn English as a colonist language or praise it as making for the efficient operation of government services (Whiteley 1974a, 2).

In a multilingual community, the languages involved will acquire symbolic status. The literature is consistent in its analysis of the indexicality of the three languages used by Kenyans. The mother tongue is associated with traditional values, and lack of modernization and/or education. Swahili is associated with African urbanism, trade and blue-collar jobs. It dominates social interaction and is the language of national unity. But in comparison to English speakers, Swahili speakers are perceived as disadvantaged. English is associated with government service, the professions and high status jobs. It is the language of prestige and upward mobility. English

speakers are the “young, modern” Kenyans, the educated, clerical workers (Parkin 1977, Samper 2002, Whiteley 1974a, Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997).

A study of secondary school students in Kenya in 1969 found that many were trilingual, with proficiency in their mother tongue, Swahili and English, each of these three serving a distinct function. When asked to rank these languages in the order of importance for their own children to learn, the overwhelming response was 1) English, 2) Swahili, 3) Mother tongue. Today’s youth in Nairobi would represent the children raised under these values (Gorman 1974b), and the pattern of trilingualism has continued. The mother tongue is usually the first language learned, then Swahili and English are learned either at school or through social interaction (Samper 2002).

In Africa in general, for more personal settings, the mother tongue is used, while the European language is used for formal communication (Senanu 1995). For many years, in rural Kenya, proficiency in Swahili or English was evidence of education; thus these languages indexed exclusion and status reinforcement (Whiteley 1974b). In inter-group communication, English was often avoided in favor of Swahili, where grammatical errors were not ridiculed. Use of English, then, was typically avoided in intimate social interactions. This could explain the lack of a pidgin English in East Africa, in contrast to those of West Africa. There are, however, numerous pidgins of Swahili (Kembo-Sure 1995), and the language variety *Sheng* is also largely based on Swahili. Today English continues to be associated with school education and notions of correct grammar. “It is English and the school context which is by far the greatest divisive factor in relations” (Parkin 1977).

Kenyans of middle and high socio-economic status suffer from conflicting demands from kinship and tribal obligations on the one hand, and the expectations of their educational level and

economic class on the other (Parkin 1974c, Laitin & Eastman 1989). In light of these conflicting demands, many Kenyans appear to desire a stable multilingual situation where each language performs a predictable function that all members of the community can recognize and approve (Kembo-Sure 1995). However, the state elites themselves are divided in terms of language attitudes. Laitin & Eastman (1989) claim that it is this conflict of interests in the legal realms that prolongs the reign of English in an otherwise unwanted manner. Whatever the case, it is clear that no one language will meet all of the needs of today's Kenyans. A multilingual policy is in order.

3.3. Language Planning Issues

I have no policy to put up, but we must have a language policy. Languages can (I do not say they should) preserve the traditions of local culture without reaching out to every experience, every speaker of that language wishes to express (Oludhe-MacGoye 1995, 54).

The development of language policy in Kenya has taken place in three phases: 1) the arrival of missionaries and the onset of colonialism (1885); 2) the attainment of independence (1964 – 1982); and 3) developments from 1983 to the present (Mukuria 1995). Throughout these phases, the question of how to handle the vast numbers of indigenous languages has proven problematic. Yet the state's formal language policy failed to make provision for the language situation at the local level, which is the level at which development is realized (van Binsbergen, 1994). None of the indigenous languages has ever been an official language; thus all of them have suffered the disadvantages outlined by Afrikaans speakers at a time when Afrikaans was unofficial. These disadvantages include the fact that knowledge of the official language becomes a pre-requisite for appointment and promotion in state institutions; that the official language can become

irresistible in non-state institutions such as the church; that psychological pressure leads parents to prefer the official language for education; that demanding an unofficial language as a medium becomes meaningless, and that the state propagates negative attitudes toward the unofficial languages (Benjamin 1994).

3.3.1. Generational Tensions

Of the Kenyan schools that took place in an inquiry in 1968, 80% expressly discouraged the use of any language other than English in the school setting. Paradoxically, for students in rural areas, the use of English in the home was just as criminal (Gorman 1974b). Wa Thiong'o (1986) reminisces over times of punishment for using Kikuyu at school, such as "3 – 5 strokes of the cane on bare buttocks." Or perhaps the offender would be sentenced to carry a metal plate around the neck reading, "I AM STUPID" or "I AM A DONKEY." Thus, "the physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom" (wa Thiong'o 1986, 11, 9). *Decolonizing the Mind* is wa Thiong'o's exposition on the folly of the Kenyan insistence to venerate English. The book was written as his "farewell to English as a vehicle" for his writings (wa Thiong'o 1986, xiv). Other authors and scholars, such as Achebe, and van Doorne sympathized with wa Thiong'o's views, which spoke for the experiences of their generation.

However, studies such as Woods' (1995) indicate that the attitudes of today's African youth toward the European languages are losing their historically negative associations. Woods examined attitudes toward the three language types of mother tongue, national language, and French across age categories in the Congo. Younger subjects place more value on French and the national languages, while the older generations still valued the mother tongues. Woods suggests

that the increasing use of French and national languages among youth in the Congo will eventually result in a language shift away from the mother tongues.

Prazak (1999) also discovered a significant shift in the attitudes of youth, this time specifically in Kenya. “By and large, they do not wish to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors, and tend to speak of the ways of the past as inferior, outmoded and insufficient for success in today’s world” (Prazak 1999, 93). For the young, the traditions of the past appear to hold the “historical baggage” and associations with oppression that the European cultures hold in the eyes of their elders. Despite their distaste for much of traditional culture, the youth demonstrate a reluctance to completely abandon those values; thus their language attitudes appear to be characterized by confusion. “The youth of Nairobi, unlike their elders, often do not have well-defined attitudes toward the roles of the mother tongues, Swahili, and English, particularly in terms of their social and cultural functions. Elders and educators are perturbed by this development” (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997, 62).

In Kenya today, the youth account for a growing proportion of the total population. In 1995, 75% of the population was under the age of 25 (Kiragu 1995). Generational distinction has traditionally been a part of Kenyan culture. For example, in Kikuyu society, the behavior and status of each individual was determined by his or her family group, clan and age group. “The system of age-grading unites and solidifies the whole tribe in all its activities” (Kenyatta 1938). However, today there are additional factors working to separate the generations.

The grimmest of these factors is the problem of unemployment. Young Kenyans reach the height of the educational process only to discover that their skills are worth little, if anything. The Kenyan writer Meja Mwangi illustrates this dilemma through his partially autobiographical novel *Kill Me Quick*. Mwangi wrote this novel after graduating from school and failing to find

employment, in spite of his education (Kurtz 1999). Regarding the youth of West Africa, O'Brien has said, "Today's students compare themselves with preceding generations, those who could count on getting government jobs because of their degrees; they see themselves as an abandoned generation" (1996, 65). This same problem can be generalized to the situation in Kenya, where the inability to attain economic independence escalates the tension between the youth and their parents (Parkin 1977).

3.3.2. Conflicting Demands

In spite of their differences, one problem faced by both generations is that of the conflicting demands of tradition and modernity (mentioned above). Parkin (1974b) discusses two organizing principles in Nairobi social life: 1) ethnic affiliation, and 2) status-groups. Laitin and Eastman (1989) describe this same tension in terms of socioeconomic change versus in-group solidarity. "People tend to choose friends and neighbors with similar life styles to their own and so become involved in a web of mutually reinforcing expectations, some of which conflict with the alleged duties to follow members of ethnic groups and sub-groups" (Parkin 1974b).

Parkin argues that transactional conversations are critical speech events that reveal the ethnic and socio-economic status values determining language use in Nairobi. Three types of transactional conversations have emerged out of the conflict of the two social principles: 1) language use and interpretation of language choice affected by notions of socio-economic status; 2) language use affected by relationships of alliance or opposition; and 3) the "game" – in which language is used to resolve a logical contradiction between personal interests and ethnic group loyalties (Parkin 1974d). An example of the first might be the use of English to highlight the speaker's high level of education. An example of the second might be the use of a mother tongue

to indicate a political agenda. An example of the third would involve code switching between these two languages or more, in order to continue in the pursuit of their economic interests while maintaining a link to their ethnicity, or to maximize the power indexed by each language. “When code switching takes place, then different rights and obligations are implicated symbolizing different (social/ethnic) identities of the speakers” (Laitin & Eastman 1989, 54).

In Nairobi, using the wrong language at the wrong time has negative consequences. To begin a conversation in Swahili may be interpreted as a disregard for the hearer’s intelligence and level of education; but a shift to English may be interpreted as an assertion of social power. These problems are dealt with by means of code switching (Samper 2002). Thus, the function of code switching, in a multilingual community such as Nairobi, is to present an unmarked choice (Myers-Scotton 1992). “Language use and switching are convenient methods of succeeding in this strategy and of tempering conflicting role-expectations arising from this fundamental contradiction” (Parkin 1974d).

Thus, not only the vast numbers of languages involved, but also the tensions between the generations as well as the conflicting demands of tradition and modernity have hindered the enactment of a consistent language policy in Kenya. Many adults may deal with this quandary through code switching. The youth of Nairobi, however, have taken this unofficial solution to another level.

3.4. Sheng

In the ethnically diverse settings of urban Kenya, English, Swahili and the mother tongues interact in an intricate and unstable fashion, resulting in code switching and language mixing. Over time, these mixed codes have developed into a systematic pattern, which is now known as

Sheng. (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997). *Sheng* was born in the 1960's supplying the youth with a tool for negotiating an identity in the context of Kenya's complex linguistic situation. Some Kenyans have held their nation's lack of a strong language policy responsible for the development of this language variety. In Nairobi, Swahili, English and the mother tongues are all socially marked languages. Thus, a principle drive behind the creation of *Sheng* may indeed have been the need for an unmarked code in the void of an official solution (Samper 2002).

3.4.1. Linguistic Status

Identifying the linguistic category of *Sheng* has not been a simple task. "It does not wholly fall into any of the language varieties, jargon, slang, code, creole and pidgin. It incorporates qualities of each of these varieties or social styles of language" (Samper 2002, 126). As it is an unstable variety used primarily by the youth, many observers brush it off as merely an example of extensive slang. However, this category is not suitable, as slang is actually the individual words forming part of an utterance, and is not the entirety of the utterance itself (Samper 2002).

In some aspects, *Sheng* appears to have the status of a pidgin. Thomason and Kaufman (1988) have defined a pidgin in terms of a lack of mutual intelligibility between speakers of the pidgin and speakers of any of the source languages of that pidgin. There must be some degree of linguistic crystallization, and yet it must still be considered "nobody's native language" (Thomason & Kaufman 1988, 169). Certainly, *Sheng* exhibits all of these traits. However, Samper points out that pidgins develop where there is a lack of a common language among speakers. In Kenya, speakers of different mother tongues already have two options (Swahili and English) as *langue franche*. As in the cases of *Shelta* and *Angloromani*, *Sheng*'s primary function is social, rather than communicative (Samper 2002). It could be that *Sheng* so closely resembles

a pidgin because the Nairobi variety of Swahili that it is based upon has been largely pidginized (Nurse 1996, Mukuria 1995).

Thomason and Kaufman also discuss the creation of abrupt creoles, contact languages that rapidly stabilize beyond the functional and linguistic restrictions of a pidgin, although before this stabilization its status would have corresponded to a “prepidgin” stage. Samper believes that *Sheng* could someday possess creole status as more and more young Kenyans use *Sheng* with their offspring. “Not only is it becoming the lingua franca of today’s generation, *Sheng* is fast becoming the first language of Nairobi’s children” (Samper 2002, 5). However, he insists that today the label of creole does not yet apply.

Again, as in the cases of *Shelta* and *Angloromani*, *Sheng* speakers as well as close observers agree that *Sheng* is a very separate thing from code switching between English and Swahili, as it is unintelligible to English and Swahili speakers who do not speak *Sheng* (Samper 2002). So what is *Sheng*? It is a multilingual mixed language, which Samper classifies as “hybrid”: the intentional use of a mixed language to merge many identities into one. Prazak (1999) also recognizes this characteristic of intentional cultural integration among Kenyan youth. “They invoke their own power of agency to shape their individual lives and the transformational direction of their generation” (Prazak 1999, 93). The linguistic manifestation of this agency is *Sheng*.

3.4.2. Functions

Young people see three general values among *Sheng*’s attributes: it is unifying, it is anti-tribal, and it is secretive. *Sheng*’s utility in keeping information hidden from parents and teachers is commonly given as a reason for its prevalence, as is the case with *Shelta*, which is “positively

regarded for its cryptolectal and expressive function by its speakers” (Grant 1994, 139). Cases of secret code development for the specific purpose of peer identity have been observed elsewhere in Africa and other parts of the world where multilingualism is the norm such as in Cameroon, in the language variety *Camfranglish* (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997).

On the negative side, *Sheng* is an unwelcome language, for its association with the lower classes, for its supposed responsibility for causing young people to forget their culture, and for its alleged detrimental affect on young people’s English proficiency and final exam scores (Samper 2002, 166). These last two disadvantages were also true of *Shelta* speakers. “The Travellers made such a habit of speaking in their own language, that they could speak neither Irish nor English correctly” (Grant 1994, 143). Ogembo (1995) argues that the origin of the problem lies in the poor use of English employed by many Kenyan novelists. “It is therefore the argument of this paper that the gestation period of ‘Sheng’ could be traced back to some of the post-Ngugi fiction. It is scaring to imagine the impact that ‘Sheng’ will have on English in the future, now that it is being used for fiction-writing in the country” (Ogembo 1995, 103). Other investigators agree with this sad analysis of English’s “doom” in Kenya, pointing to the fact that many young people in Nairobi appear to be only partially competent in every language that they speak. As Thomason and Kaufman (1988) observed, it is in a partially bilingual group of language shifters that the greatest amount of language interference will occur.

3.4.3. Identity and Ethnicity

Sheng is a tool that allows individuals and collectives to think of themselves as cosmopolitan and less ‘tribal’ but at the same time maintain an ethnic consciousness because *Sheng*’s versatility allows individuals to add words and elements from ethnic languages (Samper 2002, 172).

As opposed to English and Swahili, which are still often considered foreign languages, *Sheng* is a language that Kenyan youth can call their own. “Not only does *Sheng* belong to them, but they, in a sense, belong to *Sheng*” (Samper 2002, 150). The urban youth of Nairobi are involved in what Samper calls an “identity project.” Various conflicting identities (ideas of how the youth should define and think of themselves in relation to the rest of the world) are presented to this generation, from the family, the church, the school and popular culture. This identity project first of all indicates a shift in ideologies in the definition of identity, from a traditional African (community based) to a Western (individual based) concept of self. The speaking of *Sheng* indexes some degree of opposition to tradition and rural Kenya, which is seen as representative of confinement and limitation. On the other hand, icons of popular culture, such as Mariah Carey, Jennifer Lopez, and the Fresh Prince represent for these young Kenyans an ideology of freedom and independence (Samper 2002).

Samper analyzes the two “culture brokers” of Nairobi - those responsible for the shaping of *Sheng*: *Manambas* and Kenyan rappers. The *Manambas*, young men who operate the public transportation vans called *matatus*, are considered the “master innovators of *Sheng*” (Samper 2002, 19). These are the people who give western commodities a local sign-value. They serve as mediators between the rural and the urban, between the local and the global. They take on the responsibility of interpreting Western culture into the Nairobi context. Like all youth cultures, Kenyan youth culture is consumer based. However, Kenyan youth are severely lacking in resources (as discussed earlier) and therefore must be creative and innovative in their identity construction. And so, the interpretive, meditative role of the *Manambas* is a crucial element in their lives (Samper 2002).

Kenyan rap artists, are those responsible for the negotiation between tradition and modernity. While *Manambas* look beyond Kenya's borders for explanations and philosophies of life, these musicians look to the heritage, traditions, and values of Kenya. They see the inclusion of culture and ethnicity in the construction of current Kenyan identity as one of their responsibilities. Groups such as GididGidi MajiMaji, Kang'ethe and Darlin' P warn young people that they are losing their ethnic identity to a foreign society, and accuse them of "aping the west" and voluntarily succumbing to a "slavery of the mind." These allegations are reminiscent of Sonaiya's (2003) concerns. However, these rappers often pronounce their 'mother tongue' lyrics with English phonology, betraying their lack of authentic knowledge of traditional culture. "The past they are attempting to reinvigorate is an imagined and, in many respects, a romanticized pre-colonial past which is nonetheless emotionally evocative" (Samper 2002, 21).

Looking back to the positive qualities attributed to it, *Sheng's* ability to bring a sense of inclusion into a community that cuts across economic, ethnic, educational and social boundaries is consistently praised. *Sheng* is regarded as being free of ethnic connotations, and unifies the young generation in an "imagined" global community, one that stretches beyond the Kenyan context. At the same time, *Sheng* allows for acknowledging a specifically Kenyan identity within that larger community. It "shows that urbanization does not necessarily entail the wholesale adoption of English and Western culture" (Samper 2002, 243).

Sheng indexes youth and youth culture. In the African urban context, many of the rites and ceremonies traditionally used for marking a generation have been neglected. Perhaps the significance of the age-grading system (Kenyatta 1938) is still felt by young Kenyans today, and they may turn to *Sheng* as the primary tool for defining their generation. While *Sheng* has existed in Nairobi for several generations now, its characteristic of constant change results in significant

distinctions between the generations of *Sheng* speakers. “*Sheng* is constantly changing, almost to the point where it is re-invented every day” (Samper 2002, 9). Samper illustrates this rapid change with an anecdote about a young Kenyan who, upon returning from a brief visit to her grandmother’s place outside of the city, was embarrassed to find that her knowledge of *Sheng* was already outdated! Those Kenyans who were fluent in the language ten years ago cannot communicate in the *Sheng* of today – unless they have made intentional efforts to keep up to date. However, in accordance with an observation made by Kiesling (2004) of the “adolescent peak,” Kenyans typically drop their *Sheng* use in their late twenties (Samper 2002, Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997). Because it is constantly changing, it provides a tool for young people to distinguish themselves from their parents; they see themselves as living in the present, while their parents continue in the past.

Young people regularly create new vocabulary and expressions for *Sheng*, and those who are particularly skillful in such innovations are highly regarded. “To demonstrate the inness and solidarity with the group the most significant contribution is to create new words” (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997, 62). This lexical creativity is a typical practice of secret languages, and also exists in *Shelta* and *Angloromani*. “The incoining of names for newly – introduced linguistic items can be indulged in as metalinguistic pastime [in *Shelta*], as is the case with *Angloromani*” (Grant 1995, 140). It is interesting to note that Patricia Echessa, a linguistics student at Kenyatta University, found that the process of constructing new words in *Sheng* was actually rule-governed (Samper 2002).

Traditionally, linguistic creativity has been valued in Kenyan society (van Doorne 1995, Ogembo 1995). In a discussion of oral literature, Waita (1995) speaks of the importance of creativity. “The artist is expected to use traditional material but to modify these materials to suit

the audience, the time, and place, as well as his or her artistic devices. . . . The creative process does not seek to dismantle tradition, but rather preserves traditions through creativity” (Waita 1995, 116). The mixing of *Sheng* with traditional elements and the extensive use of metaphor in Kenyan rap music is reminiscent of the devices used in oral literature.

While many authors and scholars lament the instability apparent in this creativity, Ogembo (1995) takes consolation in Chomsky’s statement: “The normal use of language is innovative in the sense that much of what we say in the course of normal language is entirely new, not a repetition of anything that we have heard before, and not even similar in pattern - . . . – to sentences or discourse that we have heard in the past” (Chomsky in Ogembo 1995, 103).

There are some differences between the indexicality of *Sheng* for men and for women. It has been observed that men tend to be heavier *Sheng* users than women. Samper (2002) argues that since *Sheng* is a source of interpersonal power for men, women’s comparative avoidance of it indicates their lack of power in Kenyan society. However, women also testify to the liberating quality of *Sheng*, as it can be a tool for imagining a life outside of Kenya’s patriarchal order. For a woman, knowing too much *Sheng* may mark her as sexually permissive, while not knowing any will mark her as rural and backwards (Samper 2002, 158).

Not only does *Sheng* use vary by age and gender, it also varies in place and situation. “It is primarily through *Sheng* that young people express their identity as part of a larger youth culture, or a smaller sub-culture group such as a resident of Kayole, one of Nairobi’s low-income estates, a member of a school’s football team, a student of a university, a tout, or a street boy,” all of which make use of a different *Sheng* variety (Samper 2002, 9). The four major varieties of *Sheng* have been described as *Maghetto*, *Mababi*, Deep and Basic. *Maghetto* is the variety that is Swahili accented and most widespread in the low-income estates. *Mababi* incorporates more

English and is used by the more highly educated, upper class youth. In the nineties, this variety was more commonly referred to as “Engsh” (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997). Thus, while most young Kenyans insist that *Sheng*’s unifying power is stronger than its power to divide, the language does index a class difference among its speakers. The presence or absence of ethnic languages in a speaker’s use of *Sheng* is also a strong social statement (Samper 2002).

“Deep” is an adjective used in reference to *Angloromani* and *Shelta*, as well as *Sheng* (Grant 1994, Boretzky & Iglá 1994, Samper 2002). In all three cases, it refers to a variety that is used by the most “in” of the in-group, and which is only comprehensible among themselves. It “means something like ‘employing a spoken style as far away as possible from the English basilect’” (Grant 1994, 140). In *Shelta*, use of the “deep” variety was not always appropriate, particularly at times when it was important to not give the impression of using a secret language. The same principle is true for *Sheng* speakers.

“Basic” *Sheng* is more like code switching between English and Swahili. Kenyans typically consider their English and Swahili to be somehow “inferior,” and particularly Kenyan in flavor. Thus, Samper sees the languages of Nairobi as falling into a continuum: Kenyan Swahili, to *Sheng/ Maghetto*, to *Engsh/ Mababi*, to Kenyan English. Viewing the linguistic situation from this perspective, it may be difficult to determine which is the cause and which is the effect. Has *Sheng* taken its unique form as a result of the quality of its source languages, or is *Sheng* actually responsible for the “corruption” (Samper 2002, 161) of those languages?

Perhaps we should withdraw from the debate over cause and effect, and look at *Sheng* as a symptom. As has been demonstrated throughout this paper, the parallels between *Sheng* and the secret languages of *Shelta* and *Angloromani* are numerous. Many of the historical realities involved in the creation and development of these two languages are unknown today. We cannot

know if *Shelta* and *Angloromani* were the heroes of some degree of linguistic preservation, or were active agents in the deaths of their contributing languages. What we do know is that in both cases, language death was involved - there are languages that contributed to their structure and lexicon that no longer exist today. In the same way, it is difficult to determine whether or not *Sheng* is “a solution or a threat” within the linguistic situation in Kenya. But in light of the sociolinguistic history of other secret mixed languages, we must recognize *Sheng* as a symptom (if nothing else) of potential language death.

We turn now to examine survey data regarding the attitudes across age groups, gender and economic class toward languages in Nairobi. While writers such as Abdulaziz and Osinde (1997) and Samper (2002) have made reference to the existence of a shift in language attitudes, their works provide no statistical data. The data gleaned from these surveys will serve to confirm their claims.

4. The Study

In 1995, Woods performed a study of language attitudes across age groups in the Congo through survey research. His survey questions were designed to examine attitudes in the areas of behavioral choices, evaluations, and beliefs. Under behavioral choices, respondents were asked to answer questions regarding language preference for listening to radio news, for expressing anger and for meeting a new person of the opposite sex. Under evaluations, the questions involved deciding which language was the most beautiful, the most intelligent, the most trustworthy and the most friendly. Under beliefs, respondents were asked for their opinions on which language was the most important in the past, in the present and in the future. This section also included questions regarding the president's language use, a local leader's language use, and the appropriateness of one common language.

The languages involved in Woods' study fall under three categories: European language (French), national languages (Lingala and Munukutuba), and mother tongues, of which there are about fifty in the Congo. The data from this survey research revealed a pattern of attitude shift across age groups toward the three language types. Older respondents demonstrated more value for the mother tongues, while younger respondents demonstrated more value for French and the national languages. From this pattern, Woods predicts a language shift away from the mother tongues in the Congo.

4.1. Data collection

Woods' survey questions were adapted (with his permission) for use in a similar study in Nairobi, Kenya. Questions #1 - #3 reflect behavioral choices, #4 - #7 deal with language evaluation, #8 - #10 involve beliefs about language importance, and #11 - #14 are concerned

with beliefs about public language (See Appendix A). In addition to Woods' survey questions, the questionnaires in the present study requested demographic information including age, gender, place of residence, and mother tongue. Responses from subjects indicating an age between 18-29 were grouped in the category "young," and responses from subjects indicating an age of 30 or older were grouped in the category "old." Thirty was chosen as the cut-off age due to observations that many Kenyans change in their language use in their late twenties (Samper 2002, Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997). As has been discussed above, gender also plays a role in language use, males being heavier *Sheng* users than females (Samper 2002). To verify this distinction, respondents were asked to indicate gender. Subjects were also requested to indicate their mother tongue, to maintain a distinction between the four languages types: to be sure that no respondent considered English, Swahili or *Sheng* to be their mother tongue, thus creating an overlap in the analysis.

"Place of residence" has been mentioned in the literature as a consistent marker of socioeconomic status, which is another significant variable in language use in Kenya (Parkin 1974b). Kenyans from housing estates in the "Westlands" of Nairobi are of higher socioeconomic class and have been observed to make less use of *Sheng* and more use of English. Kenyans from the "Eastlands" represent the lower to middle socioeconomic classes and are described as the more regular *Sheng* speakers (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997, Samper 2002). For this study, a Daystar student and permanent resident of Nairobi sorted the indicated housing estates into upper class, and lower to middle class estates, which I will refer to as "Westlands" and "Eastlands" respectively. (See Appendix B for the list of estates under these categories.)

Questionnaires were administered to two groups of Kenyans, all found on the Athi River campus of Daystar University in Kenya, in the Fall semester of 2005. This site was chosen

because of accessibility to a large sample, and because of the diversity represented in that sample. Daystar students represent both age groups, both genders, both residential areas and a wide range of mother tongues.

The first group represents the younger segment of the population and was composed of students between the ages of 18 and 29. Questionnaires were administered in the classrooms of Professor Rebecca Ng'ang'a, a professor of Cross Cultural Communications at Daystar University. The second group represents the older segment of the Kenyan population, consisting of respondents age 30 and over. Subjects for this second group were recruited by a Daystar student and were given a small financial incentive upon completing the questionnaire.

According to the suggestion of a group of Daystar University students who reviewed Woods' questionnaire, one minor change was made in the wording of his fourth question: the word "beautiful" was replaced with the word "poetic." Thus, the question reads, "Which language do you find most poetic?" In addition to the three language types Woods found in the Congo, Kenyans are dealing with a fourth type – the youth language, *Sheng*. Thus, in the present study, respondents had four, rather than three, language types to select from in their responses. (See Appendix A for final draft of the questionnaire.)

4.2. Results

A total of 125 questionnaires were collected. Five questionnaires were removed from the analysis, because these respondents were either international students, or were not residents of Nairobi. A sixth questionnaire was removed because the respondent indicated that her mother tongue was English. 76 of the indicated estates fit into the category of upper-class ("Westlands") or lower to middle-class ("Eastlands"). The remaining responses either failed to indicate an

estate of residence, or the indicated estate did not clearly fall into either of these categories. Thus a total of 119 questionnaires were used in the analysis of gender and age, and 76 were used in the analysis of economic class. 78 (65%) represent the young age group and 41 (35%) represent the old age group. A total of 30 (25%) respondents are male, while 89 (75%) are female. 22 (30%) are residents of “Westlands” estates, and 54 (70%) are residents of “Eastlands” estates.

The results are summarized in four tables, displaying the total percentages (Table 1), the comparison of percentages across age (Table 2), the comparison across gender (Table 4), and finally the comparison across economic class (Table 6). (Additional tables, examining interaction between the three variables, are found in Appendix C). If a respondent circled more than one language in response to any question, the one to the farthest left was the only one counted in the analysis. If no language was indicated in response to any question, the response was entered under the category “blank.” Patterns of multiple language choices or no language choice are reviewed in the *Discussion*. The number in parenthesis shows the number of actual selections under each language category.

A chi square test was administered; examining frequencies of selection across the first twelve survey questions from each group (age, gender, class) toward each language type. Alpha was set at 0.01, with a critical value of 6.6349. The results of these tests are displayed under the correlating tables. Line graphs are presented in the *Discussion*, for results in categories indicating significant attitude difference.

Table 1: Totals of Language Selections Across All Categories

119 completed questionnaires

	MT	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank
Radio (1)	(10) 8%	(12) 10%	(92) 78%	(5) 4%	(0) 0%
Anger (2)	(34) 28%	(19) 16%	(51) 43%	(15) 13%	(0) 0%
Meet (3)	(7) 6%	(12) 10%	(86) 72%	(14) 12%	(0) 0%
Poetic (4)	(26) 22%	(39) 33%	(45) 38%	(8) 7%	(1) 1%
Intel. (5)	(37) 31%	(19) 15%	(56) 47%	(1) 1%	(6) 5%
Trust (6)	(68) 57%	(10) 9%	(37) 31%	(3) 2%	(1) 1%
Friend (7)	(44) 37%	(28) 24%	(27) 23%	(19) 16%	(1) 1%
Past (8)	(47) 40%	(53) 44%	(13) 11%	(0) 0%	(6) 5%
Today (9)	(0) 0%	(24) 20%	(78) 65%	(13) 11%	(4) 3%
Fut. (10)	(4) 3%	(14) 12%	(55) 47%	(42) 35%	(4) 3%
Pres. (11)	(0) 0%	(102) 85%	(11) 9%	(2) 2%	(4) 3%
Local (12)	(71) 60%	(42) 35%	(1) 1%	(2) 2%	(3) 3%
		YES	NO		
(13)		(44) 37%	(72) 61%		(3) 2%
Com (14)	(1) 2%	(33) 75%	(8) 18%	(2) 5%	

4.2.1. Age

In the first three behavioral choice questions (Table 2, #1-3), the youth demonstrate a consistent preference for English, which they share with their elders in the language for radio news and for making an acquaintance of the opposite sex. However, there is a divergence of opinion on the language choice for expression of anger. While exactly half of the young people prefer English, over 60% of the older generation prefers the mother tongue. Mother tongue is the last choice in this area for the youth, with Swahili and *Sheng* tying for second place. In the area of meeting a new person of the opposite sex, 17% of the older age group indicates a preference for the mother tongue, and there are no cases of preferring *Sheng*. Just the opposite is true of the youth, where 18% prefer *Sheng*, and none prefer the mother tongue.

In the area of evaluations, there is more variation in language preference (Table 2, #4-7). The older group finds the mother tongue to be the most “poetic,” while the younger age group

Table 2: Age

Old- 41; Young- 78

		M.T	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank
Radio (1)	Old	(8) 20%	(7) 17%	(26) 63%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
	Young	(2) 3%	(5) 6%	(66) 85%	(5) 6%	(0) 0%
Anger (2)	Old	(25) 61%	(4) 10%	(12) 29%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
	Young	(9) 12%	(15) 19%	(39) 50%	(15) 19%	(0) 0%
Meet (3)	Old	(7) 17%	(4) 10%	(30) 73%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
	Young	(0) 0%	(8) 10%	(56) 72%	(14) 18%	(0) 0%
Poetic (4)	Old	(19) 46%	(12) 29%	(8) 20%	(1) 2%	(1) 2%
	Young	(7) 9%	(27) 35%	(37) 47%	(7) 9%	(0) 0%
Intelligent (5)	Old	(20) 49%	(3) 7%	(15) 37%	(0) 0%	(3) 7%
	Young	(17) 22%	(16) 21%	(41) 53%	(1) 1%	(3) 4%
Trustworthy (6)	Old	(32) 78%	(1) 2%	(8) 20%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
	Young	(36) 46%	(9) 12%	(29) 37%	(3) 4%	(1) 1%
Friendly (7)	Old	(25) 61%	(7) 17%	(8) 20%	(1) 2%	(0) 0%
	Young	(19) 24%	(21) 27%	(19) 24%	(18) 23%	(1) 1%
Past (8)	Old	(15) 37%	(19) 46%	(4) 10%	(0) 0%	(3) 7%
	Young	(32) 41%	(34) 44%	(9) 12%	(0) 0%	(3) 4%
Today (9)	Old	(0) 0%	(11) 27%	(26) 63%	(1) 2%	(3) 7%
	Young	(0) 0%	(13) 17%	(52) 67%	(12) 15%	(1) 1%
Future (10)	Old	(1) 2%	(9) 22%	(19) 46%	(9) 22%	(3) 7%
	Young	(3) 4%	(5) 6%	(36) 46%	(33) 42%	(1) 1%
President (11)	Old	(0) 0%	(36) 88%	(3) 7%	(0) 0%	(2) 5%
	Young	(0) 0%	(66) 85%	(8) 10%	(2) 3%	(2) 3%
Local (12)	Old	(31) 76%	(8) 20%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(2) 5%
	Young	(40) 51%	(34) 44%	(1) 1%	(2) 3%	(1) 1%
13)	Old		(14) 34%	(25) 61%		(2) 5%
	Young		(30) 38%	(47) 60%		(1) 1%
		M.T.	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank
Common (14)	Old	(1) 7%	(12) 86%	(1) 7%	(0) 0%	
	Young	(0) 0%	(21) 70%	(7) 23%	(2) 7%	

Table 3: Chi Square Results for Age

Alpha @ 0.01	6.6349:critical value
Mother tongue	66.77: significant
Swahili	1.02: not significant
English	12.56: significant
Sheng	37.47: significant

again selects English. In both groups Swahili was the second most popular choice for this question. For “most intelligent,” the older group sticks with the mother tongue, with English as a fairly close second; the younger group demonstrates a high appreciation for English as an intelligent language, and their second choice is the mother tongue. The young and the old agree that the mother tongue is the most trustworthy language. The elders maintain that the Mother Tongue is also the most friendly, while the youth are evenly divided across all four languages on this question.

In the area of beliefs regarding importance (Table 2, #8-10), the majority of respondents in both groups select Swahili as the most important 30 years ago, closely followed by the selection of mother tongue. Over 60% of both groups agree that English is the most important language in Kenya today, and in both groups, Swahili receives the second highest percentage. As for which language will be the most important 30 years from now, nearly half of the responses in both groups indicate English. The percentage for *Sheng* in the younger age group is nearly as high as that of English, and even in the older age group, *Sheng* receives a fairly high percentage, but no more than is awarded to Swahili.

In the area of beliefs regarding public language use (Table 2, #11-14), the overwhelming majority from both groups selects Swahili as the language that the president should speak with the Kenyan people. Mother tongue is the most common choice for the language of a local leader,

with Swahili as the second highest choice. The question of a common language finds both groups divided almost 60-40, where 60% say “no” and 40% say “yes.” Of those who believe there should be a common language, the majority of respondents across age groups agree that it should be Swahili.

4.2.2. Gender

While both males and females demonstrate a preference for English in the behavioral choice area (Table 4, #1-3), the percentage of females choosing English is higher in all three questions. For expression of anger, the number of males who chose English was equal to the number of those who chose Mother Tongue. The selection of *Sheng* is consistently higher among males (especially young males from Eastlands, see Tables 8 and 9, Appendix C). For the question of meeting someone of the opposite sex, *Sheng* is the second highest choice for males, and is 20% higher than that of females. Among females, *Sheng* received its highest percentage in the area of anger expression. (However, the group that most favors the mother tongues in anger expression is the group of males from Westland; see Table 9.)

Under language evaluations (Table 4, #4-7), again there is more variation. While nearly half of the males chose English as the most poetic language, among the females the most popular choice was Swahili, with English only 1% behind. Both genders find English to be the most intelligent language, with second place going to the Mother Tongue. No males and only one female chose *Sheng* as the most intelligent. Nearly 10% did not answer this question. The genders are in agreement again in the question of which language is the most trustworthy, the majority from both groups selecting Mother Tongue. In both groups, English is the second most popular choice under this question. Responses to the question of most friendly language are

Table 4: Gender

Female- 89; Male- 30

		MT	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank
Radio (1)	female	(8) 9%	(3) 3%	(76) 85%	(2) 2%	(0) 0%
	male	(2) 7%	(9) 30%	(16) 53%	(3) 10%	(0) 0%
Anger (2)	female	(25) 28%	(13) 15%	(42) 47%	(9) 10%	(0) 0%
	male	(9) 30%	(6) 20%	(9) 30%	(6) 20%	(0) 0%
Meet (3)	female	(5) 6%	(6) 7%	(72) 81%	(6) 7%	(0) 0%
	male	(2) 7%	(6) 20%	(14) 47%	(8) 27%	(0) 0%
Poetic (4)	female	(21) 24%	(32) 36%	(31) 35%	(4) 4%	(1) 1%
	male	(5) 17%	(7) 23%	(14) 47%	(4) 13%	(0) 0%
Intelligent (5)	female	(27) 30%	(16) 18%	(41) 46%	(0) 0%	(5) 6%
	male	(10) 33%	(3) 10%	(15) 50%	(1) 3%	(1) 3%
Trustworthy (6)	female	(53) 60%	(8) 9%	(27) 30%	(1) 1%	(0) 0%
	male	(15) 50%	(2) 7%	(10) 33%	(2) 7%	(1) 3%
Friendly (7)	female	(33) 37%	(20) 22%	(23) 26%	(13) 15%	(0) 0%
	male	(11) 37%	(8) 27%	(4) 13%	(6) 20%	(1) 3%
Past (8)	female	(37) 42%	(38) 43%	(11) 12%	(0) 0%	(3) 3%
	male	(10) 33%	(15) 50%	(2) 7%	(0) 0%	(3) 10%
Today (9)	female	(0) 0%	(20) 22%	(61) 69%	(5) 6%	(3) 3%
	male	(0) 0%	(4) 13%	(17) 57%	(8) 27%	(1) 3%
Future (10)	female	(4) 4%	(11) 12%	(43) 48%	(28) 31%	(3) 3%
	male	(0) 0%	(3) 10%	(12) 40%	(14) 47%	(1) 3%
President (11)	female	(0) 0%	(79) 89%	(8) 9%	(0) 0%	(2) 2%
	male	(0) 0%	(23) 77%	(3) 10%	(2) 7%	(2) 7%
Local (12)	female	(58) 65%	(28) 31%	(1) 1%	(0) 0%	(2) 2%
	male	(13) 43%	(14) 47%	(0) 0%	(2) 7%	(1) 3%
13)	female		YES (32) 36%	NO (55) 62%		(2) 2%
	male		(12) 40%	(17) 57%		(1) 3%
Common (14)	female	(1) 3%	(24) 75%	(5) 16%	(2) 6%	
	male	(0) 0%	(9) 75%	(3) 25%	(0) 0%	

Table 5: Chi Square Results for Gender

Alpha @ 0.01	6.6349:critical value
Mother tongue	2.44: not significant
Swahili	1.11: not significant
English	8.29: significant
Sheng	29.42: significant

roughly divided across the four languages for both genders, however, in both groups, Mother Tongue receives the highest number of selections. For males, the percentage that chose *Sheng* under this question was higher than those who chose English, which is the opposite among females.

In the area of beliefs regarding language importance (Table 4, #8-10), the genders are in agreement that Swahili was the most important 30 years ago, closely followed by choices for Mother Tongue. Both genders are in agreement that English is the currently the most important language in Kenya, but among males, the second most popular choice was *Sheng*, while among females the second most popular was Swahili. Regarding the question of which language will be the most important language in the future, most females selected English, and most males selected *Sheng*. English was the second highest choice for males, and *Sheng* was the second highest choice for females.

In the area of beliefs regarding public language use (Table 4, #11-14), the genders agree on Swahili as the most appropriate for the president to use. 10% of the males selected *Sheng* in response to this question, and no females selected *Sheng*. The majority of females selected Mother Tongue as the best language for a local leader, while the majority of males selected Swahili. Again, no females chose *Sheng* in response to this question, while several males did. About 40% of both groups believe that there should be a common language, and of those 40%,

the majority sees Swahili as the best choice. While no males chose *Sheng*, two females chose *Sheng* as the best common language. The only group that actually favors all Kenyan's speaking the same language is that of older males from Eastlands (see Table 8 and 9, Appendix C). 100% of males from Westlands selected "no" in response to this question (see Table 9).

4.2.3. Socioeconomic Class

Between the two economic classes, categorized by residential area, there is very little difference in language selection in the area of behavioral choices (Table 6, #1-3). For the language preferred for radio news, both groups selected English. No one from the Westlands chose Swahili, while 13% of the respondents from the Eastlands chose Swahili. One person from each group selected *Sheng*. For anger expression, first choice for both groups was English, followed by Mother Tongue. 15% of respondents from Eastlands selected *Sheng*, while no one from Westlands chose *Sheng*. In meeting someone of the opposite sex, both groups favored English. Again, no one from Westlands selected *Sheng* for this question, while 11% of subjects from Eastlands chose *Sheng*.

In the area of language evaluations (Table 6, #4-7), attitudes are similar in general. Eastlands gave the highest percentage for "most poetic" to English, while Westlands gave the highest percentage to Swahili. For most intelligent language, Eastlands favored English, while Westlands favored Mother Tongue. No one chose *Sheng*. The highest choice for the most trustworthy language in both groups was Mother Tongue, and the second highest choice in both groups was English. Both groups also favored English as the friendliest language. One respondent from Westlands chose *Sheng* as the most friendly, while no one from Eastlands chose *Sheng*.

Table 6: Estates

Eastlands- 54; Westlands- 22

		MT	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank
Radio (1)	East	(3) 6%	(7) 13%	(43) 80%	(1) 2%	(0) 0%
	West	(3) 14%	(0) 0%	(18) 82%	(1) 5%	(0) 0%
Anger (2)	East	(15) 28%	(8) 15%	(23) 43%	(8) 15%	(0) 0%
	West	(8) 36%	(3) 14%	(11) 50%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
Meet (3)	East	(4) 7%	(5) 9%	(39) 72%	(6) 11%	(0) 0%
	West	(2) 9%	(1) 5%	(19) 86%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
Poetic (4)	East	(12) 22%	(17) 31%	(19) 35%	(5) 9%	(1) 2%
	West	(6) 27%	(10) 45%	(5) 9%	(1) 5%	(0) 0%
Intelligent (5)	East	(20) 37%	(10) 19%	(23) 43%	(0) 0%	(1) 2%
	West	(8) 36%	(3) 14%	(9) 17%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%
Trustworthy (6)	East	(33) 61%	(3) 6%	(17) 31%	(1) 2%	(0) 0%
	West	(14) 64%	(1) 5%	(6) 27%	(0) 0%	(1) 5%
Friendly (7)	East	(21) 39%	(13) 24%	(11) 20%	(9) 17%	(0) 0%
	West	(9) 41%	(3) 14%	(6) 27%	(3) 14%	(1) 5%
Past (8)	East	(20) 37%	(25) 46%	(6) 11%	(0) 0%	(3) 6%
	West	(11) 50%	(8) 36%	(1) 5%	(0) 0%	(2) 9%
Today (9)	East	(0) 0%	(9) 17%	(37) 69%	(5) 9%	(3) 6%
	West	(0) 0%	(5) 23%	(15) 68%	(2) 9%	(0) 0%
Future (10)	East	(2) 4%	(5) 9%	(27) 50%	(18) 33%	(2) 4%
	West	(1) 5%	(5) 23%	(10) 45%	(6) 27%	(0) 0%
President (11)	East	(0) 0%	(45) 83%	(6) 11%	(1) 2%	(2) 4%
	West	(0) 0%	(18) 82%	(2) 9%	(1) 5%	(1) 5%
Local (12)	East	(34) 63%	(17) 31%	(1) 2%	(0) 0%	(2) 4%
	West	(9) 41%	(12) 55%	(0) 0%	(1) 5%	(0) 0%
13)			YES	NO		Blank
	East		(18) 33%	(34) 63%		(2) 4%
West		(4) 18%	(18) 82%			
Common (14)	East		(15) 83%	(3) 17%		
	West	(1) 25%	(2) 75%	(0) 0%	(1) 25%	

Table 7: Chi Square Results for Class

Alpha @ 0.01	6.6349: Critical value
Mother tongue	0.83: not significant
Swahili	0.11: not significant
English	0: not significant
Sheng	1.9: not significant

Mother Tongue and Swahili are understood to be the most important languages 30 years ago (Table 6, #8-10). Eastlands slightly favored Swahili over Mother Tongue, and Westlands slightly favored Mother Tongue over Swahili. English is the most popular choice in both groups for the most important language today. A few selections for *Sheng* under this question came from both groups. English again received from both groups the highest percentage for most important language in the future. *Sheng* was the second most popular choice in both groups.

The two groups agree on the president's language (Swahili), while one respondent from each group chose *Sheng* (Table 6, #11-14). The language of the local leader found a bit more divergence. Eastlands respondents favored the Mother Tongue, and Westlands favored Swahili, the reverse of responses for the question about past language importance. 82% of Westlands respondents were not in favor of a common language (as mentioned earlier, 100% of older males from Westlands were not in favor of one language, see Table 9, Appendix C). Of the 4 respondents who did want a common language, two chose Swahili, one chose Mother Tongue, and one chose *Sheng*. The majority of common language supporters from Eastlands selected Swahili, and a few chose English. No one from Eastlands selected either Mother Tongue or *Sheng*.

4.3. Discussion

4.3.1. The Mother Tongues

Twenty-eight different mother tongues were represented among the respondents. Among these twenty-eight, the majority identified *Kikuyu*, *Luo*, *Luhya*, *Kamba* and *Meru* as their mother tongue. Several respondents listed two mother tongues, most likely an indication of an interethnic marriage.

The continuing importance of the mother tongue in the lives of Kenyans is apparent in the data. While not receiving the highest percentage in the total sample (see Table 1) under any of the behavioral choice questions, it received the second highest ranking - a total of 28.5% - of the choices for the expression of anger (#2). Thus, in agreement with the literature, its role, when it is spoken in the daily life of Kenyans, appears to be expressive (Samper 2002, Senanu 1995). The mother tongues showed most prominence in the area of evaluation. They are the second highest choice for “most intelligent language” (#5) and the number one choice for both “most trustworthy” (#6) and “most friendly” (#7). The high evaluative ranking for the mother tongue indicates that Kenyans still value and respect their indigenous languages.

As for language importance, the importance of the mother tongue is considered out-dated, and even so, it was only the second highest choice for the most important language in Kenya 30 years ago (#8). In the area of public language use, the mother tongue is by far the first choice for the language of the local leaders (#12). This may be evidence of the stereotype of rural Kenyans: that they are uneducated, and therefore would not be equipped to understand Swahili or English (Parkin 1977, Samper 2002).

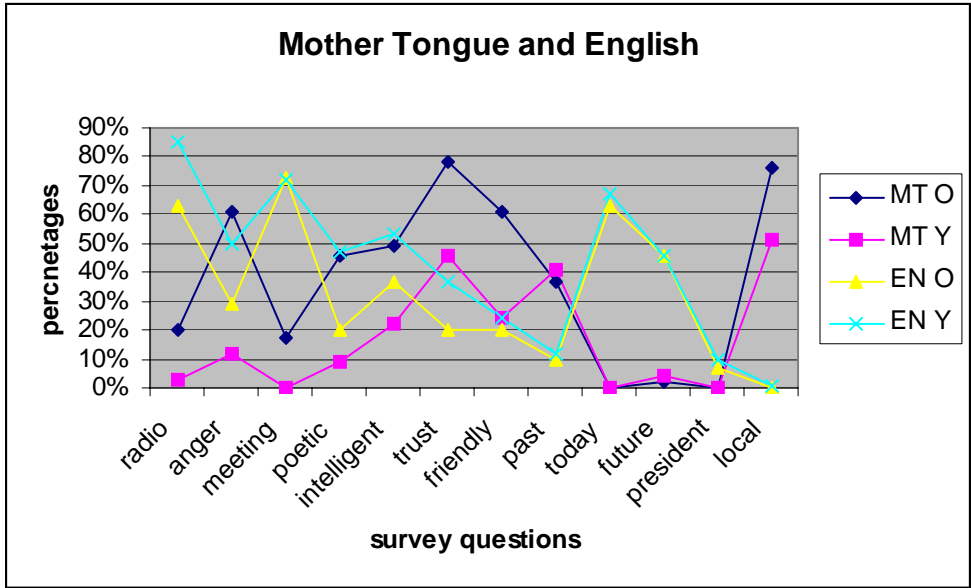


Figure 1: Attitudes Toward Mother Tongue and English Across Age
 MT- Mother Tongue; EN- English; O- Old, Y- Young

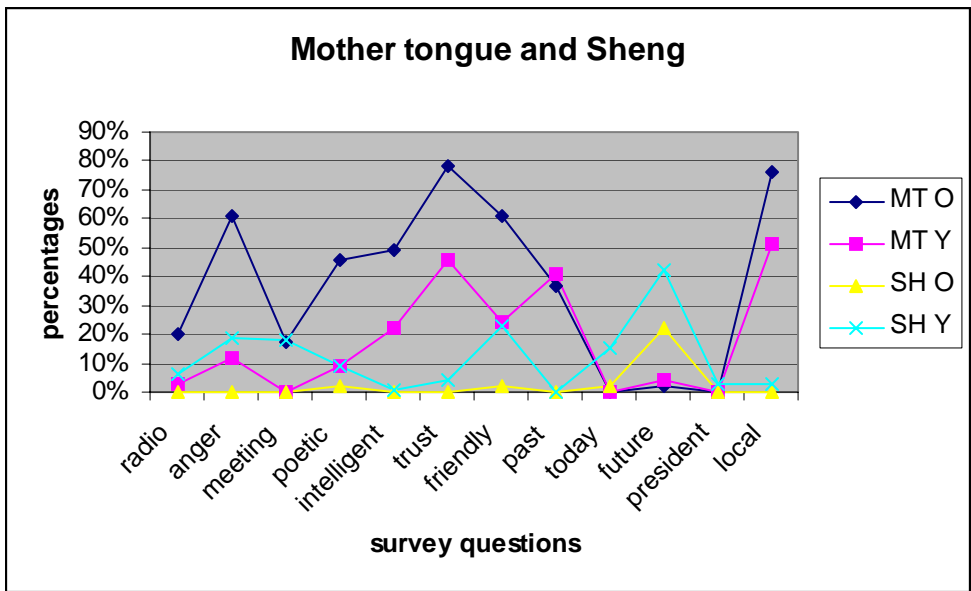


Figure 2: Attitudes Toward Mother Tongue and Sheng Across Age
 MT- Mother Tongue; SH – Sheng; O- Old; Y- Young

According to the chi square results (see Table 3), the appreciation demonstrated by the older age group toward the mother tongues is significantly higher than that of the younger age group, as

was predicted in the literature (Abdulaziz & Osinde 1997, Samper 2002, Woods 1995). Percentages among the older group are consistently higher, with the exception found in #8, where a slightly larger percentage of young Kenyans believe that Mother Tongue was more important 30 years ago than do their elders (see Table 2). Interestingly, these Kenyans are all under the age of 30, and so would only be speculating about which language was the most important then. This could be the result of what Fishman calls “attitudinal halo-ization,” where rather than returning to use a dying language, the younger generations view the mother tongues “with less emotion but with even greater respect” (Fishman 1966a, 397). This pattern was also observed among the Suba people of Kenya. “The appreciation of the original first language . . . increases almost at the same rate as the competence in it declines” (Rhotland & Okombo 1992, 280).

It is the mother tongues, the indigenous African languages, which Sonaiya (2003) suggested as the identity language. He believes that Africans cannot have true, meaningful interpersonal communication without the use of these languages. Just ten years ago, Senanu (1995) observed conformity to Sonaiya’s proposal, reporting that the mother tongue was used for personal communication, and the European language was used for more formal communication. However, today, the spheres do not appear to be as distinct, particularly among the young, who tend to select English for expressing anger and making a new acquaintance of the opposite sex (see Figure 1), which are areas that might fall into Sonaiya’s sphere of the “identity language.”

According to the chi square results, there is no significant difference in attitudes toward the mother tongues between genders or classes (Tables 5 and 7).

4.3.2. Swahili

In 1974, Gorman reported that the majority of children in Nairobi were listening to Swahili radio programs, more so than to those in English or the mother tongues. Today, radio stations in Nairobi continue to broadcast programs in Swahili, as well as several of the mother tongues. However, according to the data presented in this study, the language preferred in listening to the radio by today's youth has almost entirely shifted to English (see Table 2, #1). Swahili was not the most popular choice for any of the questions under behavioral choices in the total sample (see Table 1, #1-3). In the younger age group, the ranking for Swahili in behavioral choices is about equal to that of *Sheng* (see Table 2).

Three respondents selected both Swahili and English as their language of choice when listening to radio news. Another respondent chose both English and mother tongue for anger expression and meeting someone of the opposite sex. These cases of multiple language choice could reflect a habit of code switching. Myers-Scotton claims that code switching is the “unmarked choice” for inter-ethnic communication in Nairobi (Myers-Scotton 1992), and many adults, rather than make use of *Sheng*, will simply make use of code switching strategies.

Swahili is cross-categorically perceived as poetic (#4). The majority of choices for Swahili as poetic come from respondents of the upper class estates, and the middle to lower class actually selected English above Swahili (see Table 6). It could be that Swahili is used more in everyday speech by the Eastlands residents, and thus loses its sense of poetry, whereas among Westlands residents, it is English that is used more, and therefore has lost its poetic quality, which is why they select Swahili. Or it could be that the lower classes select English in this case, wishing to identify themselves with the prestige of the English-speaking culture, whereas, the Westlands residents already possess that status, and therefore have nothing to lose in selecting

Swahili as the most poetic language. In terms of chi square results, there are no significant differences between the attitudes of the age groups, the genders or the economic classes (Table 3, 5, 7). Thus, the place of Swahili in Kenyan society appears to be the most widely agreed upon.

By a small margin, Swahili passes by Mother Tongue as the most important language in Kenya 30 years ago (Table 1, #8). However, there is almost unanimous consensus on the issue of the president's language: 102 out of 119 respondents chose Swahili (Table 1, #11). It could be that President Kenyatta's startling use of Swahili in Parliament in 1964, and his subsequent declaration of Swahili as the national language has left a lasting impression on the Kenyan sense of language propriety. In honor of the first leader of their independent nation, Kenyans continue to regard Swahili as the president's language.

These nostalgic connotations may also affect the popular choice of Swahili as the best common language (Table 1, #14). Of the 44 respondents who would support a common language, 75% selected Swahili as the best common language, in agreement with the literature that designates Swahili as the language of national unity. Among the older generation and among residents of Eastlands, more than 80% marked Swahili as their choice (see Tables 2 and 6, #14). These groups may still be more familiar with Swahili than with English, due to a lack of educational opportunities, and this familiarity would affect their choice.

4.3.3. English

English, the official language, is well regarded in Kenyan society, and does not appear to be suffering greatly from the negative associations of colonial rule. It received the highest number of marks for seven out of thirteen questions on this questionnaire in the total sample (Table 1). The preference for English in listening to radio news (#1) may reflect its position as a strong international language and the language of education. Its high ranking in the area of meeting a

new person of the opposite sex (#3) is in agreement with previous research that has labeled English as “the language of romance” (Woods 1995, Tanner 1967 in Gorman 1974b).

English is also the first choice as a poetic language (#4) and as an intelligent language (#5). A number of respondents had some difficulty determining which of the four was the “most intelligent.” Several people left the answer blank, some circled more than one, and one person circled all but Swahili. One person wrote in a little note questioning the legitimacy of the question. “Intelligence in language is relative.” Another wrote “none” next to the question. Language intelligence may be a sensitive topic for these Kenyans, due to the associations of “mother tongue” with lack of education. Many respondents (31% - see Table 1) chose Mother Tongue as the most intelligent language, perhaps in this way making a statement against the stereotypes. In the area of language importance (see Table 1), English is hailed as the most important today (#9), scoring about 45% higher than Swahili, the second runner up. However, in terms of future importance (#10), English won by only 8%, the strongest contender in this case being *Sheng*.

Between age groups and genders, the chi square test found significance in attitude differences toward English (see Tables 3 and 5). It is the language favored by the younger age group, and by females. While the test on economic class did not reach significance (see Table 7), this variable in combination with gender shows some interesting patterns (see Figures 3 and 4, and Appendix C, Table 9). For all three behavioral choice questions, females favor English far more highly than males do (Table 4, Figure 3). In the area of language importance, females again place more value on English, while males give a higher ranking to English in the evaluative areas, with the exception of “most friendly” (#7), where the percentage was higher among females. This data contrasts with Woods’ findings in the Congo, where men were found to use

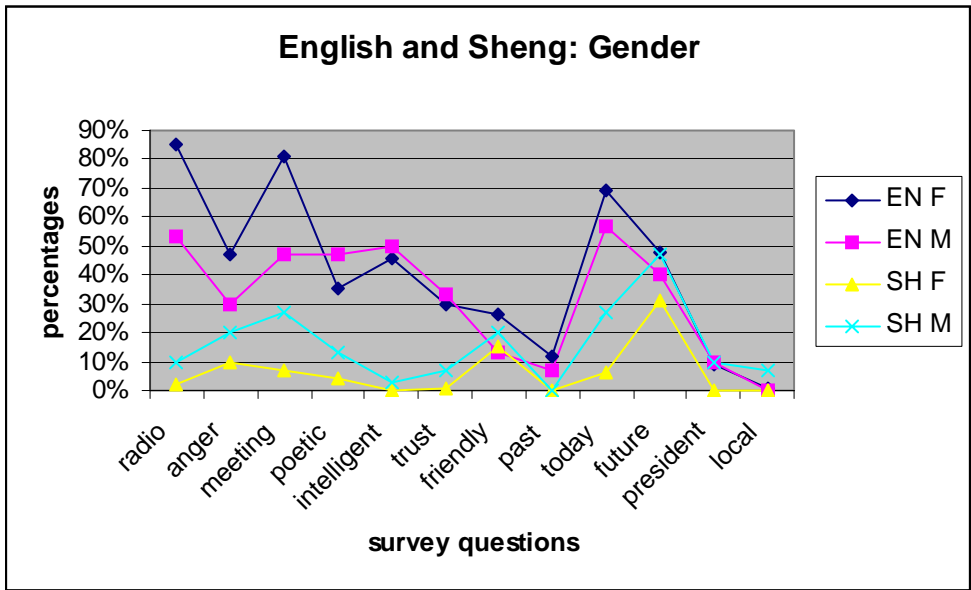


Figure 3: Attitudes Toward English and Sheng Across Gender
 EN- English; SH- Sheng; F- Female; M- Male

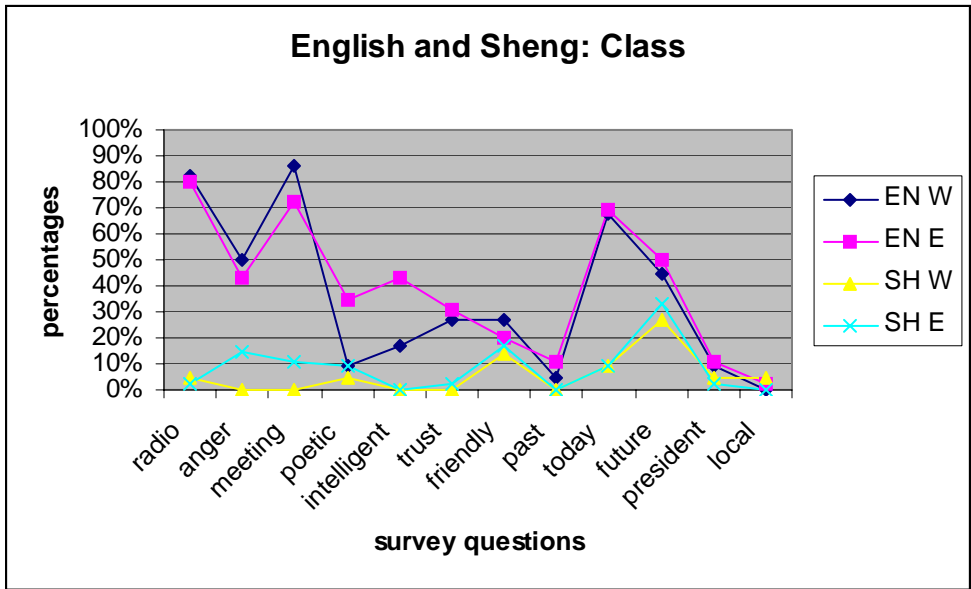


Figure 4: Attitudes Toward English and Sheng Across Class
 EN- English; SH- Sheng; W- West; E- East

the European language (French) more than the women. This could be due to the imbalance of ages represented among the female respondents: 65% of female respondents were under the

age of 30. Woods' found that age was a strong determiner in language attitudes, and the data from the present study provides evidence that it is an even stronger determiner than gender in the Kenyan context.

Between economic classes, there is a similar pattern (see Figure 4). Residents of the Westlands favor English more than those of the Eastlands in the behavioral areas (like females contrasted with males), while residents of the Eastlands favor English in the evaluative areas (like males contrasted with females), again with the one exception of "most friendly." Thus, it appears that females and Westlands residents have similar language attitudes; and males and Eastlands residents have similar attitudes. An interesting exception is that in nominating a common language, no one from Westlands chose English, while 17% from Eastlands did (see Table 6).

4.3.4. Sheng

English is currently the first choice in almost every area for young Kenyans, but *Sheng* is quickly gaining ground, and even the older generation recognizes the growing appeal of the youth language, 22% agreeing with nearly half of the youth, that *Sheng* will be the most important language in Kenya in the next 30 years (see Table 2, #10). Thus, while *Sheng* does not appear to be prominent in today's questionnaire, Kenyans are clearly aware of its increasing prominence in their society. *Sheng* provides a symbol of in-group solidarity for young Kenyans. Where previous generations marked their inclusion into an age group by means of rites of passage ceremonies (Kenyatta 1938), today's urban youth may be turning to *Sheng* as the marker of their age group.

The chi square test on gender differences found significance in attitudes toward *Sheng* (see Table 5). Positive attitudes are found particularly among males and among residents of the Eastlands (see Figures 3 and 4). An interesting exception is found in response to which language is the most important today, were males from Westlands (33%) favored *Sheng* more highly than males from Eastlands (25%, see Table 9, Appendix C). Nearly 50% of all males selected *Sheng* as the language to be most important in Kenya 30 years from now, surpassing the selection of English by about 7% (Table 2, #10). Over 50% of young males selected *Sheng* for this question, surpassing English by 28% (see Table 8, Appendix C). Both males and Eastlands residents demonstrated a strong preference for *Sheng* in the context of meeting a new person, but the preference for English was stronger.

In the behavioral choice questions, no one from the older age group selected *Sheng*, while several from the younger age group selected it under all three questions (see Table 2, #1-3). This pattern is in contrast to the positive attitude toward the mother tongues exhibited by the older group for these questions, and in combination with chi square significance indicates a true distinction in language attitudes between the age groups (Table 3). The older age groups are still able to use the mother tongues. They prefer the mother tongues in both behavioral and evaluative areas. In particular, the contrast is seen in the question of language choice for meeting a new person of the opposite sex (Table 2, #3). No one from the older age group chose *Sheng*, while 17% (the second highest after English) selected mother tongue. On the other hand, 18% (the second highest after English) of the younger age group chose *Sheng*, and none chose the mother tongue.

In Table 9 (Appendix C) we find that the preference for *Sheng* in the expression of anger comes only from males in Eastlands, and in combination with the data in Table 10, we can

conclude that these are only the young males from Eastlands. We also find in Table 10, that all of the votes for *Sheng* as the preferred language in meeting a new person of the opposite sex are coming from the young residents of Eastlands. 100% of young residents of Westlands chose English in response to this question; however only 14 respondents fell into this category.

4.3.5. Limitations

While it is particularly illustrative of the age and class difference, question #3 suffers from ambiguity. It may have been understood as asking about a “romantic” meeting, or merely as making a new acquaintance that happens to be of the opposite sex. Without personally interviewing the respondents, it is impossible to know which of the interpretations they followed, although it is likely that respondents in the younger age group did interpret it in terms of romance, while older respondents, who are in a different stage of life, may have interpreted it differently.

This ambiguity is a weakness of a number of other questions on the questionnaire. Under #4, the word “poetic” may have been interpreted as “literary” or “formal” which may be why English received the highest percentage of marks (38% - Table 1). However, it also could have been interpreted as “expressive,” which may explain the high percentage of choices for Swahili (33%) and Mother Tongue (22%).

Question #13 “Should everyone in Kenya speak the same language?” appears to have been interpreted in two different ways. Some respondents interpreted it as “Should Kenyans have a common language?” and others interpreted it as “Should all Kenyans speak just one single language?” This second interpretation is evident in the note written next to the question by one respondent who circled “no”: “Why should we lose our mother tongues?” The question intended

to investigate attitudes toward a common language, and this second interpretation hindered the elicitation of Kenyans' true attitudes. In any further study, this question should simply be reworded as "Should Kenyans have a common language?"

Another weakness of the questionnaire itself is the limited range of domains involved in the behavioral choice questions. The responses to these questions do not provide us with information about language preference in the informal domains, such as the market place, or private domains, such as at the dinner table, etc. In addition to the nature of these questions, the nature of survey research itself places some limitations on this study. If the mother tongues truly are stigmatized as indexing lack of education and modernization, perhaps university students would not admit (or perhaps not even realize) how much they use these languages. Without observation, or perhaps interview, this information cannot be known.

This brings us to another weakness in the study, that of a small and biased sample. All respondents are in some way affiliated with Daystar University, and thus represent only the more highly educated segment of Kenya's population. Males and residents of Westlands were severely under-represented, which hindered the examination of interaction between age, gender and economic class.

In addition to the small numbers, the personal "linguistic histories" of the older respondents are unknown, which presents another problem. It could be that this group represents "ex-*Sheng* speakers" who have shifted back to favoring the mother tongues in their adulthood. Or it could be that these Kenyans never spoke *Sheng*. The data provided by these surveys does not provide us with this information, and so we cannot conclusively remark on how *Sheng* affects language shift. Further study should seek out Kenyan adults who spoke *Sheng* in their

youth, to investigate whether or not they shifted back to their mother tongues, or from *Sheng* to Swahili or English.

The breakdown of housing estates into “Westlands” and “Eastlands” was also problematic. The estates were actually categorized as upper, middle, and lower class. For the analysis, I combined the middle and lower class, in accordance with the literature. However, the lack of significant difference in attitudes between the two groups may be due to the middle class. In a future study, I would analyze each of the three classes separately.

5. Conclusion

Attitudes toward the various languages in Nairobi have been examined to determine the validity of claims of a significant attitude shift, and to better understand patterns of language choice in the Nairobi context. The difference between the language choices of youth and their elders is significant (Table 3). For the younger respondents, the mother tongue is no longer the first choice for communication and self-expression. In a few areas of evaluative choices (#6, and #7), young Kenyans maintain a positive attitude toward the mother tongues. But their attitude toward them appears to be “romanticized” rather than realistic, as was seen in the example of the rap musicians, who attempt to incorporate mother tongues into their lyrics, but pronounce those lyrics with an English phonology (Samper 2002).

The findings regarding gender and class differences are consistent with the claims of Abdulaziz and Osinde (1997) and Samper (2002), but only gender differences toward *Sheng* and English are significant (Table 5). Females and residents of Westlands were stronger advocates of English, while males and Eastlands residents showed a stronger preference for *Sheng*. However, these variables did not affect attitudes toward the mother tongues. Age difference is the key factor in mother tongue selection.

From the data provided by this study, it appears that the European language English is the greatest threat to the indigenous languages. The preference for English among the young is consistently stronger than the preference for the mother tongues, Swahili or *Sheng*. The difference in attitudes across age toward *Sheng* is greater than the difference in attitudes toward English. However due to the habit of dropping *Sheng* use in young adulthood, and the lack of language history information on the adult sample in this study, it cannot be determined from the data presented here whether or not *Sheng* is actively taking the place of the mother tongues or not. The difference in attitudes toward English in this sense is even more significant, as no evidence has been provided in the literature of a tendency to drop English use at any point. English, therefore, is the most certain threat to the indigenous languages.

However, the data provided here regarding attitudes toward *Sheng* is important as well. The data may not have any “predictive value” (Thomason and Kaufman 1988), but it does aid in understanding the full picture of Nairobi’s linguistic situation. If compared to the secret languages *Shelta* and *Angloromani*, *Sheng*’s very existence could be seen as an ominous sign for the indigenous languages. I have mentioned that such languages grow out of language contact situations involving intense cultural pressure from the socioeconomically dominant speech community. In the case of Nairobi’s youth, there is intense pressure from both the traditional culture, represented by the mother tongue, and the modern culture, represented by English. Thus, the youth have created a secret language, which manifests a resistance to total assimilation into the English speaking culture, as was seen in the cases of *Shelta* and *Angloromani* (Grant 1994, Boretzky & Iglá 1994). However, while resistance and some degree of language maintenance was involved in these two secret languages, overall, the original primary languages are now extinct. Speakers of *Media Lengua*, the hybrid language that shares many common features with

Sheng, also demonstrate attrition of the indigenous language Quechua (Muysken 1994). While we cannot determine from the findings of this study whether or not *Sheng* is a true threat to the mother tongues, the shift in cultural allegiance that this mixed language represents (a shift from traditional, to a mixture of both traditional and modern) suggests a potential threat to the overall preservation of the indigenous languages.

It may be a good sign for the mother tongues that the large majority of both young and old did not favor all Kenyans speaking the same language (#13). The ideal of monolingualism has apparently lost any hold that it may once have had on Kenyan linguistic ideologies. Perhaps, if this high tolerance for multilingualism were to be aided by a consistent language policy, it may be possible to preserve the mother tongues for years to come. In a study of language attitudes following the initiation of new language policies in Morocco, Marley (2004) found positive attitudes toward Arabic-French bilingual education. A similar study could be conducted in Kenya, to discover whether or not young people value the mother tongues enough to make intentional moves toward their maintenance.

APPENDIX A

LANGUAGES IN KENYA: QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is completely anonymous. Responses to this survey will be used as data for a Master's Thesis research project in Linguistics, at the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. If you do not wish to participate in this project, please refrain from answering the questions below.

Your estate of residence _____

Your age _____

Your gender _____

Your mother tongue _____

Please circle the language of your choice for each question.

1. Which language do you prefer when you listen to the radio news?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

2. Which language do you prefer when you are angry?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

3. Which language do you prefer when you want to meet someone of the opposite sex?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

4. Which language do you find most poetic?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

5. Which language do you find most intelligent?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

6. Which language do you find most trustworthy?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

7. Which language do you find most friendly?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

8. Which language was most important in Kenya 30 years ago?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

9. Which language is most important in Kenya today?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

10. Which language do you think will be most important in Kenya thirty years from now?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

11. Which language should the president speak to the people?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

12. Which language should a local leader speak to the local people?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

13. Should everyone in Kenya speak the same language?

YES NO

14. If yes, which language?

Mother tongue Swahili English Sheng

APPENDIX B

Classification of Nairobi's Residential Estates

Middle to lower class estates

"Eastlands"

Bahati
BuruBuru
Dagoreti Corner
Embakasi
Githurai
Golfcourse
Greenfields
Highridge
Imara Daima
Jogooroad
Kabete
Kaloleni
Kayole
Kibera (slum)
Kilimani
Komarock
Lang'ata
Mlango Kubwa
Milimani
Nairobi West
Ngong Road
Ngummo
Outering
Pangani
Pipeline
Ruaraka
Santack
Satelite
Siwaka
South B
South C
Sunview
Upperhill
Woodley

Upper class estates
“Westlands”

Airportview
Hurlingham
Karen
Karengata
Kasarani
Kileleshwa
Lavington
Loresho
Mimosa
Mountainview
Ridgeways
Thome

APPENDIX C

Table 8: Age and Gender

F - Female; M – Male; MT – Mother Tongue

		MT	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank	Totals
1) Radio	F Old	(7) 22%	(2) 6%	(23) 72%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(1) 2%	(1) 2%	(53) 93%	(2) 4%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(1) 11%	(5) 56%	(3) 33%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(1) 5%	(4) 19%	(13) 62%	(3) 14%	(0) 0%	(21) 100%
2) Anger	F Old	(19) 59%	(3) 9%	(10) 31%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(6) 11%	(10) 18%	(32) 56%	(9) 16%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(6) 67%	(1) 11%	(2) 22%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(3) 14%	(5) 24%	(7) 33%	(6) 29%	(0) 0%	(21) 100%
3) Meeting	F Old	(5) 16%	(1) 3%	(26) 81%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(0) 0%	(5) 9%	(46) 81%	(6) 11%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(2) 22%	(3) 33%	(4) 44%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(0) 0%	(3) 14%	(10) 48%	(8) 38%	(0) 0%	(21) 100%
4) Poetic	F Old	(16) 50%	(10) 31%	(5) 16%	(0) 0%	(1) 3%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(5) 9%	(22) 39%	(26) 46%	(4) 7%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(3) 33%	(2) 22%	(3) 33%	(1) 11%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(2) 10%	(5) 24%	(11) 52%	(3) 14%	(0) 0%	(21) 100%
5) Intelligent	F Old	(14) 44%	(3) 9%	(12) 38%	(0) 0%	(3) 9%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(13) 23%	(13) 23%	(29) 51%	(0) 0%	(2) 4%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(6) 67%	(0) 0%	(3) 33%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(4) 19%	(3) 14%	(12) 57%	(1) 5%	(1) 5%	(21) 100%
6) Trust	F Old	(26) 81%	(0) 0%	(6) 19%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(27) 47%	(8) 14%	(21) 37%	(1) 2%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(6) 67%	(1) 11%	(2) 22%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(9) 43%	(1) 5%	(8) 38%	(2) 10%	(1) 5%	(21) 100%
7) Friendly	F Old	(20) 63%	(4) 13%	(7) 22%	(1) 3%	(0) 0%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(13) 23%	(16) 28%	(16) 28%	(12) 21%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(5) 56%	(3) 33%	(1) 11%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(6) 29%	(5) 24%	(3) 14%	(6) 29%	(1) 5%	(21) 100%

8) Past	F Old	(9) 28%	(17) 53%	(3) 9%	(0) 0%	(3) 9%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(28) 49%	(21) 37%	(8) 14%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(6) 67%	(2) 22%	(1) 11%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(4) 19%	(13) 62%	(1) 5%	(0) 0%	(3) 14%	(21) 100%
9) Today	F Old	(0) 0%	(8) 25%	(21) 66%	(0) 0%	(3) 9%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(0) 0%	(12) 21%	(40) 70%	(5) 9%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(0) 0%	(3) 33%	(5) 56%	(1) 11%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(0) 0%	(1) 5%	(12) 57%	(7) 33%	(1) 5%	(21) 100%
10) Future	F Old	(1) 3%	(8) 25%	(13) 41%	(7) 22%	(3) 9%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(3) 5%	(3) 5%	(30) 53%	(21) 37%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(0) 0%	(1) 11%	(6) 67%	(2) 22%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(0) 0%	(2) 10%	(6) 29%	(12) 57%	(1) 5%	(21) 100%
11) President	F Old	(0) 0%	(29) 91%	(1) 3%	(0) 0%	(2) 6%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(0) 0%	(50) 88%	(7) 12%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(0) 0%	(7) 78%	(2) 22%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(0) 0%	(16) 76%	(1) 5%	(3) 14%	(2) 10%	(21) 100%
12) Local	F Old	(25) 78%	(5) 16%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(2) 6%	(32) 100%
	F Young	(33) 58%	(23) 40%	(1) 2%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old	(6) 67%	(3) 33%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young	(7) 33%	(11) 52%	(0) 0%	(2) 10%	(1) 5%	(21) 100%
			YES		NO		
13) Common	F Old		(9) 28%		(21) 66%	(2) 6%	(32) 100%
	F Young		(23) 40%		(34) 60%	(0) 0%	(57) 100%
	M Old		(5) 56%		(4) 44%	(0) 0%	(9) 100%
	M Young		(7) 33%		(13) 62%	(1) 5%	(21) 100%
14)	F Old	(1) 11%	(8) 89%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%		(9) 100%
	F Young	(0) 0%	(16) 70%	(5) 22%	(2) 9%		(23) 100%
	M Old	(0) 0%	(4) 80%	(1) 20%	(0) 0%		(5) 100%
	M Young	(0) 0%	(5) 71%	(2) 29%	(0) 0%		(7) 100%

Table 9: Estate and Gender

F – Female; M – Male; MT - Mother Tongue

		MT	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank	Totals
1) Radio	F East	(3) 7%	(2) 5%	(37) 88%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(42) 100%
	F West	(2) 13%	(0) 0%	(13) 81%	(1) 6%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(0) 0%	(5) 42%	(6) 50%	(1) 8%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(1) 17%	(0) 0%	(5) 83%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
2) Anger	F East	(12) 29%	(7) 17%	(19) 45%	(4) 10%	(0) 0%	(42) 100%
	F West	(5) 31%	(2) 13%	(9) 56%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(3) 25%	(1) 8%	(4) 33%	(4) 33%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(3) 50%	(1) 17%	(2) 33%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
3) Meeting	F East	(2) 5%	(4) 10%	(32) 76%	(4) 10%	(0) 0%	(42) 100%
	F West	(2) 13%	(0) 0%	(14) 88%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(2) 17%	(1) 8%	(7) 58%	(2) 17%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(0) 0%	(1) 17%	(5) 83%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
4) Poetic	F East	(11) 26%	(14) 33%	(14) 33%	(2) 5%	(1) 2%	(42) 100%
	F West	(4) 25%	(8) 50%	(3) 19%	(0) 0%	(1) 6%	(16) 100%
	M East	(1) 8%	(3) 25%	(5) 42%	(3) 25%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(2) 33%	(2) 33%	(2) 33%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
5) Intelligent	F East	(15) 36%	(9) 21%	(17) 40%	(0) 0%	(1) 2%	(42) 100%
	F West	(6) 38%	(1) 6%	(8) 50%	(0) 0%	(1) 6%	(16) 100%
	M East	(5) 42%	(1) 8%	(6) 50%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(2) 33%	(2) 33%	(1) 17%	(0) 0%	(1) 17%	(6) 100%
6) Trust	F East	(27) 64%	(0) 0%	(15) 36%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(42) 100%
	F West	(9) 56%	(1) 6%	(6) 38%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(6) 50%	(1) 8%	(4) 33%	(1) 8%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(5) 83%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(1) 17%	(6) 100%
7) Friendly	F East	(15) 36%	(10) 24%	(9) 21%	(8) 19%	(0) 0%	(42) 100%
	F West	(5) 31%	(2) 13%	(6) 38%	(3) 19%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(6) 50%	(3) 25%	(2) 17%	(1) 8%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(4) 67%	(1) 17%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(1) 17%	(6) 100%
8) Past	F East	(18) 43%	(17) 40%	(4) 10%	(0) 0%	(3) 7%	(42) 100%
	F West	(9) 56%	(6) 38%	(1) 6%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(2) 17%	(8) 67%	(2) 17%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(2) 33%	(2) 33%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(2) 33%	(6) 100%

9) Today	F East	(0) 0%	(7) 17%	(30) 71%	(2) 5%	(3) 7%	(42) 100%
	F West	(0) 0%	(4) 25%	(12) 75%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(0) 0%	(2) 17%	(7) 58%	(3) 25%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(0) 0%	(1) 17%	(3) 50%	(2) 33%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
10) Future	F East	(2) 5%	(4) 10%	(21) 50%	(13) 31%	(2) 5%	(42) 100%
	F West	(1) 6%	(3) 19%	(8) 50%	(4) 25%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(0) 0%	(1) 8%	(6) 50%	(5) 42%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(0) 0%	(2) 33%	(2) 33%	(2) 33%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
11) President	F East	(0) 0%	(36) 86%	(4) 10%	(0) 0%	(2) 5%	(42) 100%
	F West	(0) 0%	(14) 88%	(2) 13%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(0) 0%	(9) 75%	(2) 17%	(1) 8%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(0) 0%	(4) 67%	(0) 0%	(1) 17%	(1) 17%	(6) 100%
12) Local	F East	(29) 69%	(10) 24%	(1) 2%	(0) 0%	(2) 5%	(42) 100%
	F West	(8) 50%	(8) 50%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East	(5) 42%	(7) 58%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West	(1) 17%	(4) 67%	(0) 0%	(1) 17%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
			YES		NO		
13) Common	F East		(11) 26%		(29) 69%	(2) 5%	(42) 100%
	F West		(4) 25%		(12) 75%	(0) 0%	(16) 100%
	M East		(7) 58%		(5) 42%	(0) 0%	(12) 100%
	M West		(0) 0%		(6) 100%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%
14)	F East	(0) 0%	(9) 82%	(2) 18%	(0) 0%		(11) 100%
	F West	(1) 25%	(2) 50%	(0) 0%	(1) 25%		(4) 100%
	M East	(0) 0%	(6) 86%	(1) 14%	(0) 0%		(7) 100%
	M West	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%		(0) 100%

Table 10: Age and Estate

W- Westlands; E- Eastlands; MT – Mother Tongue

		MT	Swahili	English	Sheng	Blank	Totals
1) Radio	W Old	(3) 38%	(0) 0%	(5) 63%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(13) 93%	(1) 7%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(2) 9%	(5) 22%	(16) 70%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(1) 3%	(2) 6%	(27) 87%	(1) 3%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
2) Anger	W Old	(5) 63%	(1) 13%	(2) 25%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(3) 21%	(2) 14%	(9) 64%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(13) 57%	(3) 13%	(7) 30%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(2) 6%	(5) 16%	(16) 52%	(8) 26%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
3) Meeting	W Old	(2) 25%	(1) 13%	(5) 63%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(4) 17%	(1) 4%	(18) 78%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(0) 0%	(4) 13%	(21) 68%	(6) 19%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
4) Poetic	W Old	(4) 50%	(1) 13%	(3) 38%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(2) 14%	(9) 64%	(2) 14%	(1) 7%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(10) 43%	(8) 35%	(3) 13%	(1) 4%	(1) 4%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(2) 6%	(9) 29%	(16) 52%	(4) 13%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
5) Intelligent	W Old	(5) 63%	(0) 0%	(2) 25%	(0) 0%	(1) 13%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(3) 21%	(3) 21%	(7) 50%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(12) 52%	(2) 9%	(8) 35%	(0) 0%	(1) 4%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(8) 26%	(8) 26%	(15) 48%	(0) 0%	(1) 3%	(31) 100%
6) Trust	W Old	(7) 88%	(0) 0%	(1) 13%	(0) 0%	(1) 13%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(7) 50%	(1) 7%	(5) 36%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(18) 78%	(1) 4%	(4) 17%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(15) 48%	(2) 6%	(13) 42%	(1) 3%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
7) Friendly	W Old	(4) 50%	(2) 25%	(2) 25%	(0) 0%	(1) 13%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(5) 36%	(1) 7%	(4) 29%	(3) 21%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(13) 57%	(5) 22%	(4) 17%	(1) 4%	(0) 0%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(8) 26%	(8) 26%	(7) 23%	(8) 26%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
8) Past	W Old	(2) 25%	(5) 63%	(1) 13%	(0) 0%	(2) 25%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(9) 64%	(3) 21%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(6) 26%	(11) 48%	(3) 13%	(0) 0%	(3) 13%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(14) 45%	(14) 45%	(3) 10%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%

9) Today	W Old	(0) 0%	(2) 25%	(5) 63%	(1) 13%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(0) 0%	(3) 21%	(10) 63%	(1) 7%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(0) 0%	(4) 17%	(16) 70%	(0) 0%	(3) 13%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(0) 0%	(5) 16%	(21) 68%	(5) 16%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
10) Future	W Old	(0) 0%	(3) 38%	(3) 38%	(2) 25%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(1) 7%	(2) 14%	(7) 50%	(4) 29%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(1) 4%	(5) 22%	(11) 48%	(4) 17%	(2) 9%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(1) 3%	(0) 0%	(16) 52%	(14) 45%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
11) President	W Old	(0) 0%	(3) 88%	(1) 13%	(0) 0%	(1) 13%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(0) 0%	(11) 79%	(1) 7%	(1) 7%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(0) 0%	(19) 83%	(2) 9%	(0) 0%	(2) 9%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(0) 0%	(26) 84%	(4) 13%	(1) 3%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
12) Local	W Old	(6) 75%	(2) 25%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young	(3) 21%	(10) 71%	(0) 0%	(1) 7%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old	(18) 78%	(3) 13%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(2) 9%	(23) 100%
	E Young	(16) 52%	(14) 45%	(1) 3%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
			YES		NO		
13) Common	W Old		(2) 25%		(6) 75%	(0) 0%	(8) 100%
	W Young		(2) 14%		(12) 86%	(0) 0%	(14) 100%
	E Old		(7) 30%		(14) 61%	(2) 9%	(23) 100%
	E Young		(11) 35%		(20) 65%	(0) 0%	(31) 100%
14)	W Old	(1) 50%	(1) 50%	(0) 0%	(0) 0%		(2) 100%
	W Young	(0) 0%	(1) 50%	(0) 0%	(1) 50%		(2) 100%
	E Old	(0) 0%	(6) 86%	(1) 14%	(0) 0%		(7) 100%
	E Young	(0) 0%	(9) 82%	(2) 18%	(0) 0%		(11) 100%

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